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AN EXAMINATION OF THE CASE FOR PARTY
'POLITICIZATION' OF CANADIAN CITY GOVERNMENT

by

Jonathan P. Gunn B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of
Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Political Science

Carleton University

OTTAWA, Ontario

September 19, 1980.

The undersigned recommend to the Faculty
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AN EXAMINATION OF THE CASE FOR PARTY
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ABSTRACT

The object of this paper is to assess whether full-scale 'politicization' of city government in Canada by political parties represents a viable means of alleviating widely perceived problems relating to city council decision-making and to public participation at the urban government level. City governments in which parties and party competition play a dominant role have been extremely rare in Canada, where the creed of nonpartisan local government has largely prevailed. Therefore the experience in Britain, where parties do dominate the local governments of urban centres, is analyzed. First, however, the comparability of Britain to Canada, with respect to their political systems in general and their party systems and municipal systems in particular, is established. The 'Comparable Cases' approach is utilized to accomplish this task. The analysis of the British experience indicates that full party involvement has had a positive impact in the areas of decision-making and participation in British urban government. When the findings from Britain are related to Canada it is concluded that party politicization could have a similar positive impact on Canadian city government. However, the conclusion is also reached that benefits accruing from politicization, and indeed politicization itself, will be achievable only if the necessary groundwork is laid through the accomplishment of some crucial tasks by supporters of partisan city government.

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INTRODUCTION

A firm conviction that there are some fundamental political problems with contemporary city government in Canada has emerged in recent years among many of this country's observers of municipal affairs. It is a view which, undoubtedly, is found most commonly among political scientists. Two areas of perceived political weakness are of particular concern to this group of 'urban experts': first, weaknesses perceived in the area of city council decision-making, and secondly, the less than adequate success of Canadian city governments in their role as agents for participation in democratic activity.

Concerning the first point, questions have arisen about the ability of city councils to deal adequately with the increased demands brought upon them by the rapid growth and urbanization of the postwar era. James Lightbody, for example, states that once a local government area reaches a population size of 300,000 to 400,000 "... the scope of the functions to be performed by a local government, coupled with the probable lack of social homogeneity in cities of this size, provide a basis and a need for coordinated political action. The satisfactory governing of the locality can no longer be supplied by a handful of community notables with an independent

sense of 'noblesse oblige' ..."¹ Critics maintain, however, that it is just this type of person who continues to dominate city politics in most Canadian urban areas and, hence, that the type of 'coordinated political action' to which Lightbody alludes above is largely lacking.

Turning to the second problem area perceived by these critics, the level of public participation in municipal government, concern has been expressed about the inability of city governments to stimulate widespread public interest in municipal affairs. This problem is perhaps most clearly reflected in the very low rate of turnout at Canadian municipal elections. According to a recent study, on average less than forty per cent of eligible voters cast their municipal ballots in Canada's fourteen largest cities between 1962 and 1973.²

It is essential to note, however, that the increasingly widespread critical view of Canadian city government described above is anything but a universal one. An opposing position, and one that has prevailed in Canada for years, is that perceived political weaknesses such as those which have been cited are not particularly serious because 'politics' is not and should not be a major factor in municipal government in this country. Those holding this position would define politics as conflict over values.³ As this perspective on politics is the most

relevant to this paper, we shall also utilize this conflict-oriented definition of the concept. The 'apolitical' perspective on city government, which was particularly popular in the early decades of this century, has been most commonly found among businessmen, municipal politicians and some students of public administration. It centers on the belief that municipal government is a matter of administration rather than politics (i.e. value conflicts) and that there are, in fact, no political or contentious issues per se in municipal affairs. Thus it is further held that parties, as 'political animals', introduce irrelevant concerns into local government while at the same time also introducing inefficiency and, perhaps, corruption.⁴ The analogy put forward by people with this view is that of city government as a 'business'. They assume "... that efficient municipal administration is not largely a matter of passing by-laws and voting the estimates, but of paving streets, awarding contracts, supplying water and light, protecting life and property, and appointing officials".⁵ This very nonpolitical as well as antipolitical orientation to municipal government in Canada, as James Anderson points out, continues to be very popular: "Not only is the view of civic government as administration still strongly held, but it is often directly linked to the question of nonpartisanship".⁶ Given the expectations people with this view have for

party involvement (i.e., increased inefficiency and possible corruption), the link to nonpartisanship is understandable. This particular perspective on municipal government originated with the extremely influential American municipal reform movement which emerged at the turn of the century and had profound impact on the views on local government in Canada.* Charles Adrian cites as the two central assumptions of the reform movement and its followers: "... (1) the political party and politicians in general were not to be trusted and (2) the principles of 'efficient business administration' could and should be applied to democratic government ..."⁷

It would seem clear that observers with an apolitical, administration orientation to local government would view the two 'problem areas' perceived by observers who view city government as a political arena, in a different light from this latter group. First, they would, of course, not be overly concerned with a lack of political coordination and direction on councils: rather, they would most probably argue

*The nonpartisan, 'civic government as business' tradition inspired by the reform movement, and its great impact on local government in Canada, will be examined fully in the first chapter of this paper.

that organized political groups capable of bringing such political coordination would bring with them those 'irrelevant' partisan considerations they so fear and thus impede a city government's ability to deal with civic issues on their true merits (i.e., in a businesslike manner). The argument follows that, therefore, the persons best able to perceive the true merits of these issues and act upon them correctly are independent councillors who are free to vote on each issue on the basis of individual conscience. Consensus should be likely among such councillors because of the noncontentious nature of civic issues and the lack of divisive partisan ties. Furthermore, on the subject of low levels of public participation in civic government, these observers would probably argue that such a phenomenon as low turnout rates in local elections reflects the very 'noncontentiousness' or non-political nature of local government, as well as the general satisfaction with the manner in which the 'business' of civic affairs is being conducted.

The position which will be taken in this paper is that this administration-oriented point of view is no longer valid (if it ever was completely) and that city government in Canada is a political arena -- one where issues of a conflict-producing nature arise -- in which the perceived political

weaknesses cited above are a legitimate concern. The non-political perspective on city government is no longer valid because the 'original assumptions' upon which it was based -- those put forward by the municipal reform movement at the turn of the century -- either are no longer valid or are simply not relevant to Canada. The first assumption of the reformers was that political parties and politicians were not to be trusted. This represented a response to the fact that the party machines running American cities in the late 1800's were 'renowned' for their corruption. However, in the case of Canada civic machine politics and its accompanying corruption never existed.⁸ Thus there is no basis in fact for this assumption concerning parties in relation to Canadian local government.

It is the second assumption of the municipal reform movement concerning local government which is most important, however. Municipal reformers assumed that 'efficient business administration' could and should be applied to cities -- that city government could and should be operated like a business. Central to this assumption was the very utopian idea that administration could be completely separated from politics. It is questionable whether this separation was even completely possible for cities at the turn of the century whose main concerns were the provision and maintenance of 'public works',

much less for the cities of today. In order to accept this second assumption of the reformers as still holding true today one must presuppose that the issues facing city governments continue to be confined to noncontentious public works-oriented concerns such as street paving and the provision of water -- issues which do not and should not normally lend themselves to political conflict. However, this is simply no longer the case. City governments in Canada are no longer merely 'pavers of streets' and 'suppliers of water' etc. (if in fact they ever were). The impact of urbanization and the general growth of government responsibilities at all levels have resulted in city governments taking on a measure of responsibility for certain concerns which are clearly contentious in nature. These include such matters as the level of social services, the level of public transportation, and the type of urban development. When responsibility for matters of this nature is combined with the fact that major Canadian cities are composed of large, diverse populations, a situation is created where disagreement within an urban community is almost certain to exist concerning some of the decisions of the city council. The 'local government as business' model, which largely depends for its success upon a consensus achievable because of the 'straightforwardness' of traditional civic concerns, obviously is not well-suited

to dealing with issues which breed conflict. Issues of this type are clearly 'political' in nature and it is the responsibility of the council as the civic government to deal with them as such. That most Canadian city councils appear to lack the political coordination and direction to deal with contentious policy issues effectively is thus a problem which does warrant extensive examination. In addition, the fact that much of the local electorate appears to be largely apathetic concerning who represents them when these issues are being decided also clearly represents a situation which deserves analysis.

Thus this paper proceeds on the assumption that city government in Canada is a political arena in which some significant and politically contentious issues are being considered and where potential weaknesses within these governments of a political nature are therefore important and deserve extensive examination. The emphasis here is clearly on local governments in urban areas. Civic governments in small centres do not have the large, diverse populations or the scope of responsibilities necessary to 'politicize' their municipal business. They thus remain in a state which perhaps better lends itself to the traditional administration-oriented approach to local government.

The focus of this paper will rest on the two political weaknesses noted above as being perceived by many observers to be common in city government in Canada. These perceived weaknesses would appear to involve a number of dimensions. The shortcomings in the area of city council decision-making would, in fact, seem to involve at least four inter-related elements: lack of leadership on councils in Canadian cities; lack of effective long-range planning and policy and priority setting by councils; lack of adequate coordination of the various activities of councils; and lack of clear-cut lines of accountability for actions taken by city councils.⁹ These points deserve some brief consideration here, although most will be elaborated upon in Chapter I.

- 1) lack of leadership: council heads (i.e., mayors) have little in the sense of significant separate sources of power upon which to draw in attempting to guide councils and gain cooperation. They must instead utilize their particular powers of persuasion in attempting to lead council, qualities which are generally not sufficient for providing firm, consistent guidance of council activities.
- 2) lack of effective long-range planning and policy and priority setting: it appears that, despite the increased demands for structured actions in various policy areas presently being faced by cities, the largely leaderless governments found in most Canadian cities continue to stress matters of administrative detail in council rather than the setting of priorities and the making of effective plans.

- 3) lack of adequate coordination of council activities: the lack of leadership and thus of cohesion on councils can and has resulted in fragmented, uncoordinated, attempts by city governments to deal with the various areas of municipal responsibility.
- 4) lack of clear-cut lines of accountability for council actions: the electorate is largely unable to focus on which councillor or councillors are responsible for particular council initiatives because of the ever-changing coalitions which support different pieces of legislation in the 'headless' councils of most Canadian cities.

The second area of concern discussed above, the general inability of city governments in this country to enhance participation in civic affairs, can be viewed as involving at least two elements: the extremely low rate of participation by the electorate in city elections, and a tendency toward the over-representation of certain segments of society on city councils at the expense of other societal segments. These two points also require some brief elaboration:

- 1) low participation rates in city elections: as indicated above, Canada's fourteen largest cities experienced rates of turnout of less than 40 per cent (the exact figure was 39.3 per cent) on average between the years 1962 and 1973. In federal and provincial elections during this period, however, turnout rates were significantly higher (77.9 per cent and 74.9 per cent respectively).¹⁰

Such a low level of participation in city elections would seem to suggest a generally low public interest in municipal affairs.

- 2) over-representation of certain societal and occupational groups on councils: as will be illustrated later in this paper, most Canadian city councils have been and continue to be dominated by persons who, because of background or occupation or both, can be identified primarily with middle-class, professional and business interests. This situation in turn suggests that such persons have been less inclined to consider or even understand the interests of other groups.

There can be no doubt that the problems described above are serious ones which warrant some attention concerning a means of alleviating them. It is a widely held view among observers of Canadian urban government that the introduction of full-scale party involvement in city government, a feature largely missing at present in almost all Canadian cities (Montreal being perhaps the only exception), can provide such a means for reducing problems in the areas of decision-making and participation in the municipal government of Canada's urban centres. Tindal and Tindal, for example, argue that the full-scale involvement of parties would permit the emergence on council of an identifiable governing majority: the position of mayor would be allocated to the leader of that majority, who would then be in a position (in terms of support in council and in the community as a whole)

to provide leadership to the whole council and to select an executive from among his fellow party members. The Tindals state that "The creation of a strong executive centred on the mayor is felt to be necessary for decisive action on the increasingly complex issues facing the municipality, especially in large urban areas."¹¹ Such decisive action would, it can be assumed, centre on priority setting and planning. The establishment of a cohesive executive should, following the logic of the argument, also enhance the opportunity for coordination of programs and policies. The Tindals also maintain that parties would make council operations and activities more understandable to the general public and the lines of accountability for those actions more clear; "... at the end of a term the public can attach responsibility for performance to the governing party since this group had the means to effect change. It is not possible for a ruling party to evade responsibility for action or inaction as individual councillors can and do."¹² The Tindals also cite the argument that parties representing specific programs will increase voter turnout and interest in general in city elections, but note that such a relationship between parties and turnout in municipal elections in this country has

yet to be proven.*¹³ Donald Higgins cites similar arguments to those of the Tindals for party involvement in urban politics.¹⁴ His own view is that, although such involvement cannot hope to solve all urban problems, "... parties, whether purely local ones or branches of major existing ones, can be important in the sense of clarifying, sorting out, and instilling some orderliness and intelligibility in city politics."¹⁵

As suggested earlier, optimistic views such as those of Higgins and the Tindals, concerning the positive effects of significant involvement by political parties in Canadian city government, are fairly widespread. The chief goal of this paper is to assess whether full-scale involvement does, in fact, represent a viable means of alleviating the political problems perceived in the governments of our cities. The main problem faced in such a study, however, is that Canada provides very few examples of full-scale party conflict in city politics upon which such an assessment can be made. In order to carry out an adequate analysis of this type it is therefore necessary to study, with a comparative perspective, another political system where overt party involvement in

*This potential relationship has been more closely analyzed in Britain, however. See the relevant discussion in Chapter Four of this paper.

city government is, in fact, significant. The state which will be utilized for this analysis is Britain.

There are three reasons why Britain has been chosen for this purpose. First, as will be illustrated in the opening chapter of this paper, Britain was one of the two main external influences (the other being the United States) upon the development of municipal government in this country. Secondly, and more importantly, Britain as will be illustrated in the fourth chapter of this paper, provides a system in which almost all urban areas are the scene of party conflict at the municipal level of government. It is this fact which provides the most compelling reason for utilizing Britain as the comparative case in this paper. The United States, for instance, may represent an even more similar system to Canada than Britain, although this is arguable. However, the U.S., the birthplace of the municipal nonpartisan movement, would not provide the almost universal party politicization of urban authorities which now exists in Britain. As Adrian and Press point out in 1977, "... partisan elections are used in only about 40 per cent of American cities."¹⁶

The third reason why Britain has been selected for comparative purposes in this paper is that there is a well-established precedent for conducting comparative studies of political systems, or particular aspects of such systems,

which have a high degree of similarity such as Canada and Britain.* An approach to comparative analysis of this type is generally called the 'Comparable Cases',¹⁷ or the 'Most Similar Systems',¹⁸ approach. Arend Lijphart explains the manner in which such a study is conducted. He states that the analysis is focused upon

... comparable cases (i.e., cases that are similar in a large number of important characteristics, but dissimilar with regard to the variables between which a relationship is hypothesized) which may be found within a geographical-cultural area, by analyzing the same case (nation) diachronically, by selecting intranation cases, or by focusing on intranation sectors in two or more different countries;¹⁹

Lijphart further adds that "What is important here is the ratio between the amount of variance of the operative variables and the amount of variance of the control variables ... This ratio should be as large as possible."²⁰

In order to utilize the 'Comparable Cases' methodology in this paper, the following tasks must therefore be accomplished. First, we must establish firmly the similarity of most of the characteristics of the two political systems and, more importantly, of their relevant subsystems. These common characteristics can then be viewed as having been 'controlled for'; they thus represent the 'control variables'. The implication here is that "The factors that are common to the

*The most prominent example of such a study is probably R.R. Alford's Party and Society (1963) which, based on the assumption

countries are irrelevant in determining the behavior being explained since different patterns of behavior are observed among systems sharing these factors."²¹ Secondly, we must illustrate the dissimilarity of the 'explanatory or independent variable' -- the level of 'politicization' by parties of city government within the two political systems, and the dissimilarity of the 'dependent variable' -- the relative severity within Britain and Canada of the particular problems of city government under analysis. What is implied here is that "Any set of variables that differentiates these systems in a manner corresponding to the observed differences of behavior (or any interaction among these differences) can be considered as explaining these patterns of behavior "²² Based on this methodology we arrive at the following hypothesis. Assuming that the overall comparability of most of the major features of the two political systems and of the particular sectors of interest in this paper (the party systems and municipal systems) are established (i.e., controlled for), the dominance of parties in British city government (independent variable) should help explain a situation where British urban authorities are less susceptible to the problems (dependent variable) found in Canadian city government than their Canadian counterparts. (This is further assuming, of course, that this latter

that they were very similar systems, compared particular aspects of the British, Canadian, Australian, and American political systems.

situation is also clearly established).

Questions may arise concerning the propriety of generalizing about city government and politics as a whole in Canada and as a whole in Britain. Certainly it is more 'hazardous' to make such generalizations about the Canadian situation. In this country there are a multiplicity of jurisdictions (the provinces) responsible for municipal government which have provided a myriad of structural forms. This contrasts with the fairly uniform structure of local government in England and Wales (the Scottish system differs somewhat) provided by the British central government, the sole authority over local government in that country. Nevertheless, despite differing structures as well as differing local traditions in the area of municipal politics, there is a great deal of precedent for making nation-wide generalizations about city government and politics in each country which can be found in the numerous texts dealing with municipal government in Canada and in Britain.²³

It should be made clear at the outset of this study that the 'data' to be used in this paper will be largely non-quantitative and impressionistic in nature. This is because concepts such as 'levels of leadership and direction' which will be studied here do not really lend themselves to other types of analysis. Thus such information as the 'educated' perceptions

of respected observers of British and Canadian municipal government will be widely utilized. Of course, empirical data relating to the concept of participation in civic elections is available and will therefore be utilized in the discussion concerning that area. In terms of the overall goal of this study, an assessment of party politicization as a means of improving city government by alleviating particular problems at the civic level, this is clearly a normative paper. Normative research pertaining to potential reform of course has a long-standing tradition in Canadian political science, and municipal studies in particular, and continues to be utilized today by many political scientists in this country. It is the perspective of this writer that such research can and does make valuable contributions to the field.

In order to achieve the objectives discussed above, the following five-chapter format will be employed in this paper. The first chapter will provide a detailed historical (including recent developments) perspective on the nature of political activity in Canadian municipal government, as well as on the role of political parties at the civic level. In examining recent trends it will also provide a more detailed discussion on the political problems which appear to have arisen from the particular historical developments in municipal politics in this country. The second and third

chapters of this paper will attempt to establish the comparability of the British and Canadian political systems and, in particular, the comparability of the roles of political parties and of local governments within these systems. The fourth chapter will provide a detailed analysis of party involvement in British local government. This will include an historical account of party involvement in civic affairs and an examination of the role and effect of parties vis-a-vis local government in Britain. Most importantly, this chapter will, of course, include an examination of the degree to which the political problems cited as being in evidence in Canadian urban government exist in the party-dominated British cities, as well as an examination of the relationship between these findings and the partisan nature of the councils in question, and an examination of the possible negative repercussions of party domination of British councils. Finally, the concluding chapter of this paper will provide an assessment of the significance of the findings from the analysis of the British situation for city politics in this country.

ENDNOTES

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- 14 Donald J.H. Higgins, Urban Canada: Its Government, and Problems. Toronto: 1977, p. 243.
- 15 Ibid., p. 243.

- 16 Charles R. Adrian and Charles Press, Governing Urban America. New York: 1977, p. 108.
- 17 See Lijphart, Arend, "II, The Comparable-Cases Strategy in Comparative Research", Comparative Political Studies. Volume 8, 1975-76.
- 18 See Przeworski, Adam and Teune, Henry, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry. Toronto: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1970, pp. 32-34.
- 19 Lijphart, op. cit., p. 159.
- 20 Ibid., p. 163.
- 21 Przeworski and Teune, op. cit., p. 34.
- 22 Ibid., p. 34.
- 23 In the case of Canada, one may look, for example, at Donald C. Rowat, Your Local Government, Second Edition (1975) or at Kenneth G. Crawford, Canadian Municipal Government (1954). Two British examples are Richard Buxton, Local Government, Second Edition (1973) and Peter G. Richards, The Reformed Local Government System (1975).

CHAPTER 1

A Historical Perspective on Political Activity in
Canadian Municipal GovernmentIntroduction

As the title indicates, this chapter attempts to provide a historical perspective on the nature of political activity in Canadian local government. The first section will provide a fairly detailed examination of the extremely strong nonpartisan tradition in local government in this country, including a look at the effects of this tradition on the relationship between existing political parties and the municipal political arena. The second section of this chapter will examine and attempt to explain the recent growth in interest in the involvement of political parties in municipal government in Canadian cities, and will focus on the major examples and results of such involvement. It will also include some brief comments on the future prospects for greater party 'politicization' of Canadian urban government.

Part I: The Nonpartisan Tradition

Local politics in Canada has traditionally been, and to a great extent remains to this day, nonpartisan in nature. The view of most Canadians, both inside and outside of municipal government, is that this is in fact the way it should be.

However, as Donald Rowat states, "The strength of this non-partisan tradition is hard to explain, especially in view of Canada's vigorous provincial and national parties and the participation of parties in local elections in England and most parts of the United States".¹ In the first section of this chapter, we will attempt to provide some explanations for the development and tenacity of this seemingly anomalous tradition in Canadian local government. We will also examine the resulting peculiar historical relationship which has emerged between the largely nonpartisan local sphere of government and existing political parties.

According to Donald Higgins, the tradition of non-partisanship in Canadian local government owes a great deal to two external factors.² First, he points out that the form of municipal government in this country was largely a transplant of the British model and that the British system was fairly nonpartisan at the time municipal government emerged in Canada. Concerning the second factor (and for most observers the one which is most crucial), Higgins notes that Canada was influenced greatly by the municipal reform movement of the 1890's in the United States, which placed great emphasis on nonpartisanship in local government. This important movement deserves some detailed examination here. Jack Masson and

James Anderson assert that the U.S. reform movement was a response to the rampant corruption of civic party machines in that country in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The clamour against the corruption of civic parties had the effect of producing a strong nonpartisan ideology which helped to insulate local parties from major party control. These devices, along with specific anti-party measures and improved social welfare measures, civil service reform and reduced immigration led to the demise of the party machine in many established cities, and prevented its rise in newer communities.

A short time after reform proposals for civic government were adopted in the U.S., they were embraced wholeheartedly by many Canadian cities. According to Anderson, by the time Canadian cities had achieved a sufficient size and complexity to make them attractive to parties, "... the reform ideology and the accompanying structural innovations imported from the United States had become firmly established and provided an effective barrier to the entry of parties".⁴ Concerning the associated structural innovations, they included the city-manager plan and at-large election (as opposed to the election of ward representatives).

Although Joyce and Hosse agree that the American municipal reform movement has been a significant factor in the growth of the nonpartisan philosophy in Canada, they point out that the machine politics and accompanying corruption to

which the U.S. reformers were supposedly reacting were phenomena which had never existed in Canada*. The two authors hold that when urbanization became significant in Canada the reform movement was in full swing in the United States and thus, when Canadians turned to the more 'urban-experienced' Americans for guidance in coping with city problems, it was the reform ideals which they found were being stressed. The authors state:

In spite of the fact that the socio-cultural basis causing the reform movement in the United States did not exist in Canada, reform philosophy appealed to the conservative, business-oriented mentality of the establishment governing Canada at that time. Thus, Canadian cities are regarded as 'corporations' with the function of council to meet periodically to conduct the 'business' of the city.⁵

According to Joyce and Hosse, the major effect of the reform movement in Canada " ... has been to retard seriously the development of local political parties and to create strong resistance to national party involvement municipally even inside the parties".⁶ Anderson, of course, makes a similar point above. Such an effect is obviously highly significant. Anderson suggests another effect of the municipal reform movement of perhaps equal cruciality, however. He maintains, somewhat cynically but probably accurately, that

*It should be explained that corruption unrelated to machines has been an occasional problem in some centres over the years, however.

although the rhetoric of the largely middle class American reform groups was aimed at the political misdeeds of the bosses of the civic party machines, much of their opposition probably stemmed from the fact that the parties had stripped them of their former roles as community leaders. He asserts that by eliminating party politics these groups were able to assure themselves of a dominant position once again in municipal affairs.⁷ Certainly to this day in both the United States and Canada it would appear that middle class groups and individuals have dominated cities where nonpartisanship has prevailed in local politics. It would also seem clear that this prevailing nonpartisanship has in fact facilitated their control of these councils. The over-representation of these elements in Canadian local government is, of course, one of the areas of concern upon which the attention of this paper is focussed.

Anderson provides what appears to be a logical explanation for the clearly profound impact of American municipal government developments upon Canada over the years. He indicates that the nomenclature of Canadian local government is more closely related to that used in the United States than to the terminology in any other country, including Britain, and that "... Canadian municipalities were also more like the American municipal system in form and practice".⁹ Certainly it can also

be asserted that the problems which have been faced by Canadian local governments over the years have borne more similarity to those which have been faced by their American counterparts than to those of the centuries-old European cities. Thus it has been quite logical for Canadians to look to the United States for guidance in the field of local government. Anderson also indicates that American influence has been particularly strong in the Canadian West because one million American citizens settled in the area between 1898 and 1914, most of whom were from the Progressive movement-dominated plains states. "These settlers brought with them the anti-party attitudes characteristic of the Progressive movement of the United States, and this influence undoubtedly contributed to the nonpartisan style of politics in cities that appeared later in the West".¹⁰

It is very important to note that, in addition to the external factors cited above, there are also some factors indigenous to the Canadian political environment which have been instrumental in the establishment of the tradition of nonpartisanship in local government in this country. Anderson, for example, points out that the rapid urbanization which was well under way by the late nineteenth century in the United States (and which saw the associated politicization of urban

centres by parties) did not occur until later in Canada.¹¹ The Canadian cities of this period were small, fairly homogeneous, and lacked the potential for patronage which existed in U.S. cities, of which party machines in that country took full advantage. The small size and general homogeneity of these Canadian cities suggest to Anderson that they contained little disagreement over the ends of local government and therefore few political cleavages upon which a party system could gain sustenance. Another distinct aspect of the Canadian situation is that the actual establishment of local government came fairly late to this country. The earliest province-wide systems of municipalities were only established in Upper and Lower Canada in the middle of the last century. Also of significance is the fact that, although the Loyalists who had moved north from New England during and after the American Revolution brought with them experience in town government, they brought no previous experience with partisan government at the local level.

James Lightbody perceives an additional indigenous factor which reinforced the tradition of nonpartisanship in local government. He maintains that in the early days of Confederation, particularly in the West, a high degree of community cooperation was necessary in order to develop necessary municipal services in a rugged natural environment.

There was thus little incentive or room for political division. Lightbody contends that the "... continuing Canadian fascination with the land, the unoccupied northern frontier and the agrarian basis of our society, has concurrently maintained the facade of cooperative rural communities. This, in turn, has fostered an acceptance of local nonpartisanship as a prerequisite to legitimate politics".¹² He feels that this attitude has disguised our society's true urban nature and the sources of political cleavage which result from a complex social system of this urban type.

It would appear that the reform and nonpartisan philosophy is now so much a part of the approach to local government in this country that the very concept of party politics in municipal affairs seems alien to most people. Joyce and Hosse found in a study they conducted that, with very few exceptions, the only people who supported the party concept were those individuals involved in civic political parties or those few persons voting for these parties.¹³ Such a pervasive nonpartisan attitude, as will become clearer later in this chapter, of course represents a significant barrier to the politicization by parties of local government in Canada.

It should be indicated that a general public attitude

based on long-standing tradition that local government should be nonpartisan is not the only causal factor in the historical dearth of party involvement in Canadian local politics.

There are some other important factors which deserve mention here. For instance, it would appear that the major Canadian parties fully realized during the early days of municipal government that the local electorate did not want them involved in civic politics. "The several brief and unsuccessful forays made by some parties earlier demonstrated that electorates did not view the major parties as legitimate contenders for civic office".¹⁴ They therefore generally avoided direct participation in local elections. In addition, it seems that until fairly recently the major parties generally lacked interest in city politics. Donald Higgins asserts that this lack of interest on the part of the parties stemmed from the fact that cities were perceived to be largely engaged in housekeeping decisions of a non-controversial nature and that there was thus little need for interest-aggregation by parties in cities.¹⁵ Similarly, many observers have contended since the days of the American reformers (with whom most of this philosophy originates) that "... urban government is a matter of administration or 'business' to be 'managed' according to the business principles of efficiency and economy; that there are no 'political' issues in civic government; that political parties introduce irrelevant issues into local administration

and that they are inherently corrupt".¹⁶ This position has, of course, been noted in the Introduction to this paper. It is a view which has been fairly dominant within the membership of the major parties. Higgins further asserts that the stakes in local government in the past have not been sufficiently high for the parties. "About the only possible payoff for major parties to become active by contesting city elections was that such involvement could facilitate the recruitment of candidates for provincial and federal elections".¹⁷ Even this was a weak incentive, however, as the major parties could and did recruit councillors without becoming overtly involved in local politics.

In a related vein, Jack Masson argues that in order to fully understand nonpartisanship at the local level it must be realized that the particular financial and organizational structure of the two major Canadian parties has made the creation of grass roots organization unnecessary. This he feels is crucial. Concerning these national parties Masson states:

They are neither dependent on a tightly knit party structure organized at the poll level nor on their rank and file for campaign financing. The consequence of this has been that senior parties have not seen any advantage in developing a grass roots organizational structure ... The senior parties are not dependent on this type of organizational structure in

order to win elections at the provincial and federal level and therefore they have avoided entering the local political arena.¹⁸

The historical relationship between the national parties and the largely nonpartisan local government sphere will be examined further later in this section.

James Lightbody suggests some additional factors which may help explain the lack of overt party involvement in Canadian local government. He indicates that Canadian civic electoral arrangements do not encourage party involvement in the registration of city voters, in the facilitation of participation (via primaries) by these voters in the electoral process, or in the general education of city voters, to the degree they do in the United States.¹⁹ These factors represent a definite incentive for partisan activity in local politics in some American cities. Lightbody also indicates that, unlike in Britain, Canadian politics has not been graced with a successful (in terms of having won national power) "... intensively mobilized mass working-class party, dependent for success on the disciplined turnout of its membership ..."²⁰ Thus, he maintains, there has not been the national party political cultivation of urban areas which has been the result of this development in the United Kingdom. Moreover, in Britain success in local elections is utilized

by the parties as a gauge for reading national political opinion, and power in local authorities is believed to provide an organizational base for a party which is not in power at Westminster. In Canada, on the other hand, the federal structure of institutions, "... including the national political parties, places greater rewards on the capture of provincial power than municipal".²¹ These would certainly appear to be valid points. Concerning Lightbody's assertion that Canadian local politics lacks the impetus toward partisanship of a successful mobilized working-class party, it is interesting to note that the party most associated with the working class in Canada, the New Democratic party, although nowhere near as successful as its social-democratic counterpart in Britain, the Labour Party, has also been by far the most active of any national party in urban politics in this country.

To briefly summarize the discussion above on the tradition of nonpartisan local government in Canada, it would appear that this tradition stems largely from a number of historical factors which have instilled within the Canadian population the view that nonpartisan municipal politics is, in fact, the norm. In addition, this prevailing nonpartisanship has been further fueled by some other factors. First,

the major parties in Canada have, until recently, for a number of reasons lacked interest in local politics. Secondly, Canadian civic electoral arrangements do not encourage party involvement in local government as do such arrangements in the United States, and there is not the impetus to partisanship, in terms of representing significant class interests and making significant party gains via party involvement in local government, which exists in Britain.

Having examined the traditionally nonpartisan nature of Canadian local government, it is perhaps of value at this point to briefly discuss the nature of the resulting relationship which exists between the established political parties in this country and the local sphere of government.

As indicated in the first part of this section, until recently the major national/provincial parties have, for a number of reasons, with few exceptions historically avoided becoming involved in local politics in this country "... as openly-organized municipal parties".²² The protest parties which originally emerged in Western Canada largely represent the exceptions to this general rule. For instance, the Social Credit party supported slates in a number of cities in Alberta during the 1930's, and the CCF gained some electoral support in Regina, Vancouver and Winnipeg during the

Depression years. It is only in the latter city, however, that national party involvement has continued to a significant degree over the years. In fact, the CCF-NDP as well as the Communist party continue to run candidates successfully in Winnipeg city elections.²³

Although overt political involvement by national parties is relatively rare in municipal government in Canada, this does not mean that indirect party involvement in the local sphere has not been significant over the years.

Donald Higgins states that "It has by no means been uncommon for the major political parties to be involved in municipal elections behind the scenes, in terms of contributing organizational support to selected candidates for municipal offices

..."²⁴ James Anderson claims that the prevailing nonpartisan politics in local government may, in fact, have a partisan bias. He asserts that "Local office often serves as a

'stepping stone' to senior levels of government, and municipal councils often harbour a large number of councillors who claim to be nonpartisan in their local role but at the same time hold memberships in federal or provincial political parties".²⁵

Joyce and Hossé assert that "In Canada's larger cities, at least, overt party activity has been replaced by subterfuge. For a long time the municipal level has been regarded as a

testing ground of the national parties. In Toronto, all three national parties openly acknowledge their covert participation".²⁶ They state that Ontario Tories have for a long time regarded civic experience as a step towards the provincial legislature or the federal Parliament. The two authors cite the following comment from the Toronto Globe and Mail: "The provincial Conservative government for years has wielded subtle but strong influence at the municipal level (in Toronto) and prefers this arrangement to having to organize and support a Tory municipal party".²⁷ In our view, the 'subtle influence' referred to here cannot be generalized to include Progressive Conservative provincial governments in other provinces, however. What can be suggested reasonably is that the 'nonpartisan' city councils in this country, because of their domination by 'conservative' elements, have generally served the same interests as those served by non-socialist provincial parties.

Stephen Clarkson also perceives a longstanding covert relationship between the national parties and local politics. He asserts that the national parties for years have been getting their better recruits from local politics. As well, he shares with Anderson the view that the personal politics of individual councillors has rarely been of a nonpartisan nature. "Most often the politician had direct, personal links with a

national party, helping it in its provincial or federal campaigns, presiding over a riding association, giving and getting support from the party's youth, women's, ethnic or labour organizations".²⁸ Clarkson further maintains that the covert relationship between civic politicians and the major parties has long been an instrument of restraint on party involvement in local politics. His argument here is that incumbent municipal politicians must prefer the 'status quo' of nonpartisan local politics or they would have moved on to politics at a senior government level. "As the advocates of municipal party politics had a distinctly reformist thrust, aiming their fight specifically at the status quo as incarnated in the old guard, it is understandable that the City Hall politicians used their influence within their own party to resist its entry into city politics".²⁹

Joyce and Hosse point out that the NDP has always been the most overt supporter of party involvement in local government of any of the national parties. They feel that what has largely restricted the party in these endeavours has been a lack of resources.³⁰ We would suggest that this historically greater interest in municipal government exhibited by the NDP is a function of the fact that more than any other Canadian political party it seeks to represent particular class

interests -- those of the working class -- and thus is motivated to represent these interests at all levels of government, and in particular in urban governments. Their particularly strong interest in city government stems from the fact that it is in the urban areas that the working class largely resides. As well, the attempt to build a base of strong electoral support at the local level is probably perceived by the party to be a logical step towards the achievement of power at the provincial and national levels since success at these senior levels has, except in three provinces, so far been unachievable.

Donald Higgins indicates that, although many councillors may be members of national parties, this party affiliation, if it is to the Liberal or Progressive Conservative parties, is often not crucial to their behaviour on council. He asserts that "Except in cases where a city council is composed almost entirely of people from the same party, voting coalitions on council frequently cross party affiliations".³¹ This is an extremely important point. Higgins claims that this situation largely stems from the fact that the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties are not coherently ideological parties at the two senior levels of government, and therefore should not be expected to offer or be committed to any explicit ideology in municipal politics. However, he maintains that

the NDP city councillors are more likely to be partisan and to coordinate their views and activities on councils because of their more obvious ideological stance at the senior government levels. This cannot be stated with certainty though, because, except in a few cases for brief periods, the NDP has not dominated or constituted a significant proportion of the representation on city councils in this country.

To summarize, it would seem clear from the discussion above that, historically, there has been a relationship between the established parties and the municipal political sphere. However, it is usually a covert one and, in the case of membership of individual councillors in the Liberal or Progressive Conservative parties, not particularly crucial to their behaviour on council. As pointed out earlier in this chapter, it is largely 'middle class' individuals (and thus persons most likely to be aligned provincially and federally to the Liberals and Tories) who have dominated city governments in Canada.

Part II: City Government and Parties - Recent Developments

Despite the attitudinal and structural impediments to a high degree of open and significant party involvement in local politics in Canada illustrated in the first part of

this chapter, it would appear that in recent years a definite interest in open and comprehensive party activity at the municipal level has emerged within segments of the established Canadian parties as well as among other observers. This section of the chapter will examine the major examples and results of overt party involvement in the municipal political sphere, and then will discuss some plausible explanations for this development as well as discuss what the future may hold for such involvement.

It was clear that by the 1960's a change could be perceived in the attitude of some members of the established parties toward their party's direct involvement in local politics. K.G. Crawford had in fact prognosticated in 1954 that such attitudinal change within the parties was possible in the near future. He wrote at that time:

... it may be that as the social services extend to occupy a larger place in the municipal programme and if the national political parties tend to divide on the basis of greater or lesser degrees of socialism there may be more justification for the introduction of party at the municipal level. The increasing importance of long-range planning in municipal programmes also may encourage party organization as a means of securing greater continuity of policy and to avoid the hazard of frustrating such programmes by individual changes in council personnel.³²

The change in attitude within parties during the sixties actually stemmed, in part, from such factors as the increasing pressures of urbanization, the reorganization of city governments, the general increase in scope of all governmental activity including that of local government, and, perhaps most significant of all, a change in the business of local government from "... short-term, non-controversial decision making to more politicized policy making ...".³³

The stakes in municipal government thus had become significant and there was a perceived need within elements of the parties "... for the kind of interest-aggregating expertise that they possessed".³⁴ It should be emphasized, however, that in general the push for the involvement of established parties in local politics has come from local elements of the party rather than from the national or provincial party headquarters.

Probably the most significant single expression of the more favourable attitude within parties toward involvement in local politics was the Toronto municipal election of 1969, where both a Liberal and a New Democratic party group entered the contest. E.P. Fowler and M.D. Goldrick maintain that the two parties were enticed to enter the municipal political arena in Toronto by the city's large population and associated heterogeneity and specialization, as well as by the

complexity of issues with which the city government dealt, all of which required some institutionalized means of interest aggregation.³⁵ The parties were also drawn to involvement by a growing sense that the prevailing system of rule in Toronto City Hall worked against coherent political leadership. In addition, the two authors cite the growing dismay over the 'urban crisis' spurred by the problems in American cities during the late sixties which further increased the relevance of partisanship in Toronto municipal politics for many party supporters. However, Fowler and Goldrick stress that, although these factors provided reasons and justifications for party involvement in local government in Toronto for some party activists, as the parties later discovered during the election, they did not stir up a groundswell of support within the general public.

Stephen Clarkson, a political scientist who ran as the Liberal mayoralty candidate in the Toronto election, is able to provide an excellent inside look at the attempt by the Liberals and the NDP to break into the formally non-partisan municipal sphere of government in Toronto. He indicates how difficult it was to obtain a consensus of support concerning venturing into the municipal political arena from within the Toronto chapters of the two parties.

Clarkson states that despite a commitment by the NDP in 1968 to a full-scale party effort in the Toronto civic elections of the next year there were strong elements within the party ranks opposed to such involvement in the local arena. He asserts that "... New Democrats were to find in the 1969 campaign that whole riding executives refused to put their weight behind the campaigning".³⁶

Clarkson indicates that Liberals favouring direct party involvement in the Toronto election faced bitter opposition from within their party. The issue was directly debated at the "Toronto and District Liberal Association Executive" annual meeting in 1968 and at a special general meeting in early 1969. Both times involvement was approved, but in the face of firm minority opposition. This debate resumed at the annual meeting of the Ontario Liberal party in March of that year, again with the same result. "Although the decision was made to take the plunge, the new party was obviously not going to be launched with all of its guns directed at the electoral enemy. Rather, it was to be left up to the proponents of municipal politics to prove they could pull off the difficult feat while continuing to fight significant internal opposition".³⁷ Clarkson maintains that despite this continuing internal opposition the municipal

Liberals did receive much help in terms of campaign organization from the provincial and federal branches of the party. He in fact asserts that the three level integration of the campaign was the most successful aspect of the party's involvement in the Toronto election. Clarkson further states that "Seen from the inside and in retrospect, the municipal Liberal campaign would have been impossible in practice as well as inconceivable in theory without this integration which, though hastily put together, did work according to expectations".³⁸ Support from other levels stopped short of financial aid, however. Fund-raising was left solely in the hands of the municipal group until after the election, when the federal and provincial wings of the Party and the "Toronto and District Liberal Association" provided some money to help pay off the post-election debt.

Concerning the results of the Toronto election itself, neither national party involved fared particularly well. In the mayoralty race, Clarkson came in third with a total of about twenty-one per cent of the votes cast. The NDP did not run a mayoralty candidate. In the race for council seats both parties nominated sixteen out of a possible twenty-two candidates for alderman, and the NDP had only three successful candidates while the Liberals had only two. According to

Higgins, "... only five more NDP and two more Liberal candidates were serious challengers for office in terms of getting at least half as many votes as the junior alderman received in a given ward".³⁹ It is clear that these disappointing results caused the two parties to re-evaluate their positions on overt involvement in Toronto municipal politics. "The two parties in Toronto were very much humbled by their 1969 experience, and reverted to indirect involvement in subsequent elections".⁴⁰

Clarkson provides some explanations for the poor showing in Toronto by the two parties. He states that "What one would have expected to be the very easy transposition of political activity from the federal and provincial levels to the municipal arena in the same region within the same nation-state, turned out to be a case of systematic conflict in which the parties encountered real opposition even from within their own ranks".⁴¹ Clarkson maintains that the two national parties involved in the Toronto election found in the heat of battle that the municipal arena contained a distinct political culture which was in many ways hostile to the attitudes, style, and pattern of behaviour which were a part of party activity. He further states that "... the barriers to entry came not from the civic political system but from the parties themselves. Rather than the centralized firm well prepared to

launch a properly financed, carefully orchestrated campaign, the parties were internally split, ill-prepared, improvizing, and uncertain in their first official venture into the city forum".⁴²

Fowler and Goldrick charge that the parties also failed to educate and capture the imagination of the public. They assert that:

... it is clear that the Liberal and New Democratic party elites decided in favour of involvement in response not to public clamour for party politics but primarily in response to partisan and personal considerations. In so doing, they committed the common error of vastly overestimating the mass public's political knowledge, perception, and concern for ends which the elites thought partisan municipal politics would achieve.⁴³

We believe it is also worth noting the fact that both of the national parties involved in the Toronto election were reform-oriented and thus were competing with each other for many of the same voters. As well, they were competing with a 'nonpartisan' local reform-oriented party, the Civic Action League (CIVAC), which was able to attract reform minded electors who still questioned the legitimacy of national party involvement in local politics. Certainly these circumstances must have worked to curtail the success of the two national parties.

Some nonpolitical reasons for the generally poor showing of the NDP and Liberals in the Toronto election have also been put forward. Clarkson, for example, perceives as one of the major problems faced by the parties the structural impediments of Toronto's electoral system. Some of the impediments he cites are the 'undemocraticness' of the system which provides extra votes to those persons with business premises in wards where they do not reside, the intimidatingly large ballots, and the two councillor wards where the top vote-getter earns a seat on Metro Council and where, thus, friction arises between the ward candidates, including two from the same party. Clarkson states:

Liberals had known in advance that electioneering by the unreformed campaign rules of city politics would be a problem. Unable to adapt party organization and party approach to them, the cumulative impact of the damaging pinpricks was almost to cripple the party effort.⁴⁴

J.F. Hough, based on the Toronto experience, perceives the present method of taxation in municipalities as a major barrier to party success in local politics. He states "A tax structure that changes the low-income voter from a man who favours expanded governmental services into one who favours low governmental expenditures is one that will require many adjustments in approach as parties move from the federal to

the municipal level".⁴⁵

Fowler and Goldrick provide an interesting explanation for the fact that the NDP was somewhat more successful than the Liberal Party in the Toronto election. They perceive the fact that Liberals have traditionally made leadership a focal point of their campaigns as a major obstacle to their success in Toronto.

A potential Liberal supporter who has voted regularly in previous municipal elections needed to re-orient his image of city leaders, issues and groups to reinforce his loyalty to Toronto Liberals: after all, this kind of reinforcement is necessary for regular Liberal voting at the national level. The unsophisticated Liberal voter just did not have the information or the political energy to perform this feat in one election. The NDP voter had no such task.⁴⁶

Fowler and Goldrick perceive the NDP as more of a mass party whose supporters are more likely to feel strongly about their party than their Liberal counterparts. NDP members rely less on reinforcement by the image of leaders or reference groups than Liberals. The two authors believe these differences are reflected in the fact that the traditional NDP electorate responded fairly well to the NDP label in the Toronto election as compared to traditional Liberal support.

The other major Canadian city which has experienced large-scale involvement in municipal politics by a national

party is Winnipeg. The New Democratic party was enticed to field a large slate of candidates in that city in 1971 when the Manitoba government amalgamated Winnipeg with its surrounding suburbs and established a fifty member city council. In that election, however, only seven of the thirty-one NDP candidates were elected. Only a slight improvement was experienced in the 1974 municipal election when the New Democrats gained two additional seats. In 1977 the provincial government amended its 1971 legislation to reduce the size of council to twenty-nine. In the municipal election later that fall the NDP picked up only four council seats.

Since the large-scale overt entrance of the NDP into Winnipeg local politics in 1971, neither of the other major national parties has shown any inclination to enter the Winnipeg municipal political arena. This is largely because most of the municipal Liberal and Conservative interests in Winnipeg have joined together under the guise of the 'Independent Citizens Election Committee' (ICEC) in order to present a united front protecting 'status quo' interests against the NDP. The ICEC has gained a majority of council seats in all three civic elections since amalgamation. It should be noted that this group has, in effect, functioned in some areas much like a party as it has held caucus meetings and has utilized

its council majority to control all of the standing committee chairmanships as well as to ensure an ICEC majority on all of these committees. It falls far short of the model of a 'disciplined' parliamentary group, however.

National/provincial parties are not the only political groups to have become involved in Canadian local government, however. 'Parties' of a strictly local nature, not affiliated to the major parties, have existed for some time. (The aforementioned ICEC in Winnipeg, for example, is one such group and has existed in one form or another since 1919). As Donald Higgins points out, local civic parties of sorts have, in fact, existed in Canada since the beginning of this century.⁴⁷ The earliest of these parties were inspired by similar groups in the United States. As was the case with their American counterparts, these groups were an integral part of the municipal reform movement, a phenomenon discussed earlier in this chapter, and had the general aim of removing 'politics' from municipal government. Higgins asserts that these original Canadian civic parties "... were adamant in their insistence that they were not parties. They professed to be non-partisan and this reflected an anti-political, pro-business approach to city politics".⁴⁸

The very 'anti-political' nature of these parties made their significance as political actors somewhat inconsequential. Many of these groups, in fact, resembled slate-making bodies more than anything and thus 'withered away' between elections, having insured that the 'right sort of people' had been elected. However, the emergence of Jean Drapeau's Civic Party (CPM) in 1960 in Montreal began a trend to a new kind of politically potent civic party. This trend was part of the larger trend of the sixties towards the 'politicization' of local government. The emergence of the CPM is significant despite the fact that, in many ways, the group was more akin to the old style civic parties. As Higgins indicates "It is composed largely of business interests (small and large) plus some professionals, but not organized labour. Further, it initially styled itself as a party of reform, but in 1974, for example, it contested the election mainly on its past accomplishments rather than on change for the future".⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the CPM, unlike its predecessors, does largely perform the role of a true political party. According to Joyce and Hosse the CPM represents a distinct policy, as well as having a leader and a caucus (which meets once a year), although apart from elected party representatives on council it has no separate membership or organization.⁵⁰

In terms of the CPM's role as a trend setter for new local civic parties, Joyce and Hosse assert that "The importance of the CPM outside Montreal has been to popularize the concept of a municipal political party and to reshape our thinking about political activity at the local level".⁵¹ Party spokesmen in other cities have given credit to the leader of the CPM, Mayor Jean Drapeau, for spurring them to establish civic parties in their cities. Joyce and Hosse agree with the assertions of these spokesmen, noting that, although none of these new parties has copied the style and structure of the CPM, "... the concept of a civic political party, unfettered by the factions and restrictions of traditional 'old-line' national parties seems to have been strongly influenced by Montreal's example".⁵²

Looking at the new Canadian civic parties (the CPM and the parties it has inspired elsewhere) as a group, Joyce and Hosse perceive as their common characteristic the fact that they "... do not claim allegiance to any political party or philosophy operating at the provincial or federal level. They believe that it is possible and desirable to forge a purely local political party to deal with the problems facing their individual cities and want greater freedom of action than they feel is possible with the national parties".⁵³ In addition, the two authors point out that all these groups

claim to use the same political devices as the national/provincial parties -- a leader, group discipline, caucus meetings, and a platform. The Joyce-Hosse study also found that local civic parties usually have arisen as a response to a specific issue. "Very few of these groups resulted initially from a general belief that the structure of local government needs reform".⁵⁴

It should be noted that many of these new local parties are politically significant for a few years and then disappear (i.e., CIVAC in Toronto), undoubtedly because of their predominant orientation to specific issues. The long term stability of such groups thus has to be questioned. Nevertheless, civic parties of one label or another continue to emerge and continue to play increasingly important roles in municipal government in some Canadian cities.

It is clear from the discussion above that during the last two decades attempts have been made to make Canadian local government more partisan. Although some important factors have already been touched on in the beginning of this section, we will now discuss in detail some particularly crucial developments which help to explain the recent trend towards greater partisanship in the municipal sphere.

A major factor in the increase in popularity of open party activity in local politics appears to be the growing

awareness among some party people as well as other observers that nonpartisan city government does have some serious political weaknesses which they believe party involvement in local government may help to alleviate. These weaknesses, which were noted in the Introduction, are of course of central importance to this paper and therefore deserve a more detailed analysis here.

The weaknesses cited as relating to decision-making are, as was indicated earlier, highly interrelated. The most important of these weaknesses is probably the lack of leadership which is evident on city councils in Canada. It was noted in the Introduction that council heads, generally mayors, enjoy little in the way of significant personal sources of power upon which to draw in attempting to guide their councils and gain cooperation. The Tindals state that, in fact, "The head of council in Canada must rely heavily on his personality and persuasive skills and attempt to enlist council's cooperation".⁵⁵ Such qualities, however, are seldom sufficient for providing firm and consistent guidance of the activities of councils.

Because of these limitations on the leadership abilities of the mayor, as well as because of the particular decision-making structures in use in many Canadian cities, the council itself has been viewed as the source of municipal guidance. However, as the Tindals note, councils have difficulty

providing such municipal guidance and leadership when, "Except for those few instances where organized political parties operate, the council is made up of a group of individuals with potentially different interests and concerns and no sense of cohesion or collective will".⁵⁶

They further argue that this situation is made more difficult when councillors are elected in wards and parochial views are predominant on council, resulting in support for particular measures being garnered on the basis of trade-offs. These trade-offs involve not only support but 'backing off' from criticism of other councillors' proposals. As K.G. Crawford states, "... a member may hesitate to call attention to the shortcomings in the proposals of a fellow member whose support he may subsequently require for one of his own proposals".⁵⁷

"This 'logrolling and back scratching' makes voting patterns even more unpredictable and further complicates the efforts of the head of council to develop a consensus for action".⁵⁸

Crawford also raises a related point. He argues that city councils may be overly sensitive to public opinion because of their largely nonpartisan nature and states that councils are notorious for their propensity to change their minds on particular issues and reverse their decisions.⁵⁹

It should be pointed out that the lack of direction on councils may also stem from a lack of an organized council

opposition. Crawford states that the lack of a consistent, coherent opposition on most Canadian councils means that there is no one person or group with the responsibility for finding the weaknesses in proposals made to council and thus protecting the public against 'ill-advised action'. Thus, "Frequently proposals of dubious value are adopted by councils, not because the members approve of them, but for want of anyone who will assume the thankless task of criticizing and opposing them".⁶⁰

Turning to the second decision-making related weakness cited in the Introduction, the lack of effective long-range planning and policy and priority setting by Canadian city councils, it has been stated that the largely leaderless (for the reasons discussed above) councils have generally stressed matters of administrative detail rather than the setting of priorities, despite the increased demands for coherent actions in various policy areas. It should be made clear, however, that lack of leadership and guidance on council is not the only factor in the general failure of city councils to develop priorities and provide adequate planning. Their inabilities in this area have been heightened by the short terms of office which some councils in Canada serve, the lack of technical resources necessary to undertake research and long-term planning which councils face in this country,

the grave financial limitations on municipal governments, and the high level of control which provincial governments exercise over municipalities which limit council initiatives in these areas.⁶¹ These latter two limitations will be examined more fully in Chapter Three of this paper.

Concerning the third decision-making related weakness cited in the Introduction, the lack of adequate coordination of the activities of Canadian city councils, it has been stated that the lack of leadership and cohesion on councils can and has resulted in fragmented, uncoordinated attempts by city governments in Canada to deal with the various areas of municipal responsibility. Factors behind this lack of cohesion have been cited above in the discussion concerning the inability of councils to provide civic leadership. In their analysis of this problem the Tindals state that "Because of the lack of cohesion on council, coordination of the activities of the municipality is difficult. This is particularly the case as the range of responsibilities increase and a large number of functionally specialized departments are established".⁵² They note that the standing committees which are established to supervise these departments in many cities tend to increase the fragmentation of municipal operations because of their propensity to become preoccupied with the particular departments for which they

are responsible.

Lack of clear-cut accountability for actions taken by councils, the fourth decision-making related weakness cited in the Introduction, involves the fact that the city electorate is largely unable to focus on which councillor or councillors are responsible for particular council initiatives because of the ever-changing coalitions, based largely on trade-offs, which support different by-laws in the largely leaderless councils of most Canadian cities. As has already been noted above, it is also not clear who is responsible for criticizing council actions. Thus, as the Tindals indicate, these matters are both the responsibility of every councillor and the responsibility of nobody. "It is almost impossible for citizens to know where to direct criticism or praise. Any particular councillor can claim that he was for (or against) the matter at issue but was outvoted by the other councillors. The chances for buck-passing in this system are endless".⁶³

Jack Masson's quantitative analysis of decision-making patterns on Edmonton council provides an illustration of this particular problem. He finds in his study that there appears to be no relationship between any council voting blocs and the three structural features he examined: membership of an electoral slate group (these bear little

resemblance to disciplined parliamentary parties), standing committee membership, and common ward membership. Masson therefore states: "With the less than 'responsible' party slate system which has operated in the past and a decentralized governmental structure (a problem we will examine further in Chapter III), the Edmonton council is fertile ground for continued bargaining and compromise".⁶⁴ Attempts to identify consistent voting patterns among councillors and to identify which councillor or councillors are responsible for particular pieces of legislation on such a council is obviously extremely difficult for the average Edmonton civic voter.

The second general area of concern noted in the Introduction to this paper involves the general inability of city governments in Canada to enhance participation in civic affairs and relates to two particular weaknesses. The first weakness involves the extremely low rate of participation in city elections. It was stated earlier that turnout rates in city elections are significantly lower than those at the federal and provincial levels. Whereas in federal and provincial elections between the years 1962 and 1973 turnout rates were 77.9 per cent and 74.9 per cent respectively, in elections in Canada's fourteen largest cities during this period the turnout rate was only an average of 39.3 per cent.

Low turnout rates at municipal elections are hardly unique to Canada and are experienced to a certain extent in most 'western democracies'. Nevertheless, the level of civic voter apathy in Canada as reflected in the difference between municipal versus federal and provincial turnout rates should be of great concern to civic officials and to the level of government ultimately responsible for municipalities -- the provinces.

The second weakness cited in the Introduction concerning participation involves the over-representation of certain societal and occupational groups on councils. As has been discussed earlier it appears that most Canadian city councils have been and continue to be dominated by persons who, because of occupation or background or both, can be identified primarily with 'middle-class', business and professional interests. It has also been suggested that this situation in turn makes it likely that such persons have been less inclined to consider or comprehend the interests of other groups. Concerning this point, a number of observers claim that in nonpartisan cities many candidates are recruited by community groups composed for the most part of high status individuals in occupations often directly influenced by policies of the municipal government. "In addition, self-recruited candidates,

motivated by a private sense of noblesse oblige, frequently run in nonpartisan elections. Those elected to office from these two main groups are, as one would expect, quite unrepresentative of the social and class configuration of the local population".⁶⁵

The findings from Long and Slemko's quantitative analysis of recruitment patterns in five Alberta cities help illustrate this particular problem. The two authors conclude from their study:

... the high degree of involvement of secondary groups in the recruitment process, such as community service and business associations, helps to define the structure of effective political opportunity, in the sense of who can compete for local office with a fair chance of electoral success, is heavily biased towards the clientele these groups serve. One effect of this which has been frequently pointed out in other studies is the systematic discrimination against those members of the community not meeting the eligibility requirements and by and large the exclusion of these individuals from city decision-making.⁶⁶

(Long and Slemko found in their study that forty-nine per cent of the councillors in the cities under analysis had incomes of \$20,000 plus while only slightly more than one per cent of the general population of these cities were in a comparable income bracket. They also found that over two-thirds of the councillors had experienced some post-secondary

or university education while only ten per cent of the general population had achieved that education level.

"Finally, over 80 per cent of the aldermen interviewed fell into the traditional middle-class white-collar occupations of the managerial, professional, and clerical nature".⁶⁷⁾

The two authors further state: "serious questions of linkage between governed and governors can be raised when the decision-makers are so different in background characteristics from most of the constituents they represent and the latter group has little chance of reaching the centre of power".⁶⁸ Long and Slemko also feel that questions should be addressed concerning the receptiveness of councillors to certain kinds of inputs as well as concerning the particular frame of reference they utilize to evaluate and solve problems, because of this situation.

Awareness of these various weaknesses of city government in Canada has, of course, not been the only reason for the increased interest in party involvement in urban politics, however. It is apparent that national/provincial party members who came to support their particular party's involvement in local politics in the 1960's also perceived some definite benefits to the party in question from such involvement.⁶⁹ They felt it would strengthen party organization for provincial and federal elections because local government campaigns would

result in the recruitment of new members, particularly the young and the reformers who were especially concerned by urban-related problems. Involvement in local politics, it was felt, would also provide a new outlet for political activity. The party workers would thus have something meaningful to do between federal and provincial elections and the party machinery could therefore be kept finely tuned.

It is essential to note here that, within the memberships of the national parties in particular, a negative reaction did emerge and continues to exist today, concerning direct party involvement in local politics. This, of course, is not surprising considering the strength and longevity of nonpartisan sentiment concerning municipal government. These detractors cited a number of perceived drawbacks to such involvement. They asserted, for example, that "... disenchantment with the local government party by the electorate could lead to the defeat of national party candidates of the same party, regardless of merit, because of political association and vice versa".⁷⁰ Opponents also argued that it would be potentially dangerous if the same party were in power at all three levels of government. The feeling was that such a situation could cause a financial and organizational strain on the resources of the party in question and, in the case

where a municipal election was taking place at roughly the same time as that of one of the other two levels, cause the civic contest to be ignored so that the party could concentrate on the other election. In addition, some opponents within the parties feared that if they held power provincially they would face rivalry for power from their own group at the local level. They cited the fact that this occurs occasionally between federal and provincial arms of parties. Finally, opponents argued that parties in opposition "....should concentrate on becoming the provincial government rather than getting involved in local politics because (1) the ability to effect meaningful change rests with the provincial legislature, (2) finances and organization are limited, and (3) municipal party involvement confuses the electorate and diffuses the party's efforts".⁷¹ These are, of course, all significant though familiar criticisms of the involvement of major parties in local politics, the validity of which shall certainly be discussed later in this paper.

Despite the generally increased interest in party involvement in Canadian local government and, to a certain extent, because of the reaction against partisan local government cited above, the impact of such involvement on election results, particularly in the case of national/provincial parties, has been limited. The major cases of national parties

involving themselves in urban government, the Liberals and the NDP in Toronto in 1969 and the NDP in Winnipeg in 1971, 1974, and 1977 are clear illustrations of the inability of major parties to capture substantial support from municipal electorates. J.D. Anderson, in fact, maintains that "Despite increasing political party involvement in the larger Canadian urban centres during the last decade, politics in most cities remains effectively nonpartisan, and even in those where parties are active, nonpartisanship is often a matter of degree".⁷² It is thus difficult to predict whether the modest inroads made by parties into the local government sphere will result in an eventual breakthrough for partisan forces in the cities, or whether the strong tradition of nonpartisanship in Canadian municipalities will prevail. Nevertheless, it is our belief that, despite the recent setbacks, the retreat by national parties (other than the NDP in Winnipeg) from local politics is only a temporary phenomenon. James Lightbody in fact, cites some crucial factors which should work to help bring about an increasing impetus toward full-scale involvement by national parties in city government in Canada. He points out that Canada is no longer a rural society, with over three-quarters of its population now living in urban areas. Rather, this country is an intensively urban, industrial society.

Lighbody states "The assumption by individuals of particular roles in this new urban community, and their subsequent assignment as classes to social positions begins the process of group self-awareness".⁷³ He feels that as groups emerge there will be a generation of political division along group lines which should mean the eventual extinction of non-party municipal politics. Lighbody also asserts that the electoral redistribution prior to the 1968 federal election, "... by according the majority urban population an appropriate share of the ridings, has emphatically alerted the politically aware to the impact of the metropolitan vote in the shaping of future federal and provincial governments".⁷⁴ Associated with this development has been the emergence of the NDP as a mass, urban-based, largely working class party which should gain strength by the fairer distribution of federal ridings. (Recent electoral developments may call this view into question, however.) In order to maintain the comparatively higher intensity of commitment of its followers and the party organizational machinery between federal and provincial elections, the NDP should logically soon become openly involved in municipal politics in a number of urban centres as it already has in Winnipeg. Lighbody maintains that the other parties will then have to mount a municipal challenge to the NDP if they are not to be outflanked in the urban areas. He also notes the

fact that such problems as environmental control, planning, transportation, and housing have grown geometrically with urban expansion. The provinces have therefore often been forced to deal with an increase in urban-related problems by rationalizing existing municipal authorities toward larger and more financially viable political entities through the establishment of regional and metropolitan government or through total amalgamation. The size and complexity of business of these new urban governments make party involvement in their affairs a viable, useful and likely proposition. These latter factors should also augur well for the future of strong local civic parties which, as indicated earlier, are already significant political entities in some Canadian cities.

This concludes the discussion on the nature of politics in Canadian city government. Attention will now be turned to an examination of the comparability of the British and Canadian political systems and the particular features of those systems which are of most interest to us in this paper — political parties and local government.

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CHAPTER II

The Political Systems and Party Systems in Britain and Canada

Introduction

The goal of this chapter and the next is to determine whether an analysis of party involvement in British local government and the relating of these findings to Canadian city government is in fact justified -- whether there is an adequate basis for comparison. The establishment of the comparability of most of the major features of the Canadian and British political systems and, in particular, the comparability of the roles and functions of political parties and of the structures and functions of local government, between the two states, is essential to the framework of analysis being utilized in this paper -- the 'Comparable Cases' approach. In this chapter the basic structural similarities and the one significant difference between Britain and Canada will be discussed briefly, followed by an extensive examination of the roles and functions of parties within the two states.

It should be clear from this introduction to the comparative component of this paper that the focus of the comparison is an institutional one. It would appear that such a focus is best suited to the issues being addressed in this thesis. This does not mean that the relevant aspects

of the political cultures of the two states are ignored, however. For example, it is highly significant that Canadians generally equate local government with nonpartisanship while Britons have generally accepted partisan appeals as a legitimate element of city government.* Therefore, these differing perspectives on the nature of local government and their ultimate significance for party politicization do come under examination in this paper. It is also worthy of note that Britain is very class-oriented in terms of its political culture while class is a much less significant political and social factor in Canada. Hence, the significance of this difference in the respective political cultures is examined in the paper as it relates to party support patterns. Of course, in terms of 'macro' political cultures, some very prominent political scientists** have identified a common Anglo-American political culture in Britain and Canada as well as in the U.S. and Australia.

*It will be illustrated in Chapter Four, however, that questions about the legitimacy of 'politics' and thus of parties in local government have also arisen over the years in some British circles.

**For example, Robert Alford in Party and Society. Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963, p. 4; and Gabriel Almond in "Comparative Political Systems", H. Eulau et. al. eds., Political Behaviour. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956, p. 36.

Part I: A Comparison of Structures.

To begin this discussion, we must first note an obvious structural difference of crucial importance between the two states -- the fact that Britain is a unitary state while Canada is a federation. Although these would appear to be fairly straightforward concepts, some particular characteristics of the unitary nature of the United Kingdom and of the federal nature of Canada which are of relevance to this discussion should perhaps be noted before the significance of this structural difference is examined.

It should be illustrated, for example, that the United Kingdom falls well short of the model of a purely unitary state. As James Kellas points out:

... the unitary character of the British state is restricted by the existence of various forms of devolution or decentralization which exist above the level of local government. The most extended of these was the government of Northern Ireland, which from 1920 to 1972 included a separately elected parliament at Stormont, an executive responsible to it, a local government structure and a system of courts.

Scotland represents a lesser form of decentralization within the British system. It has a separate constitutional identity, but at present does not possess a separate government or parliament. This latter situation may soon change, however. Kellas states that Scotland also retains "certain key institutions such as the Scottish legal system, the

Presbyterian Church of Scotland (the Established Church), the Scottish education system, and the 'royal burghs' (local authorities)".² Concerning the Scottish legal system, Kellas asserts that it has more independence than those of the regional governments of federal states.³ Within the governmental structure of Britain there also exists a 'Scottish Office' which is responsible for a wide range of administrative functions in Scotland and whose head, the Scottish Secretary, is a member of the British Cabinet. In addition, there are several Scottish committees of the House of Commons which deal with the various stages of Scottish bills.⁴ Wales also deserves some comment here. Although it has no separate legal system or local government system Wales does have a 'Welsh Office' responsible for various administrative bodies. However, its overall range of responsibilities is less than that of its Scottish counterpart. There also exists a 'Welsh Grand Committee' of Parliament which, because it cannot discuss Estimates or Bills, is of lesser importance than the Scottish committees.⁵ Despite these variations, the point which is clear from this brief discussion is that unitary Britain has some significant 'federation-like' characteristics.

The fact which is crucial to note about Canada and its federal nature is that, despite the intention of the drafters of the BNA Act to create a very centralized Canadian federation, Canada has evolved over the years into a federation

which is quite decentralized in nature. This is a point made with great clarity by Garth Stevenson. He states that "... the reality throughout most of the twentieth century - and at no time more than the present - has been a situation in which the central government exercises less power, and the provincial governments exercise more power, than in any other developed country".⁶ The impact of the decentralized nature of the Canadian federation upon politics and government in this country is, as all observers of the Canadian system are aware, highly significant.

Having put Britain's unitary nature and Canada's federal nature into clearer perspective, we turn now to an examination of the significance of the federal versus the nonfederal nature of these two states. Canada's status as a federation has undoubtedly facilitated the emergence of regionalism as a highly important political factor in this country and one which, as the discussion later in this chapter will illustrate, has had a profound influence on Canadian parties. Federalism has provided 'regions' with constitutional status and thus regional interests with significant political power. In Britain, on the other hand, although significant regional tensions do exist, they appear to be of less overall political importance than those of Canada. Class politics is paramount in Britain, a point we shall return to later.

Nevertheless, because of Britain's unitary nature, the areas where tensions do exist -- Scotland, Wales, and perhaps, northern England -- lack the provincial level of government upon which to build more influential regional political power bases.

The federal nature of Canada has also resulted in separate party structures being set up at the provincial level in addition to those of the national parties. Thus "... federal and provincial parties, even if they bear the same name, have separate organizations, elites, platforms, and sources of financial support".⁷ A related point is that Canada's federal system has allowed small parties on the national level to achieve government status at the provincial level in areas where they are relatively strong. There is, of course, no bifurcation of the parties in non-federal Britain. Richard Rose has the following comment on this fact. He states that "By international standards, British parties are less complex than parties in federal systems of government, for they do not have to face the problems that arise when partisans compete for office at several levels of government, adopting differing appeals, institutions and political alliances as their constituency varies."⁸

The fact that Canada is a federal state and Britain is not is also crucial to this particular discussion for another reason. It has resulted in a difference between the

two countries in the source of ultimate political control over municipal government. This is an extremely important point because the municipal sphere represents the central concern of this paper. In Canada, as in most federal systems, local government is the constitutional responsibility of the regional governments rather than of the national government. In unitary Britain, however, the national government has ultimate control over municipal affairs. The significance of this difference will be discussed in the next chapter. Nevertheless, it should be noted here that the jurisdiction of eleven* separate governments over local government in Canada makes the kind of uniform reforms of the municipal system which have occurred in Britain impossible in this country. No one authority, for example, could modify the municipal system in Canada in such a way as to make it more suitable for party development.

Britain and Canada also have some important structural features in common. Both states have a parliamentary form of government in which the executive (the cabinet and Prime Minister) emerges from the legislative body and in which governments are vulnerable to votes of no confidence. This

*Municipalities in the federal Yukon and North-West Territories are the responsibility of the federal government.

similarity reflects the British roots of Canada's political system. The role of parties in Canada has also been greatly shaped by their British parliamentary roots. There are thus some obvious similarities between the general electoral system-related roles and activities of British and Canadian parties, particularly when compared to those of American parties. Engelmann and Schwartz state, for example, that "The British-type parliamentary system ... permits parties to seek, ostensibly at least, an election 'mandate' for policies. In the selection of personnel, the role played by the British party system is simple, as the parties themselves take care of the business of nominating candidates."⁹

Another structural feature shared by both Canada and Britain is the single member constituency and a 'first-past-the-post' system of electing each member. It is generally argued that this electoral system has facilitated the dominance of federal politics in Canada by two parties -- the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives -- at the expense of other parties. It apparently has had a similar effect in Britain. Rose states that "The efforts of the Liberals to break into the Conservative-Labour duopoly of power demonstrates how difficult is the task under the present 'first-past-the-post' electoral system"¹⁰ in Britain. He illustrates his point by indicating that in 1974 when the Liberal party captured half

of the popular vote of each of the two major parties (19.3 per cent of the total national vote) it received less than one-twentieth of those parties' seats in Parliament.

Lopsided results of a comparable nature have, of course, also been experienced by Canada's 'third party', the New Democratic party.

To summarize the discussion in this section of the paper, Britain and Canada are basically similar in structure, except for one rather important exception -- the federal nature of Canada. It is a difference which is highly relevant to this paper and which, therefore, has been alluded to in the previous chapter and will be discussed further in various contexts throughout this essay.

Part II: A Comparison of the Roles and Functions of Political Parties

It is necessary at this point to turn our attention to the roles and functions performed by political parties in Britain* and Canada. Concerning the role of political parties in general, Engelmann and Schwartz state that "Today,

*This discussion will centre on the roles and functions of British parties at the national level as it is at this level that comparison between the British and Canadian party systems is possible. The role of British parties at the local level will be examined fully in Chapter Four, however.

most political philosophers and analysts agree that parties are vital connectors between the people and the organs of government, and that they are instrumental in providing the political system with leadership and decisions in the authoritative public domain."¹¹ Lees and Kimber describe the primary objective of parties as follows: "... the gaining of legislative representation in order to have some direct influence on political debate and an indirect influence on governmental decision-making."¹² The ultimate goal of parties in a parliamentary system is the control of government. Engelmann and Schwartz characterize the ruling party's role as one in which they are politically responsible for conducting executive business as well as for organizing the legislature.¹³

It is clear that in both Britain and Canada, as in competitive systems elsewhere, parties play a crucial role in providing opposition to the group in government as well as actually taking the reins of power. The party's role in opposition in a parliamentary system has been explained as follows: "Where there is an alternative two-party system, the main role of the second major party is to attempt to replace the government. In a multi-party system, the role of an opposition party is likely to be more modest: an attempt to displace at least part of the personnel of government"¹⁴ now or in the future. In the modified two party systems

of Canada and Britain (a concept which will be discussed further below) there are opposition parties of both types in operation.

Samuel Beer has the following view on the particular type of general role played by parties in Britain. He asserts that "While they have often been coalitions of interest groups, they have also usually been more than that, representing conceptions of the common good and showing distinctive views of authority and purpose in the way they think, approach power, and try to change society."¹⁵ Such distinctiveness of views would appear to be less evident in Canadian political parties in general and in the major parties in particular, however, as the discussion later in this chapter should make clear.

Party systems in both Britain and Canada also perform some key political functions well known to students of political science. Among these are such basic tasks as the provision of decision-makers and managers for the government; the recruitment and training of potential decision-makers; the simplifying of choices for voters by providing distinct alternatives at elections; the provision of accountability within the political system by providing an alternative to the group in government; the provision of a means of communicating information from the society to the government and of

transmitting decisions from the government to the society; the articulation of principles on behalf of broad sectors of the population; and the aggregation of demands of interest groups.¹⁶ These are all crucial tasks in the political systems of Britain and Canada, although they are also performed to a certain extent in both countries by other institutions such as the respective bureaucracies or interest groups. The question may arise as to whether parties in one state fulfil these functions better than those in the other. Unfortunately, however, to attempt to address that difficult question adequately is to go beyond the scope of this paper.

Turning to an examination of the nature of the parties and the party systems in Britain and Canada, most observers characterize the British party system as being basically a two-party system. The two dominant parties they cite are the Labour and Conservative parties. Jacobs and Zink certainly hold this view; they maintain that, except for a short period when Labour was originally on the rise, there has generally existed a two-party system in Britain for two and a half centuries.¹⁷ According to Leslie Lipson, a two-party system is one which fulfills the following conditions:

1. At any given election the chance of coming to power is shared by two parties, and no more than two.

2. One of these is able to take office by itself, without requiring third-party support.
3. With the lapse of time, two parties alternate in office.¹⁸

Lipson agrees with Jacobs and Zink that, based on these criteria, Britain has had for some time and continues to have a two-party system.*¹⁹ He hedges, however, on whether Canada can be characterized as having such a system, although from his comments it would appear that he feels that, for the most part, Canada has experienced a complex two-party system. The Canadian system can and has been characterized as a 'two party plus' system. In such a system only Lipson's first and third conditions are fulfilled fairly regularly, while fulfillment of the second condition has not been at all consistent in our system in recent years.

Returning to Britain, Jacobs and Zink argue that historical circumstances rather than design brought about the development of a two-party system and that it has been maintained by logic, by tradition, and because "Economic interests, as they have aligned themselves in a small and relatively homogeneous country, have adapted themselves to it."²⁰

*In the first election of 1974, of course, the second condition was not fulfilled.

Jacobs and Zink also share the widely-held view that the single-member, majority system utilized in British parliamentary elections mitigates against success by third parties, a perspective noted in the previous section. They state that "The voters have so long been accustomed to a biparty arrangement that they look upon an election as simply a contest between the 'government' and 'the opposition'."²¹ Lipson interprets the British party system as being "... the outcome of an ancient social order which has now attained a fundamental harmony; which therefore divides easily into two sides whose opposition is conducted within mutually agreed limits; which has evolved along with, and has helped to cause, the framework of institutions that suit its purpose."²² He sees this system as having provided an example for English-speaking inhabitants in the older Commonwealth countries, including Canada. The variations in Canada's party system vis-a-vis that of Britain he relates largely to Canada's social complexity.

Despite the variations, of most importance here is the fact that although Canada strays farther from the pure two-party model than Britain, the Canadian system nevertheless does represent a particular variant of the two-party system -- what has been characterized above as a 'two-party plus' system. As has already been discussed, similarly to Britain, the relative dominance of two parties in Canada at the

federal level probably owes a great deal to the single member, first-past-the-post electoral system.

A dominant characteristic of political parties in Britain is their cohesiveness -- the united front they almost always present in Parliament. Concerning the particularly high level of cohesion of party voting in the British Parliament, Alan Beattie asserts, "The assumption that, in a two-party situation, party voting in the Commons would be sufficient to prevent the defeat of a government between elections has been realistic for most of the period since 1931."²³ He, in fact, characterizes contemporary party government in Britain as being the type of government "... in which the majorities necessary to Parliamentary government became party majorities cohesive enough to ensure that governmental defeats would occur at elections rather than in Parliament."²⁴

This cohesion of parliamentary parties is a crucial element in the nature of British parties and thus requires closer examination. Beer maintains that the major parties in contemporary Britain "...both demand that the M.P. should be not a 'representative' but a 'delegate' (although, to be sure, a party delegate, not a local delegate), and that the Government's majority should stand stoutly with it, as should the Opposition's minority."²⁵ He also notes, in his historical analysis of British politics, the fact that

tight party cohesion has extended beyond Parliamentary votes to election campaigns. Beer indicates that at election time all candidates have accepted and supported the party manifesto, with Labour strictly imposing this obligation and with the Tories demanding it in a less explicit manner.²⁶

This high level of party cohesion has often been attributed to the effectiveness of 'party discipline' as a means of maintaining unity. Beer explains this concept of party discipline as follows: "Party discipline refers to a system of sanctions by which the parliamentary party induces recalcitrant members, or perhaps merely slack and apathetic ones, to act in concert with its authoritative decisions."²⁷ He cites as the most important of these sanctions the 'withdrawal of the whip', meaning the expulsion of the member in question from the parliamentary party. Such an action, of course, jeopardizes a member's very parliamentary career, not to mention curtailing his chances for promotion within the party. It appears, however, that party cohesion has generally been maintained without the use of such sanctions in the two major parties. In fact, in the case of the Labour party Beer has doubts about whether withdrawal of the whip has ever been particularly 'influential' when it has been used. He states: "...when these powers should have been useful, they were ineffective, and when they were

effective, they were not really necessary."²⁸

Michael Pinto-Duschinsky also argues, in a quite adamant fashion, that party discipline is a poor explanation for the high level of parliamentary party cohesion in British politics.²⁹ Concerning the Conservative party, he asserts that "Party unity has normally been maintained because the loyalty of the rank and file has been balanced by the leaders' willingness to compromise and to forestall criticism."³⁰ In Pinto-Duschinsky's view the main factor which has convinced the various party factions to compromise has been the realization of the great costs of disunity.

Whatever the source of the high level of cohesion in British parties, there can be no question that it represents a significant aspect of political activity in Britain and one which is not universally found in all western democratic states. However, one country which does share this tradition of highly cohesive parliamentary parties is, of course, Canada. Concerning the Canadian case, Engelmann and Schwartz state that "Despite the lack of a strong ideological orientation within the two major parties, they do take relatively consistent positions over time..."³¹ They further suggest that such strong caucus solidarity or cohesion has forced persons or groups at odds with particular party stances to leave the party in question and form a new one. It should be noted, however, that this high level of cohesion among

parliamentary parties in Canada is not limited only to the Liberals and Conservatives. It is, in fact, a general phenomenon.

Jackson and Atkinson, in their analysis of the Canadian legislative system, place heavy emphasis on the high level of cohesion within Canadian parties. They state "...the overriding fact of parliamentary life is the existence of persistent and powerful political parties, and members of Parliament are encouraged to regard party cohesion as more important than freedom of action in the House."³² The two authors attribute this cohesiveness of Canadian parties to the following factors: the very existence and particular role of caucus and the roles played by House leaders and party whips. Allan Kornberg, in his study on legislative behaviour in the Parliament of Canada, reports the following findings concerning high party cohesion from the responses of M.P.'s of the Twenty-fifth Parliament to his questions on the subject. He states that explicit in the replies of the members:

...are pride in party membership, highly favorable attitudes toward the party, concern for the achievement of party-relevant goals, and awareness of the functional efficacy of a cohesion norm. Taken together, the factors strongly imply that the majority of Canadian MPs act in concert with their parties because they want to. Their adherence to a cohesion norm is voluntary, and the influence that their party is able to exert upon them stems not from fear of sanctions or hope of reward, but from willing acceptance of that influence.³³

The relative unimportance of coercion in maintaining cohesion among parliamentary parties in Canada which Kornberg notes here is comparable to the views on the British situation which were described above. Undoubtedly, the 'bottom line' on the very high level of party cohesion in Parliament, in Canada as in Britain, is that such cohesion is essential to the successful functioning of a cabinet-parliamentary system of government.

The existence of this high level of party cohesion in both Britain and Canada is a significant similarity between the two political systems and represents a situation which is in sharp contrast to that of the American Congress where Congressmen and Senators often vote differently from their party's stated position. Maurice Duverger, in fact, asserts that the main difference between an actual two-party system and a psuedo one "...involves the degree of party discipline."³⁴

It can reasonably be argued that in both major parties in Britain (as well as in the Liberal party) the leadership plays the dominant role in the setting of party policy. This is another crucial characteristic of British parties which deserves further analysis here, particularly because of some degree of differentiation between the two parties in this area which will be illustrated below.

R.T. McKenzie views the nature of Britain's major

2

parties as mass parties* as being crucial to the predominance of the leadership in policy matters. He states that "initiative in the formulation of policy cannot possibly come primarily from the several millions of party supporters or from the electorate as a whole. The active party workers must devote themselves primarily to sustaining the teams of candidates for leadership between whom the electorate may choose..."³⁵ Engelmann and Schwartz assert that the power of the extraparliamentary party of a mass party is curtailed because, for one thing, "...a party in Parliament is frequently called on to respond to events almost immediately, without time for consultation with its membership outside Parliament, and the need for rapid decision making is particularly pressing in the case of parties which form the government."³⁶ Another factor noted is that the actual assumption of leadership roles often creates an unwillingness to relinquish those roles.

*It should perhaps be noted here that not all observers perceive both major parties in Britain to be 'mass parties'. Engelmann and Schwartz do not classify the British Conservatives as a mass party (1967, p. 7). Rather, they place it in a group of parties they describe as the broad-based, success-oriented cadre type. They also include the two major Canadian parties in this group (p. 12). The two authors classify the British Labour party among those "Mass parties that have a broad base and an orientation to electoral success..."; parties which "have 'de-ideologized', i.e., abandoned a significant orientation to principle, during recent decades." (p. 13). Given the fact that the Conservative party had a membership of 1.5 million in 1969 (Beer, 1974: 203), we would have to agree with observers who classify the British Tory party as a mass party, however.

Concerning the degree of differentiation in this area between Britain's two major parties, Lees and Kimber maintain that both the Tory and the Labour parties are programmatic parties with the support of a mass membership. They also state, however, that "The Conservatives, unlike Labour, have generally not subscribed to the view that the mass membership or even party activists should make party policy, though it should not be inferred from this that they have never tried to make or influence policy, or have never succeeded."³⁷ The two authors point out that Labour, on the other hand, largely because of its origins as an extra-parliamentary movement, has formally perceived its elected members to be servants of the movement as a whole. Not surprisingly conflicts within the party between leadership and rank and file have arisen over this situation. In practice, however, it would seem that the leadership has played the most crucial role in policy setting since Labour has become electorally successful. This is certainly the view of Jacobs and Zink. They assert that the parliamentary party in Britain is free to decide on its particular course of action at all times, independently of the instructions or wishes of the general party organization or the constituency branches. They further maintain that these policy decisions are largely made by the parliamentary leadership -- the Prime Minister and cabinet or the opposition leader and shadow cabinet. Thus "...

meetings of the parliamentary party may be designed not so much for deliberations as to give the leaders a chance to instruct and spur their followers."³⁸ Jacobs and Zink acknowledge that the theoretical position of the parliamentary party vis-a-vis the general party organization in the Labour party differs from this description, but maintain that, in practice, the above pattern does largely hold true.

Looking at this intraparty relationship within the Labour party in greater detail, Engelmann and Schwartz argue that the coming to power of Labour after World War II significantly modified the relationship between the parliamentary party and the extraparliamentary party organization, with the parliamentary party gaining a good deal of power. The two authors acknowledge that the long time out of office that followed again increased the control of Labour's extraparliamentary organization but state: "... the experience of government was itself critical, and served to permanently decrease the influence of the extra-parliamentary body."³⁹ As noted in a footnote above (p. 91), Engelmann and Schwartz differentiate between cadre parties and mass parties with Labour being placed in the latter category. However, they cite the British Labour party as an example of a mass party which has been forced to emulate a cadre party when in office in the area of policy-making in that decisions have been made by the leadership. They state, "As long as policy-making

remains a partially professionalized function...the cadre party's mode of decision making will prevail as parties, no matter how organized, improve their relative standing within the polity."⁴⁰

Samuel Beer has a slightly different perspective on the 'power structure' within the Labour party. He agrees that "...the Labour Leader has come to occupy a position of authority in relation to his lieutenants and backbenchers greatly resembling the present-day Tory model."⁴¹ He notes, however, that when in Opposition Labour backbenchers have some power to determine party stance in Parliament, something not shared by their Tory counterparts. Beer also points out that, unlike the Tory party, the Labour leadership is confronted by extremely powerful concentrations of political and economic power (i.e., trade unions) in its extraparliamentary party.⁴²

Concerning the Conservative party, it would seem clear that, in general, Tory backbenchers have not exercised significant control over major policy areas whether the Conservatives have been in government or in opposition.⁴³ This has undoubtedly also been the case for the extraparliamentary party organization which has always played a much less 'overt' role than its Labour counterpart. Thus, in general, party policy stances appear to emanate consistently from the party leadership in the British Conservative party.

In looking at the power structure of Canadian parties in relation to those in Britain, it must first be noted that the major parties in this country are not mass parties. The Canadian Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties do not have highly organized mass memberships. Nevertheless, (and not surprisingly) the relatively small extraparlimentary party organizations, like their British counterparts, play a definite subordinate role to the party leadership. Thus Engelmann and Schwartz state: "In Canada...the policy-making role of the extra-governmental party structure is, generally speaking, slight."⁴⁴ Van Loon and Whittington provide some insight into this secondary role of the extra-parliamentary party in Canada. They indicate that the lines of communication between party head offices and national and provincial executives, and the parliamentary party groups are often relatively weak. They also suggest that the prevailing view in caucus is that it is their responsibility as the elected representatives to determine party policy while it is the executive's role to maintain the party's electoral machinery. "Since members of legislatures are the most visible part of the party between elections, what they say or do is what the press reports and what the public picks up about the party. Thus, since the party organization is not important between elections, the extraparlimentary executives are relegated to second place in policy making."⁴⁵ According to

McMenemy, et al., within caucus the parliamentary leadership holds the predominant position, a situation which of course parallels that in Britain. This dominance within caucus is consistent with the highly cohesive nature of parties operating in parliamentary systems. The explanation of McMenemy and his co-authors for the overall predominance of the parliamentary party leadership is that "The constitutions of the parties and especially their actual organization place an extraordinary concentration of power in the hands of the parliamentary leaders."⁴⁶ They maintain that "The de facto organization of the parties is autocratic and leaders feel under little pressure to make concessions to extremist policies advocated by their followers or even to follow policies adopted by party conventions."⁴⁷

Despite the overall similarity of Canadian parties in this area, the NDP, like its social democratic counterpart, the British Labour party, does have some unique characteristics, which deserve brief mention. The NDP is, to a certain extent, a party of principle, a program-oriented party which originated as a popular movement outside of parliament. Not surprisingly, its extra-parliamentary organization has therefore had a larger role in party affairs than the extra-parliamentary parties of the more 'pragmatic' parties of parliamentary origin, the Liberals and Tories. McMenemy, et al. state "In particular, the NDP's origin as a movement

party and its philosophical roots among the mass parties of the left may account for its more earnest treatment of the concept of party membership and of the concept of party convention."⁴⁸

The larger role for the overall membership is reflected in the fact that a functioning policy committee outside the parliamentary party and chosen by an elected party executive does exist.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, as McMenemy and his co-authors also point out, "... in practice the extra-parliamentary party rarely threatens the supremacy of either the parliamentary leadership on its own or the parliamentary leadership in conjunction with the national office."⁵⁰

The discussion above has dealt with the source of policy or direction within parties. The nature of party policy also deserves examination. British parties have been described above as being programmatic when it comes to policy. Concerning this characterization, Lees and Kimber assert that "Cultural traditions and constitutional realities in Britain make political parties aware of the need to be programmatic in nature if they are to attract support, though programmes may be simple and dominated by a single issue, or complex, and even confused."⁵¹ The two authors suggest that formal activity of this type may be less necessary for parties in other political systems, however, and cite the United States as a possible example. Canada would undoubtedly provide

another example of a country where parties are much less programmatic. It should be noted, however, as Lees and Kimber do, that a great deal of the motivation for policy innovations within the British Conservative and Labour parties stems from the desire to maintain control of government or to regain it. Thus the two parties can be influenced significantly by interest group pressures. Certainly electoral success would appear to be the key motivation for policy innovations and initiatives by Canada's major parties.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the British and Canadian political parties over the years has been in the nature of the respective relationships of parties in each country to class-based issues and groups in society. It is thus one which deserves detailed discussion here. In Canada, as will be discussed further later in this section, the class cleavage has been of minor political importance at the federal level and thus the major parties cannot be seen as representatives of particular classes in society. It is, in fact, a rôle which they have avoided. However, according to most observers of British politics, the division between 'working' and 'middle class' "...still contributes to the clearest cleavage in British political attitudes and in British voting behaviour."⁵² Robert Alford's extensive study of political cleavages in the 'Anglo-American democracies'

confirms the views of other observers that in fact, traditionally, very little but class matters in British politics.⁵³ The two major parties in Britain have each traditionally been oriented to one of the major class groupings -- Labour to the working class and the Conservative party to the middle class. As Alford asserts, "In Britain, the regional cultures of Scotland and Wales and religious differentiation modify but do not erase the fundamental class basis of the Conservative and Labour parties."⁵⁴

Many observers believe that the explanation for the class basis of party politics in Britain may be found in the particular British social structure. Concerning this social structure, Richard Rose asserts that its single most significant feature "...is the absence of sizeable groups divided along religious, linguistic or national identity grounds."⁵⁵ He contrasts this "relatively simple social structure" with that of Canada which he maintains is divided into a large number of groups "...by cross-cutting differences about religion, language and region, as well as class."⁵⁶ According to Jean Blondel, "Britain is probably the most homogeneous of all industrial countries."^{57*} The

*A detailed account of what Blondel considers the major reasons for this homogeneity may be found in J. Blondel, Voters, Parties and Leaders. Harmondsworth, England: 1974, pp. 20-25.

result of this fact, he maintains, is that social and economic conditions (i.e., class), rather than geography, account for the major 'distinctions' in Britain.

Looking more closely at the relationship between class and party, Richard Rose states, "Every nationwide survey in Britain confirms a relationship between occupational class and party preference."⁵⁸ He indicates three essential qualifications to this observed relationship, however. First about one-tenth of the British electorate has either a preference for the relatively non-class-aligned Liberal party* or no preference at all. Secondly, the middle class is more solidly Conservative in terms of party preference than the working class is Labour. The third qualification follows from the first two: "The relationship between class and party is partial rather than complete."⁵⁹ In his analysis of postwar Gallup Poll results Rose notes that "...social class, which correlates with party preference at all levels, leaves unexplained the voting behaviour of more than one-third of the British electorate which does not vote in agreement with its objective class."⁶⁰

*It is interesting to note that in the two most recent British elections Liberal party support has been even higher than this. In 1974 the Liberals gained 18.7% of the popular vote and in 1979 they picked up 14.1% of the vote. (Source: "Two nations - north and south", The Economist. 12-18 May 1979).

The most significant aberration in the basic pattern of class voting in Britain involves the rather large degree of support the Conservative party gains from the working class. On average the Conservatives get about one-third to two-fifths of the manual workers' votes in elections.⁶¹ Beer writes that "As the Gallup data show, Conservatives have continued to win the support of a third of the manual workers. This comes to about one-half of the total Conservative vote."⁶³ Labour, on the other hand, gets only about one-fifth of the votes of those persons not in manual occupations, on average.⁶³ It is, to say the least, paradoxical that in a class-based society like Britain a party such as the Conservative party can gain such significant support from the working class. According to Blondel "It is because of this paradox that the Conservative party can rightly claim to be more representative of the whole society than the Labour party."⁶⁴ Blondel indicates that no one cause explains the significant amount of support the Tories gain from the working class. He suggests that a few factors may be involved. He notes that some association has been found between women and middle-aged voters and being right-wing ideologically.⁶⁵ Studies also indicate that geography does influence party support to a small extent, although the reasons are unclear.⁶⁶ It also seems that to a certain extent in Britain "People tend to conform to the predominant influence of the area in which they live."⁶⁷

In addition, they seem to be influenced to a certain extent by the nature of the place in which they work. For example, unionized workers and those in large factories are more likely to vote Labour than other members of the working class.⁶⁸

It is, in fact, this latter factor, union membership which appears to be most crucial to party support. Union members vote Labour in a proportion of three or four to one.⁶⁹

Richard Rose notes similar findings to those of Blondel.⁷⁰ Whatever the factors behind the limitations of the relationship between class membership and party support, however, the crucial fact is that class voting is far from being the complete explanation for the style of politics and the particular role of parties in Britain.*

It is important to note at this point that many observers of British politics believe that class may also be becoming a less significant political factor in general in Britain. Samuel Beer characterizes the postwar period in Britain as the period of "Collectivism". He views it as a period where producer and consumer groups exercised significant

*For detailed analyses of support for the Conservative party among the working class the reader should consult Eric A. Wordlinger, The Working-Class Tories. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967 and R. McKenzie and A. Silver, Angels in Marble. London: Heinemann, 1968.

influence on government policy via a complex system of bargaining and bidding. He further asserts that "At the same time, the ideological gap between the parties narrowed as Labour's retreat and the Conservatives' advance left the two parties occupying the common ground of the Welfare State and the Managed Economy. Along with this decline in ideology, class antagonism, as compared with the interwar period, also greatly subsided."⁷¹ Beer states in another piece that "The questions dividing the parties became marginal, statistical, quantitative -- questions of 'more' and 'less' rather than great social theories in conflict. Correspondingly, general elections consisted not of pitched battles between opposing social philosophies, but of small raids on interest groups."⁷² Alan Beattie makes a similar point concerning the lessening of class-oriented ideological differentiation between the major parties. He asserts that, since 1931, clearly defined differences of principle in British politics cannot be easily correlated with divisions along party lines, but have, rather, "...often appeared in the form of a division between a 'radical' or 'left-wing' attachment to sweeping 'ideologies' and the rest of the politicians."⁷³

Beer cites as signs of a strong weakening of class as a force which determines political attitudes the results of a study which showed: that the belief, among middle-class

Tories and working-class Labour supporters, that politics represented a class conflict increased for each successive age group of the interwar years and the period of World War II and significantly declined among those voters who entered the electorate after 1951; that perceptions of difference between parties among voters declined in the postwar period; that the number of voters who reported that they didn't know who they would vote for in a national election rose gradually in the initial postwar period, then increased very sharply during the late sixties; and, finally, that turnout at national elections declined steadily (from eighty-four percent in 1950 to seventy-two percent in 1970).⁷⁴ Concerning this last indicator of the possible decline of class as a political force, Beer asserts, "The bearing of turnout on the role of class appears especially when it is noted that turnout fell markedly in solid working-class areas, particularly mining areas, while it rose slightly in almost all other types of constituency."⁷⁵

Richard Rose utilizes an analysis of election results as the basis for his views on the changing relationship between class and voting in Britain. He concludes from an analysis of the four British elections from 1959 to 1970 that the "...influence of class upon individual party loyalties is declining."⁷⁶ He indicates that a further weakening of class-determined voting is evident in the February, 1974 election results.

From the discussion above it is clear that class is the most significant factor in voting behaviour and patterns of party support in Britain. However, it should also be clear that class is not the only factor and that it may, in fact, be of declining importance. It is now time to turn our attention to the bases for party support in Canada.

Thomas Hockin states that "Although studies have indicated that there is significant class voting in some Federal constituencies and definitely in provincial elections, the dominant impression in the voting behaviour literature is that, on the whole, regionalism has greater impact on voting behaviour than class."⁷⁷ Robert Alford (1963) states that "In Canada, regional and religious cleavages supersede class almost entirely as factors differentiating the support for national parties."⁷⁸ The findings of Clarke et. al. from the 1974 National Election Study provide more recent proof of the weak relationship between social class and voting patterns in federal politics and the continuing strong relationship between voting and region, ethnicity, and religion.⁷⁹

It appears that, historically, class has not been a vital influence on major parties in

Canada.* Engelmann and Schwartz assert that neither of the major parties have attempted to represent the interests of the working-class to the relative exclusion of other classes nor of any other class vis-a-vis the working class. They maintain that working-class parties closely connected to labour have been viewed with disapproval by the majority of Canadians.⁸⁰ The two authors argue that thus even in the CCF/NDP which is "...the closest approach to a national class party, and one which has had the relatively greatest success of all Canadian labour parties, its own spokesmen have come to avoid strong emphasis on its class nature."⁸¹

According to Engelmann and Schwartz the weakness of Canadian working-class parties is probably related to such general North American features as a lack of feudal traditions, a faith in limitless opportunities being open to anyone willing to work for them, and the general availability of

*The emphasis here is on the major parties in federal politics in Canada. The NDP does represent an exception of sorts to this generalization concerning the relative unimportance of class in national party politics. As Van Loon and Whittington indicate, "The profile of NDP supporters suggests that while Canadian politics in general is not class based, support for the NDP is. Thus we have the phenomenon of a class-based party in what is not a class-voting system." (Source: R.J. Van Loon and M.S. Whittington, The Canadian Political System. Toronto: 1976, p. 266)

land in the west when the continent was still being settled. The argument behind this last point is that the western land "...provided an outlet for what otherwise might have been a dissatisfied proletariat and also contributed to the loss of social distinctions in the face of an equalizing need for hard work."⁸² One must also, of course, note the dominance of 'liberal' ideals in English-speaking North America since the British first settled this continent which have worked against the widespread success of socialist doctrines. The effect of the dominant liberal ideology on the political patterns of the United States and Canada has been discussed by numerous writers over the years.*

Engelmann and Schwartz also note two Canada-specific factors related to the weakness of class-based parties in this country. The first factor concerns the particular nature of the Canadian trade union movement (i.e., the fact it must maneuver in a state with an economy which is vulnerable to trade and seasonal fluctuations; that it must deal with a

*The most prominent examples are Hartz, Louis, The Liberal Tradition in America. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1955 and The Founding of New Societies. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1964; McRae, K.D., "The Structure of Canadian History" in Hartz, The Founding of New Societies; and Horowitz, Gad, "Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science. Volume 32, 1966.

largely immigrant, fairly recently urbanized working-class difficult to unionize; the questionable autonomy of many 'international' unions; and the limited jurisdiction of the federal government over labour issues which results in the continuation of regional variation in working conditions).⁸³

Engelmann and Schwartz conclude that, "If, in most countries, workers' parties derive their strength from a tie-in with organized labour, we can now see some of the reasons for the weakness of such parties in Canada."⁸⁴ The second factor cited by the two authors relates to voting opinion and behaviour. They point out Alford's findings that, when included in a group with the United States, Britain, and Australia, Canada's class-based voting was the lowest* and that national class interests took a 'back seat' to those of a regional-ethnic or a regional-economic nature.⁸⁵

Thomas Hockin cites two additional common explanations for the resistance to class voting in Canada. First, the fact that provincial boundaries reflect different priorities

*It should be noted that John F. Myles (The Class Vote in Canada and the U.S. Carleton University: Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Departmental Working Paper 77-5, November 1977, p. 58) has reanalyzed Alford's data and comparable data in the period since Alford's study utilizing a new classification of Canadian parties and has found the class vote in Canada and the U.S. to be 'virtually identical'.

and different kinds of economic activity to a certain extent (the fact that provincial governments enjoy high visibility in their conflicts with the federal government, and that some metropolitan centres are more geared to provincial than national economic growth, which fosters regional identities). Secondly, that certain 'functional' social groups in Quebec exhibit a basic disinterest in cross-regional alliances because of their considerable concern with their particular culture.⁸⁶

Whatever the reasons for the relative insignificance of class voting in Canada, it is clear to most observers that, as indicated above, some other issues are very crucial in political terms in this country. Engelmann and Schwartz maintain:

...a population heterogeneous by reason of ethnic and religious origin and period of settlement, spread out in a country in which each region differs greatly in its resources and other potential, has meant that regional-economic and social diversity has been continuously reinforced.... Canadian political parties ... can be understood only against this background.⁸⁷

John McLeod states that Canadian politics is dominated by a number of cleavages, including those of a regional nature, a linguistic/cultural cleavage, the cleavage between rural and urban segments of society, as well as that between rich and poor (class). He asserts that political parties in this country have been forced to pay heed to this situation.

Faced with these difficulties, our major parties must inevitably be flexible and broadly inclusive if they are to be national. All in all, they must attempt to harmonize and conciliate the various conflicting interests of the society, and to do so they must emphasize the modest but essential virtues of moderation and compromise. In a nation lacking unity or cohesion, the national political party becomes the shock-absorber of domestic conflicts.⁸⁸

This role played by the major Canadian parties at the federal level has been characterized as that of a 'broker'. According to brokerage theory, "...a party attempts to balance and reconcile divergent interests by such strategies as regional compromises in policy outputs and by granting regional representation in the cabinet."⁸⁹

The crucial feature of the major Canadian parties as bodies attempting to bring diverse elements together McLeod compares with the role played by the two major American parties and contrasts to the role of British parties. It is this latter comparison which of course interests us here. McLeod maintains that whereas the major Canadian parties attempt to unite the nation, the British parties strive to divide it. He states that while "... the British party system serves to bisect that relatively compact and homogeneous island population into alternative ideological groups, our leaders appear to doubt whether Canada's people, already so sharply fragmented, could withstand yet another division into poles of the political right and left."⁹⁰

Thus McLeod asserts that the chief function of Canadian political parties has been to prevent new cleavages and to create a majority by bringing diverse elements together using whatever means are necessary.⁹¹

It is not surprising that, with goals such as those cited above, the two major parties have down-played appeals based on ideology. Engelmann and Schwartz in fact assert that "Throughout the past century, there has not been a definite ideological difference between Conservatives and Liberals, no matter how significant the temporary differences in style have been."⁹² Thus, both parties have continually competed with each other for the support of all major segments of society. The two authors characterize Canada's two major parties as parties with electoral success orientation and state that the effect of this "...has been to cast Canadian party politics in a pragmatic mould."⁹³

The discussion to this point concerning the nature of Canadian parties has been about parties at the federal level. It should be pointed out, however, that major parties at the provincial level differ somewhat from the above description. Of particular interest here is the fact that in many of the provinces the actual parties which seriously compete for control of the government differ from those at the national level. In five of the ten provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba,

Saskatchewan, and British Columbia) in recent years a social democratic party has emerged as a serious contender for office or as the actual government. As social democratic parties they have naturally taken a more ideological, class-oriented stance than the highly pragmatic federal Liberals and Conservatives. As a reaction to this competition from the 'left' the pragmatic parties they compete against have often been forced to also become more ideological in representing themselves to the electorate (Campaign rhetoric and literature from the Manitoba Tories and B.C. Socreds in recent years would provide many examples of this.). This development at the provincial level has been noted by Jane Jenson who, on the basis of her statistical analysis, states that "Some provinces have moved toward a pattern of party politics and electoral mobilization that is reminiscent of politics in the industrial societies of Western Europe."⁹⁴ She contends that, in fact, most Canadian provinces are being so transformed, to differing extents, and that these changes are associated with an industrialized society. The development of these new competitive structures and electoral mobilization patterns in provincial party systems may, of course, also be a reflection of the fact that equilibrium maintenance is less crucial at the provincial level where there are fewer divergent interests to be balanced than is the case at the federal level.

It should also be noted, however, as Jenson does, that some provincial party systems "...remain mired in the traditionalism of post-Confederation political cleavages."⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the fact remains that in many provinces parties are taking on competitive roles and positions somewhat similar to those of the major parties in Britain.

It must also be remembered that the level of government which is of primary concern to us in this paper is municipal government. In recent years issues which have become contentious in Canada's larger cities have often tended to polarize councils. Thus, pro-development versus anti-development 'interests' have arisen occasionally on our city councils. In some of these cities this polarization can be further characterized as 'right' versus 'left'.* This would seem to indicate that the type of ideological cleavage which exists in Britain and in some Canadian provinces, and has been exploited by their political parties, is already an element of Canadian urban politics, although few political parties in few cities have as yet exploited it successfully.

To briefly summarize the discussion in the above

*The pro-development, right-wing ICEC versus the anti-development, left-wing NDP in Winnipeg is one obvious example of such a polarized city council.

section, a number of generalizations appear to arise logically from our analysis. First, concerning the role and functions performed by parties in the two political systems under discussion, it would seem clear that they are much the same in each. Secondly, concerning the nature of the party systems in general, it would appear that the systems in both states can be characterized as particular variants of the two-party system. Thirdly, turning to the nature of the parties themselves in Britain and Canada, it would seem clear that parties in both states may be characterized as having extremely strong parliamentary cohesion and dominant leaderships. On this latter point a qualifier must be added, however. The fact that British parties are of a mass nature can give their extra-parliamentary parties (particularly that of the Labour party) greater sway vis-a-vis the leadership than is the case with the tiny 'cadre' extra-parliamentary party organizations of the two main Canadian parties.

The most significant difference in the nature of the parties in the two states which is illustrated in the above discussion is, of course, the fact that national parties in Britain are 'semi-ideological', programmatic, class-based parties while major national Canadian parties are basically nonideological and pragmatic and cannot be seen as representatives of particular classes in society. What the above discussion

has also pointed out, however, is that class and ideology is far from a universal factor in voting behaviour and patterns of party support in Britain and may be a declining one. It has also been indicated that class and ideology do appear to be significant factors in some Canadian provinces and that ideological differences also appear to exist in urban politics in this country, the area of greatest concern in this paper. Thus the importance of this particular difference between the nature of parties in the two political systems should not be overestimated.

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CHAPTER III

The Local Government Systems in Britain and Canada

Having examined and compared the British and Canadian political systems in general and the political parties operating within these two systems and having illustrated the broad similarity of most of the characteristics of the political and party systems, it is time to turn our attention to the particular sphere of government under analysis in this paper -- local government. The intention in this chapter is to examine and determine the similarity of the structures of local government in the two states being analyzed here and the functions municipal authorities perform in each. First, however, the general role of local government should perhaps be briefly outlined.

According to Humes and Martin, local governments serve at least one and perhaps two basic purposes: "First of all, the local governments serve as geographic subdivisions of the sovereign or quasi-sovereign entities carrying out some portion of the public activities; and secondly, the units of local representative government give an opportunity for the local residents to determine and achieve desired objectives."¹ Both these purposes would appear to be fulfilled to a certain extent by local governments in Britain and Canada.

Turning to the particular local government organizational 'arrangement' in Britain, the basic structure should perhaps be examined first. Given the fact that only one government, the central government, is responsible for local government in Britain, the basic structure of local authorities is fairly uniform, although there is some variation between England and Scotland.* The structure in England and Wales, as of the 1972 statutory reorganization, appears as follows: in the conurbations there are metropolitan counties, metropolitan districts or boroughs, and in some places parishes or towns, while in the mixed urban and rural areas there are counties, districts or boroughs, and parishes or towns. It should be noted that the structure in London differs slightly from this. It provides for a Greater London Council and thirty-two London Boroughs.² (See Appendix I for a diagram of the various subsystems.)

*Scottish local government evolved separately from that of England and has been dealt with separately by the central government. Shortly after English and Welsh local government was reorganized, the Local Government (Scotland) Act of 1973 was passed, coming into effect in April 1975. A two-tier system similar to the three-tier structure in England and Wales was created. According to Martin Minogue (Local Government in Britain, Cambridge, 1977, p. 344), "The distribution of functions is similar to the distribution between non-metropolitan counties and districts in England and Wales, but the 'islands' authorities (Orkney, Shetland, and the Western Isles) have been described as 'most-purpose' authorities."

It is obvious from the description above that most of England and Wales has a nominally three-tier structure. According to Peter Richards "This apparently cumbersome arrangement provides for a fuller range of representation of local interests and opinion than would be possible with a simpler form of organisation."³ He further maintains that it allows functions to be distributed between classes of local authority on the basis of a particular service's requirements.

Concerning the decision-making structure of the local councils themselves, the council-committee form is a universal feature of British local government. Richard Buxton, in fact, maintains that the committee represents the characteristic institution of British local authorities.⁴ The role of the committee is crucial within the British system. Council meetings do not provide sufficient time to allow council to exercise close control over the various activities of administrative departments, nor is the full council structured to provide close administrative supervision. "Detailed consideration of the work of the authority is thus allocated by the council to committees comprising members of the council working in close collaboration with the permanent officers of the authority."⁵ Committees may administer a single service (e.g., education), or they may administer a specialized function affecting a number of services (e.g., finance).

It should be noted that the 1972 reorganization act increased the powers which councils may delegate to their committees. They may, in fact, now delegate all powers other than the power to levy a rate or raise a loan to committees or subcommittees.⁶ According to P.W. Jackson, councils have "...tended to confer a limited executive power which permits a committee to make decisions on routine matters which are then formally approved by the council, whilst only matters of principle or those involving exceptional expenditure require council attention exclusively."⁷ The case is somewhat different for statutory committees, however. These committees, which are established by local authorities to administer services required by central government statute, may have full executive power delegated to them by council. An example of such a committee is a police committee.

Concerning the control of these rather powerful committees by councils, any reports or minutes of committees on matters where power has not been delegated to them must be approved by council at regular council meetings. Such matters may be rejected or referred back to the committee for more consideration. Peter Richards further asserts, "The council must always prevail in any fundamental clash with a committee because it holds the ultimate sanction of being able to replace recalcitrant committee members with others."

who will heed the views of the full council."⁸ Such a means of control is, of course, highly significant. It is analogous to the ultimate control of the Canadian parliament (i.e. the government) over its standing committees.

Some final relevant points about the British council-committee system should be noted here. Councils may have any number of committees they wish. The lower tier authorities tend to have fewer than the top tier authorities, however.⁹

In addition, of particular note is the fact that it appears now to be a common practice in British local governments to establish a central committee "...to deal with major issues concerning the allocation of funds and to exercise a coordinating role of the work of the authority as a whole."¹⁰ These central committees represent a response to the dearth of coordination which has been noted in the actions of most local authorities in Britain in recent years as civic responsibilities have multiplied and intensified. These committees are generally headed by the leader of the governing party. A similar problem has, of course, arisen over the years in Canadian municipalities, which represents one of the main concerns of this paper.

At this point attention should be focussed on the actual functions and responsibilities of British local government and their distribution, an area which is of no small importance to the general discussion in this paper.

Peter Richards divides services provided by British local authorities into four groups which he calls protective, communal, personal, and trading.¹¹ The first group involves universal services which include services aimed at providing such things as fire protection, police protection, and refuse and sewage removal to protect against epidemics. Communal services are also provided for the public as a whole and include such things as street repair, environmental protection, planning, and parks and playgrounds. Personal services are aimed at individuals requiring them and include such things as welfare and education. These services represent the most expensive of local government functions. The final group, trading services, includes such things as public transit and housing.¹²

The general division of responsibilities between the levels of local authorities, based on the 1972 Act, appears as follows:

Strategic services which needed to be provided and administered over large areas were allocated to the new county councils, as were the police and fire services. Services which are essentially local, such as housing or refuse collection, were to be run by the district councils. In the conurbations, education, personal social services and libraries were allocated to the metropolitan district councils, which are generally responsible for population of 250,000 or more, but elsewhere were allocated to country councils.¹³

Richards characterizes the division of local responsibilities as follows: the top-tier authorities provide the most

expensive services -- those of a specialized nature or requiring highly skilled staff, and those demanding uniformity or greater central government control (e.g. police); second-tier authorities deal with services where responsiveness to local needs or local knowledge is considered most crucial. Analyzing the division of particular responsibilities in more detail, Richards points out that counties and districts share such responsibilities as highways and planning and recreational facilities. Districts are responsible for functions such as public health services, environmental protection, housing and licensing.* The powers of the lowest level local authorities (parishes and towns) are optional and of minor importance. They include such things as the provision and maintenance of streetlighting, footpaths, bus shelters, cemeteries, war memorials, and parish land. They also have the additional very important responsibility of representing local views to the higher authorities, however.¹⁴

*It should be noted that the distribution of powers between counties and districts does vary somewhat depending on whether the county is metropolitan or non-metropolitan in nature. For further detail the reader should consult P.G. Richards, The Reformed Local Government System. London: 1978, p. 66

Concerning the source of local government responsibilities and powers, British local authorities enjoy only those powers which have been granted to them by a parliamentary act. These statutes may take the form of general acts or acts which relate only to a specific authority.¹⁵ Clearly, then, British local authorities are in a subordinate position to the central government. Buxton asserts that it is the fact that much of a local government's activities "... will be illegal, as opposed to merely ill-advised, if undertaken without governmental approval that places local authorities in their position of subordination."¹⁶ British local governments are, in fact, legislative bodies only in relation to local by-laws and even these are subject to approval by the central government. It seems that in many ways their most crucial role, then, is "...to carry out the administration of general principles of policy decided by the national legislature."¹⁷ Nevertheless, as will be illustrated in the next chapter, the areas for which local governments are responsible, although they have been encroached upon to a certain extent by the central government, have become increasingly crucial because of the pressures of urbanization. Thus the importance of local government legislation in Britain must not be minimized.

Examining the relationship between local governments

and the central government in Britain in somewhat more detail, grants from the central government represent a significant proportion of the funds of local authorities. In addition, any funds needed for capital building works or for the purchase of land may be borrowed only if the central government or Parliament has granted its consent.¹⁸ It should also be noted that British local authorities are "...bound by a firm ultra vires rule which forbids the spending of money other than in ways authorized by statute."¹⁹ Richard Buxton has the following view on the financial control the central government enjoys over local governments:

It is...more than arguable that the grant system has been over-emphasized in discussions of the relationship of local to national government; what in fact binds local authorities hand and foot is not the grant system itself, but firstly, the fact that a local authority may not spend money except in a way permitted by law, and secondly, the loan sanction system.²⁰

In terms of administrative control over local government, the central government in Britain involves itself in every major issue in the areas of town and regional planning, policing and education. In addition, some actions of local governments require approval by a minister. Two notable cases are development plans and proposals for compulsory land or property purchase.²¹

It would also appear that central control over local

government in Britain is in fact increasing. Buxton notes that the extension and rationalization of public services which have occurred in Britain since World War II have resulted in the removal of many functions from the local government sphere by Parliament and their transfer to large scale ad hoc bodies. To illustrate this point he states that "... since 1945 local authorities have been deprived of their responsibility for the hospital service, trunk roads, the supply of gas and electricity, and the direct influence of many local authorities over water supply was drastically reduced by the substitution in many places of district water boards for separate municipal enterprises."²² The 1972 reorganization act also served to further centralize the local government system -- it in effect made local government less local. Concerning this development, Richards states, "Even more serious from the local government standpoint was the loss of further functions from the ambit of local government, namely personal health services, water supply and sewerage."²³

Most observers hold the view that local government initiative is greatly curtailed by central government control in Britain (many people would, in fact, suggest that central control effectively destroys local initiative). However, this is by no means a universally held point of view. One

dissenter is John Dearlove. He suggests that, not only have those observers who argue that central control has destroyed the initiative of local authorities failed to prove their case,

...but also that there are firm grounds for claiming that local authorities are by no means the passive agents of the central government but have scope to develop their own policies. If local authorities are not prepared to accept central guidance and advice, then the central government can really only impose its will if it can apply sanctions, and this means that they are 'likely to be more fruitful in curtailing an above-average level of local activity than in stimulating individual authorities to achieve such a level' (Chester, 1951, p. 121). A local authority which conceives of its role in small terms may find its pattern of public policies but little affected by central control.²⁴

Dearlove's position appears to be supported by his study of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Thus, based on these findings one could suggest that within fairly restricted parameters (i.e., issues of a strictly local nature) British local governments are able to perform a policy-making role.

Looking briefly at the less important reverse side of this central-local relationship, Jeffrey Stanyer asserts that most of the influence of local authorities vis-a-vis the British central government stems from the fact, at least at the operational level, that the local authority is the active force in relations with the central government. He

states that "Most of the centre's information about what goes on in a council's area derives from the council itself, and the centre does not generally have the machinery either to check the information or supersede the local authority as administrative agent."²⁵ Thus the actual power of the local authority in Britain should not be dismissed too quickly. Despite significant formal central controls, local governments do enjoy relatively untethered administrative dominance in areas with which they are the most familiar.

In concluding this discussion on central-local relations in British local government, Peter Richards provides the following statement about the relationship between these two levels of government which, in our view, applies equally as well to the provincial-municipal relationship in Canada which will be examined below: "...central-local relations demand a balance of control and independence, a balance of partnership and separation."²⁶

Canada, of course, provides a much greater problem than Britain in terms of generalizing about the structure and functions of local government, given the fact that local government is the constitutional responsibility of the provinces and that variations exist from province to province. Nevertheless, there are basic shared or extremely similar features which can be discussed here.

Looking first at the organizational format of Canadian local government, it appears that in most provinces municipalities fall into four classes: cities, towns, villages, and rural municipalities. In addition, in all provinces other than Nova Scotia there are sparsely populated areas which are not municipally organized and are generally divided into Local Improvement Districts which are administered by Municipal Affairs Departments.²⁷ According to Donald Rowat "The chief distinction between the three classes of urban municipality is that cities and towns are larger than villages and their governments therefore have greater powers."²⁸ The same point has, of course, been made concerning the different classes of authority in Britain. It should also be noted that British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec have some additional second-tier regional or county governments which include urban and rural municipalities. Rowat points out that only British Columbia has attempted to bring about a fairly universal combining of rural and urban areas into two-tier governments, however. He also indicates that the other provinces (other than the relatively few Quebec and Ontario exceptions) thus differ in structural organization from England²⁹ where, as has been discussed above, the cities were incorporated into new counties (or were given county status) in the reorganization of 1972. This is probably the most notable difference between the organizational formats

of local government in the two states, although it does not appear to be one which is particularly significant for the purposes of this paper.

Turning to the internal structures of local government in this country, in Canada as in Britain the council, of course, represents the local authority's governing body. However, Canadian municipal councils are generally small in size when compared to those of Britain.³⁰ There are some obvious exceptions to this rule, though (e.g. Montreal with its fifty-six member council and Winnipeg with its twenty-nine member council). In addition, the role council plays vis-a-vis other civic bodies also often differs from that of British councils because of differences in decision-making structures. The British form of local government with its council-committee structure reflects a "...relative fusion of the legislative and administrative functions, whereby council not only legislates but oversees the execution of the legislation."³¹ The rationale behind this format is that better civic legislation will result when councillors are aware of administrative problems and of administrative ramifications of different policy alternatives being considered. However, most large Canadian cities have moved to decision-making formats with American roots which attempt to separate these two functions. The argument for this type

of system is that "... while councillors who are not technically expert can legislate, administration is best left in the hands of those who are hired for their expertise."³²

As is the case in Britain virtually all Canadian councils do have committees,³³ but for the most part they play a lesser executive role than their British counterparts. This is largely because of the differing decision-making structures noted above, which vary from one province to another and indeed within provinces. These structures are established by special incorporation charters or by municipal acts of the provincial government.³⁴ According to Donald Higgins there are four basic models of municipal decision-making presently being utilized in Canada.³⁵ One of these, the council-committee structure, is basically the same as the British structure, upon which it is based. In this type of system the committees enjoy much executive control over particular administrative spheres. Higgins indicates that this remains the most common structure in Canada,³⁶ although, as noted previously, it has been replaced in virtually all of Canada's urban municipalities. A second decision-making structure is Ontario's council-board of control system. This model retains the fusion of legislative body (council) and administration.³⁷ The board of control enjoys executive powers not enjoyed by the rest of council or the one or few

largely advisory standing committees -- to make recommendations to council and to provide all civic departments with supervision and coordination. A third structure of decision-making, the council-commissioner structure, is an example of an attempt to provide the kind of separation of legislative and administration alluded to above. In this system the commissioners provide the main source of control over the administration while the standing committees "... have only a modest mandate to oversee civic administration..."³⁸

This model is found in a number of major western cities. The fourth major form of decision-making structure, the council-manager system, represents the most clear attempt to separate policy from administration. Under this system the manager is largely in charge of administrative functions. However, because of his position at the top of the administrative network, a city manager can also have a role as a policy formulator.³⁹ The executive role of committees in such a structure is limited. Vancouver is an example of a Canadian city with such a decision-making structure.

The differences in internal local government structure between Britain and most large Canadian cities which can be noted from the above discussion would appear to be extremely relevant to the particular area with which this paper is concerned. First, there is the fact that most city councils

in Canada are much smaller than their British counterparts. It can be reasonably argued that small size precludes the development of party competition in the civic arena (and development of an effective committee system). Larger council size makes the organizational benefits which parties provide in a legislative body and in the electoral process more attractive and even necessary. Such an assertion would appear to be buttressed by the fact, pointed out in Chapter One, that the two cities with large councils, Montreal and Winnipeg, do experience some party involvement in their municipal governments. Secondly, there is the fact that in most Canadian cities the British council-committee system has been dropped in favour of other formats. The council-committee system would seem to be an ideal one for parties, given the important administrative control it provides the council members. However, there is greatly reduced administrative control for councillors in structures such as the council-commissioner and council-manager systems and thus undoubtedly less incentive for parties to want to organize to take control of council. Given the particular decision-making models and small size of many Canadian councils it thus can be argued that the development of party competition in these city governments is highly unlikely if not impossible at present. Structural change

would have to occur first. This is a point which will be discussed more fully in the concluding chapter of this paper.

Some difference also exists between British cities and a few Canadian cities in the area of the electoral system. British local councillors are elected on the basis of single member wards. Although most Canadian cities utilize a ward system as well (single member or otherwise) there are some exceptions or important variations. Vancouver is the most notable example of a Canadian city which has no wards and utilizes an 'at-large' system. Thus all eleven of the city's councillors are elected on a city-wide basis. Edmonton provides an example of a city which utilizes a small number (four) of very large multi-member wards within each of which an at-large type electoral pattern also prevails. Like many other of the differing structural features in particular Canadian cities, at-large elections represent an integral part of the municipal reform movement's structural reforms of the early twentieth century and, when instituted, were clearly an attempt to de-politicize these cities. Such elections were viewed as a means of preventing labour interests with strong sectional bases from gaining representation in the municipal government. The move to at-large elections, as with other of these reforms, has generally been most common in the West.⁴⁰

It would appear that at-large elections act to magnify the general problem of the 'nonrepresentativeness' of Canadian city councils. This is certainly Donald Higgins' perspective. As he views it at-large elections allow councillors to safely ignore certain sectors of the community because the votes in these sectors are not crucial to their election: "It is lower-income people that are most likely to be ignored because of the greater tendency for the middle classes to vote."⁴¹ Actually running in such an election is also beyond the capabilities of most such people because of the greater financial demands of city-wide elections. As James Lightbody states, "Through increasing the costs of political information, at-large elections...work to the clear advantage of individuals and groups who are dominant in social and economic spheres."⁴²

It would seem that the successful development of party competition will also be unlikely in cities with versions of this at-large format of elections. As its original boosters had hoped it does largely prevent working-class or lower income oriented groups from drawing on the sectional interest necessary for their electoral success. In addition, it establishes a situation where all parties interested in achieving control of these cities are faced with the prospect of their own candidates competing with each other for city-wide or ward-wide support, as well as with opposition candidates. Such

a situation is totally foreign to the tradition of single member constituency-based party competition which prevails in Canada and around which the political 'rules and strategies of the game' have evolved. As with particular decision-making structures, then, a reform of the electoral system in those cities which presently utilize the at-large system would thus appear essential.

At this point attention should be turned to the actual powers and responsibilities of local government in Canada. Donald Rowat indicates that the traditional functions of Canadian municipalities have been education, roads, and the support of the poor, as well as the regulation of conduct to protect the community's welfare.⁴³ (As will be discussed later, the first three of these services have become increasingly a responsibility of the provinces as well, however.) With increased urbanization cities also took on the responsibility of providing such public utility services as water and sewerage systems, garbage collection and public transportation. In more recent years local governments have also taken on the task of providing such social services as libraries, parks and playgrounds, auditoriums, health clinics, housing, day-care centres, and adult education programs. In addition, community planning and zoning has become a key activity of local governments.⁴⁴

As noted earlier in this discussion, the number or range of services provided by local governments generally varies to a certain extent according to the type of municipality. The range of services provided generally varies with municipality size. Thus rural municipalities provide the fewest services while cities provide the greatest range of services. In addition, municipalities in some provinces provide a wider range of services than those in others.⁴⁵

Concerning the source of local government powers and responsibilities, as has already been indicated a number of times, in Canada municipal governments are creatures of the provinces. The provincial governments thus have "... complete authority over the creation, supervision and control of municipal government."⁴⁶ The structure, organization, and powers of local governments in Canada stem from provincial statutes either of a general nature or relating to specific municipal categories of municipalities. It should be noted that most larger cities have their own charters (also provincial statutes). Nevertheless, the general laws for all municipalities still apply to these cities. In fact, according to Higgins, because special charters clutter up legislative order papers and because they make it difficult

to deal with all local governments in common, the practice of granting these charters "... has generally been abandoned in favour of the provinces passing general municipal acts which apply either to all classes of municipalities in a province or to particular classes."⁴⁷ These general municipal acts specify such things as the extent of powers of municipalities to raise funds, structure of civic decision-making, council terms of office, voter and candidate qualifications, and service functions which municipalities can or must carry out.⁴⁸ There are, of course, numerous other pieces of provincial legislation which have an impact on provincial-local relations in areas such as health, education, planning, etc.

In addition, according to the BNA Act "Any powers that municipalities have to raise finance by direct taxation, issuance of licenses, or borrowing are clearly within the realm of provincial responsibility..., as are any powers that municipalities have to make decisions regarding property, hospitals, justice, and all 'local works'".⁴⁹ Higgins maintains that municipalities in this country do not fit into either the autonomous local self-government model or the purely local-government model (i.e. administrator of provincial programs and local works) in terms of central-local relations.⁵⁰ Rather, they may be placed somewhere

between the two. Based on the earlier discussion in this section a similar point can be made about local government in Britain.

It is clear from the discussion above that Canadian municipal governments can do nothing which has not been delegated to them by the provincial government in question. However, it should be pointed out that by the same token "...a province can delegate to municipalities any of its own powers and functions that it chooses to delegate."⁵¹

It is necessary at this point to make a more detailed examination of the crucial relationship between provincial and municipal governments. As should be expected, given the fact that local government in Canada comes under the jurisdiction of eleven different governments, the nature of provincial-municipal relations does vary from province to province. As Higgins notes, however, the similarities are nevertheless strong.⁵² Of particular importance is the relationship between the two levels of government concerning finance. Canadian municipalities are restricted to tax sources which their provincial governments have deemed necessary and have delegated to them.⁵³ The major source of municipal revenue has always been property taxes. Other common minor sources are charges for licenses and permits and various fines and penalties. It has become clear in the

past few years, however, that the property tax is inadequate to meet the increased municipal revenue needs which have resulted from the increased demands on municipal governments spawned by the rapid postwar urbanization in this country. According to the Tindals, "The growing shortfall in municipal revenue needs has been met almost entirely by grants from the senior levels of government."⁵⁴ These grants have largely come from the provincial governments and have predominantly been of a conditional nature. Thus they have reflected provincial concerns and have provided an important means of controlling municipal activity. The Tindals cite an important and valid justification for such control, however. They state that "Many traditional local government responsibilities are now recognized as having much wider than local significance and it has become necessary to find some means of ensuring that these responsibilities are exercised to at least a minimum standard across the province."⁵⁵ Similar justification is of course used in Britain for the increased central control over local government which has occurred in that country since World War II.

The fairly recent increase in financial control via conditional grants is not the only additional source of provincial authority vis-a-vis municipalities. Early problems with municipal servicing and financing caused

most provinces, in the first half of this century, to create municipal affairs departments as well as boards to oversee particular local government activities. The municipal affairs departments provide general supervision while the boards are administrative and quasi-judicial in nature and have such responsibilities as regulating public utilities, controlling municipal financing, and controlling municipal zoning. Municipal affairs departments and boards in Canada generally must provide approval for loans which municipalities wish to incur and must approve municipal by-laws in areas such as traffic, zoning, and public health.⁵⁶

The Tindals further note that "There has been a tendency for traditionally municipal services to shift upward to a higher level of government or become shared between two or more levels as a means of insuring their effective provision."⁵⁷ This largely provincial intervention has been caused by the financial inability or reluctance of local governments to provide particular services or standards of services, or because provinces have been attempting to improve administrative efficiency.⁵⁸ Concerning financial assistance for particular municipal service functions, Higgins asserts that such aid "...frequently brings with it the imposition of provincial standards, procedures, and detailed regulations, all of which blur the legal responsibility of municipalities for

the performance of functions and exercise of powers and which therefore reduce municipal discretion."⁵⁹ The Tindals cite as examples of municipal services which have experienced increased provincial involvement and control, education, health and welfare, and roads.⁶⁰ This development clearly parallels developments in Britain where similar areas have become the concern of both the central and local governments which previously had been primarily the concern of the local authorities alone.

As a final point in this discussion on provincial control over municipalities, it should be noted that all decisions taken by Canadian municipalities are subject to approval by their respective provincial governments. Again, this parallels the situation in Britain.

Concerning ultimate municipal government influence in Canada given the high level of provincial control, it would seem valid to repeat the point made concerning the source of local government influence in Britain vis-a-vis the British central government. Canadian municipalities undoubtedly have the greatest amount of information concerning the particular matters with which they deal. This superior knowledge should provide our municipalities with significant maneuvering room despite the extensive formal provincial controls under which they operate.

It would seem clear from the above examination of the responsibilities and relative powers of local government in Britain and Canada that these areas are extremely comparable in the two states. Local governments in both states are responsible for very similar functions; the scope of these functions for which an authority is responsible is hierarchically set on the basis of size of authority in a similar fashion; and local authorities in both states are experiencing a decline in authority over similar areas of concern because of the increased involvement of their respective parent governments. In addition, the ultimate position and amount of formal authority of local governments vis-a-vis their parent government appears to be basically the same.

Conclusions

To summarize the findings in this chapter, the following would appear to be the major conclusions: that local governments in the two states enjoy very similar kinds of responsibilities and powers and have to contend with similar limitations and growing incursions on these responsibilities and powers from their respective parent governments; but, that important differences in internal local government structure and electoral format exist between Britain and

many of Canada's cities which are extremely relevant to the particular area of discussion in this paper.

The purpose of this chapter and the previous one has been to attempt to determine whether there is justification for analyzing party involvement in British local government and relating these findings to Canadian city governments. In terms of the 'Comparable Cases' approach which is being utilized in this paper, what we have been attempting to establish is whether the major features of the two political systems being analyzed and the subsystems of particular interest -- the party systems and the municipal systems -- are sufficiently comparable or similar to be viewed as 'controlled for'. The discussion in these two chapters would seem to indicate that the states are broadly similar in these areas of concern. The areas thus may be considered controlled for and the analysis of the operative variables may proceed, so long as the following precaution is taken. The few additional systemic differences which have been illustrated here -- the federal nature of Canada's political system, the ideological, class-based nature of Britain's political parties, and the differing internal decision-making structures and electoral formats of many of Canada's cities -- must be kept in mind and their significance discussed in relevant parts of this paper.

ENDNOTES

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- 41 Higgins, op. cit., p. 252

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- 44 Ibid. pp. 56-58
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- 60 Tindals, op. cit., p. 41

CHAPTER IV

Party Politics in British Local Government

Introduction

In this chapter attention focuses on local government in Britain. The discussion here represents the core of this paper. The intention in this chapter is to provide a detailed analysis of the involvement of parties in the British local government sphere. This analysis will include the following components: an historical account of party involvement in civic affairs in Britain; an examination of the role and manner of operation of parties in local government; an examination of the perceived benefits of party involvement in local government, with particular emphasis on the impact of parties on those problems cited earlier as being in evidence in Canadian cities; and, an examination of the perceived problems of party involvement in British local government.

Part I: The History of Party Politics in British Local Government

Party politics in British local government was an established fact in certain localities as far back as 1835. John Gyford states that "It is clear that in the major towns, at least, of the Victorian era, political conflict between various parties, groups and factions was a recurrent event".¹

He cites three main political issues which resulted in organized conflict in cities during this era. The first two issues related to key administrative questions of the day -- municipal spending levels and education and its relationship to religion. The third issue was more emotional in nature and involved the consumption of alcohol together with factional differences and personality clashes. Gyford also maintains, however, that despite the liveliness of local conflicts over these issues "... it was not until the last decades of the nineteenth century that there emerged anything resembling a coherent urban political programme attached to a permanent political organisation".² The growth of program-oriented urban politics was further spurred by the emergence in the 1890's of the labour movement and of municipal socialist ideas. The viability of these labour and socialist groups was enhanced by the creation, via the Local Government Reform Bills of 1888 and 1894, of new county councils and urban district councils. These new councils heightened the electoral chances of urban working-class candidates.

The creation of new highly urban local authorities also brought the two major national parties of the time, the Conservative and the Liberal parties, openly into local politics in some localities. Each party had a somewhat

different goal in becoming active locally, however, although each was attempting to protect itself from the newly emerged Labour party. The Tories were attempting to maintain their share of the working class vote, while the Liberals were seeking the new urban middle class as a source of national support. The Labour Party rise following World War I increased this trend toward party-oriented local politics as Labour successfully attempted to politicize industrial towns in hopes of eventually achieving national electoral success. Douglas Ashford in fact asserts: "Autonomous local government in the historic British sense -- that is, local councils immune to national alignments -- ended with the formation of the Labour Party in 1918".³ After this time most cities became polarized around Labour and anti-Labour councillors, thus shattering what Ashford calls the 'elitist' tradition of nonpartisan local government in these authorities. This tradition will be examined later in this chapter.

J.G. Bulpitt agrees that the Labour Party was a significant factor in expanding the scope of party politics in local government. He maintains that Labour extended party activity to a number of previously non-party councils, particularly following World War II. In addition, he feels that Labour

involvement put party politics at the local level on a new footing because the Labour party had come from outside the old local power structure. They put forward working-class candidates, increased the number of seats being contested, and pushed for change in the local government system. The result was that opposing interests perceived the Labour party as a threat to a whole way of life.⁴ This perception of the Labour threat was the cause of the polarization on councils cited by Ashford. What emerged was a new local government phenomenon, the anti-socialist 'independent'. "Policies previously discussed on their merits between Conservatives and Liberals now became matters of political principle between Labour and anti-Labour Councillors. It was really only after 1919 that the idea that the local Council was not a fit place for party politics became widespread. Very soon it became a popular debating point to be against Labour in local politics".⁵

Labour's ability to change the character of local government had limitations, however. It was restricted by the antagonistic attitude of many people concerning the party's local activities. It was also checked by an increase in central control over local government, by the power of the generally anti-Labour ratepayers and their organizations, by the general dislike of rising rates which were often linked with Labour

programs, and, most important of all, by the party's own decline of interest in local government as a significant reform instrument once they had become serious challengers for national power. Nevertheless, fear concerning their influence at the local level persisted and finally caused the Conservative party, which had largely stepped aside in local elections and thrown its support behind anti-Labour independents,* to formally re-enter local politics in 1946.⁶ Since this time Conservatives, Labourites, and in some cases Liberals, have played a significant role in local politics in most urban areas.

Although they do not constitute a particularly widespread phenomenon in Britain it should also be noted that parties which are unaligned to any national parties or which have broken away from these parties (splinter parties) have, over the years, also emerged on the local political scene in

*An important exception to this generalization must be noted. The Conservatives had been operating consistently in London local politics under the label of the "London Municipal Society" since 1894. The Society in fact continued to represent the Conservative party's interests in local government in that city until 1963 when it was dissolved. At that time the Conservative party became an official participant in London local politics. (Source: K. Young, Local Politics and the Rise of Party. Leicester University Press: 1975).

certain localities. Gyford perceives as a unique characteristic of these purely local parties their readiness to contest elections against anyone.⁷ W.P. Grant asserts that there are two types of local party (only one of which he considers truly local in nature) -- the 'concealed Conservative' party, which for a number of reasons may wish not to reveal its right wing leanings, and "... the 'genuine' local party which is prepared to fight an electoral contest against a Conservative candidate"⁸ or anyone else. It is, of course, this latter type of party to which Gyford refers. Grant also maintains that local parties generally emerge when particular local conflicts are not catered for by the ideological division which prevails between the two major national parties: "Or in other words, such local parties are most likely to arise where local circumstances divide people who may share similar views on national affairs. If people who hold opposing views on a local controversy also hold opposing views on national politics, opinion will tend to polarize around the local branches of the national parties".⁹ In a similar vein, Gyford asserts that local parties which are unaligned to national parties generally arise as a response to a particular local situation. He sees these parties as in many ways being quite similar to pressure groups. "The distinction between a

local party and a local pressure group is hard to make but the party has something to say about the local community as a whole, something which implies outwardly at least a broader concern than with a sectional interest, but which cannot be said from within the confines of a national party branch".¹⁰

The creation of a local party, Gyford maintains, usually occurs when the community life-style is perceived as being threatened. Small communities faced suddenly with major expansion are thus ripe for the emergence of a local party. Turning to splinter parties, Gyford asserts that such groups generally arise out of national parties when internal conflicts of personality, perhaps related to national policy, occur.

Concerning the long term viability of purely local parties in Britain, Grant states in a later publication that the 1974 reorganization of local government should have a definite negative impact upon such parties. He maintains

... under the old system, particularly in the smaller urban districts and non-county boroughs, a ratepayers' organization could reasonably hope to win a substantial proportion of seats on the council. There is much less hope of this happening on a larger authority. Even before reorganization, many ratepayer movements were reluctant to contest elections. The effects of reorganization are likely to increase this reluctance.¹¹

Grant's study shows that 'genuine local parties' have been most successful in resort areas forming non-county boroughs

or in urban districts with populations of under 100,000. Local authorities of this size and type have been largely absorbed into the new counties since the reorganization, however. Thus local parties in Britain, never particularly significant in terms of numbers, should become even less commonplace.

It should also be noted that, despite its negative impact on local parties, the 1974 local government reorganization apparently holds great potential for a further impetus toward domination of local politics and government by the national parties. Gyford states that the new authorities arising from the 1974 reorganization will probably "... be the scene of further party politicization of local government".¹² To back this up he cites the fact that the percentage of Independent seats in English and Welsh counties after the 1973 local elections fell from forty per cent to 14.3 per cent. As well, he indicates that Cornwall and the Isle of Wight were the only new English counties to have an Independent majority, and that, in the metropolitan district elections, Independents secured fewer than forty of the total 2,500 municipal seats. Gyford also notes that party advances have been made against local Independents in Scottish local elections in the past few years. He asserts that

This pattern seems likely to continue. Not only does it represent the result of Labour reaching out from its urban strongholds into rural hinterlands, after reorganisation, it is also the outcome of an explicit Conservative policy of encouraging former Independents of Conservative leaning to stand under the party label or else face an official Conservative opponent.¹³

Gyford's view on the effects of the local government reorganization on party politics is certainly shared by

A.L. Norton and P.N. Mawhood, as well as by Richard Buxton. Norton and Mawhood note that the reorganization has caused the merging of many party and non-party authorities and maintain that in almost all such cases the party principle has emerged as dominant.¹⁴ Buxton asserts that it would seem inevitable that "... all the important authorities, the counties and metropolitan districts, will be run on party lines, since even if the general trend were not already in this direction, it would hardly be possible for authorities as large as these to be controlled by the informal methods which are the only alternative to party politics."¹⁵

In the first section of this chapter it has been established that party politics is a long-standing phenomenon in British local government and a dominant one in urban authorities which has been affected by a number of factors over the years and which, because of recent structural changes, is

likely to become even more dominant within the overall municipal sphere in the future. We propose now to turn to an examination of the role parties play in local authorities and their manner of operation in local government.

Part II: The Role and Manner of Operation of Parties

It is important first to note that where party activity is present in British local authorities its intensity differs from one place to the next. At one extreme are the local governments where members are elected on a party basis but on council act as fairly independent individuals, where no caucus meetings are held, and where committee chairmen are chosen without regard to party affiliation. At the other extreme are councils where the majority group's caucus determines policy on all major issues, and where this group nominates the chairmen and vice-chairmen of all committees and requires complete obedience from all of its individual members.¹⁶ Most of the 'partisan' local authorities fit in somewhere between these two poles of party control. This difference in intensity of party activity from one place to the next, of course, makes it difficult to generalize too much about how parties operate in British local government. Nevertheless, some general observations are possible, particularly if one disregards the first extreme cited above, which more

closely resembles an electoral slate than a true political party and is not particularly common.

According to Lees and Kimber in their book Political Parties in Modern Britain (1972)*, approximately two-thirds of local councillors in Britain are members of political organizations.¹⁷ They assert that parties thus perform the largest part of the recruitment function in local politics. Ivor Gowan maintains that the national parties involved in local politics leave the actual conduct of local election activity entirely to the local party organization, however. This includes both candidate selection and the running of the campaign itself.¹⁸

Turning to the role and activity of the parties within the local authority itself, Gowan asserts that party discipline is certainly to be found in most party groups on local councils. "Membership of any party organization naturally tends to limit the complete freedom of the individual councillor, and I regard it as axiomatic that membership of a group will imply the acceptance of a certain amount of discipline by the

*This book was written prior to the reorganization of British local government. As indicated in the previous section of this chapter, reorganization has resulted in an increase in party presence in local authorities.

councillors concerned".¹⁹ Based on the official party doctrines concerning municipal branches of the national party, one might presume that local Labour groups stress quite strongly the necessity for party discipline and collective decision-making, but that Tory groups leave room for councillors to exercise some individual freedom in their decisions. In practice, however, it appears that for both major parties group discipline on local councils is generally more dependent on local personalities than on general party rules.

Gowan maintains that in medium and large-sized authorities it is fairly standard for each party group on council to elect an executive or policy committee, various officers, a chairman, and a secretary. In the large authorities one or more whips are also chosen. The key party activity in most medium and large authorities is the meeting of the full council membership of the party. These group meetings usually take place following all the standing committee meetings and prior to the council meetings. They have two main purposes -- to convey information about the whole range of council activities and to make party decisions concerning certain contentious issues which have been dealt with in the standing committees and will be coming before council. Whether all party members will support the party decision will, of course,

depend partly upon the degree of party discipline within the particular group. Group cohesion will also depend upon other factors, however. Gyford asserts:

A community of values or of social background will sustain the Group at most times. This will probably be reinforced by the mere existence of the opposing Group against whom a united front may be sought. Moreover, many members of the Groups will accept the need to 'go along' with their colleagues on a given issue in the expectation that the favour will be reciprocated later on: that, after all, is part of the business of constructing democratic majorities.²⁰

Even where a high degree of cohesion within a party group exists, however, there is no guarantee that the group will act as a policy-maker. The Redcliffe-Maud Report (1969) in fact questioned the extent to which party caucuses, even when they have a majority on council, act as policy initiators. "It seems that much of the time and energy of party groups is absorbed in vetting recommendations originating in committees. This enables the majority party to co-ordinate policy, but is in a sense a negative activity and quite different from the initiation of policy".²¹ The report also indicates that in many authorities an 'inner caucus' exists, made up of party officers such as the leader, deputy leader, party secretary, and party whip, which may well provide the policy-making function for the party group as a whole. It is, of course,

not surprising that cabinet-like groups such as these should emerge as the main policy-makers on local councils, given the particular system of government which the parties are familiar with at the national level in Britain.

The area where party machinery is applied the most consistently in local government is in the selection of councillors for particular offices. In many councils the majority party provides the chairmen for all the important committees. In other councils the chairmanships are distributed proportionately, but the majority group generally holds on to the most important posts. Concerning the leadership of council as a whole, "The leader of the council is, of course, the dominant figure of the majority party ... He guides and controls his party's contribution to the business and debates of the council and without superseding the functions of committee chairman (sic) in matters relating to their special field, he makes major pronouncements on council policy".²² The council leader is also frequently the chairman of the council's policy committee. Such strong leadership on council is, of course, largely lacking in city government in Canada.

On the question of the possible control of the local government wings of national parties by national party headquarters, Buxton asserts:

As far as we can judge, neither of the main political parties makes any attempt at national dictation of the lines of policy to be adopted by local parties, though the Conservative Party has of recent years provided much more positive guidance to local parties, together with policy documents for local elections produced by Conservative Central Office, and ideological community of view amongst Labour Party members makes it unlikely that party policy will differ very radically from one constituency to another.²³

Turning to the behaviour of parties in local government, Bulpitt maintains that, in general, local parties attempt to practice political restraint so that they can avoid issues which are really divisive. He suggests that their motivation for acting this way may stem from the traditional idea of common agreement and non-partisanship on council. Bulpitt believes that the fact there are numerous disputes between the parties over patronage thus reflects "... a preoccupation with the possession of power, not the use of it for policy purposes".²⁴ Some issues, however, are inherently political and it is over these that most conflict between parties will occur. These political issues include long range planning, levels of social services and provision of housing.

Before leaving the topic of the role and manner of operation of parties in local government in Britain, the limitation imposed upon them by the status of local governments as instruments of the central government should perhaps

be examined. Bulpitt asserts that the extent and nature of the control of the central government over local authorities greatly restricts party initiative at the local level. As has been noted in the previous chapter, the two main sources of this control are the restricted system of local government finance and the doctrine of ultra vires. Concerning the latter source of control, the ultra vires doctrine has over the years been strictly enforced by the courts. The result of this limitation on the role of local government has been that municipal authorities have often come to be seen as trustees of the ratepayers' money. Bulpitt states that "Such a climate is hostile to the activities of those parties which wish to do something more than merely administer policy laid down at Westminster and preserve things as they are".²⁵ It fosters an attitude among many people that councillors are delegates rather than representatives and must work by common agreement and have the community's full support before acting. It should be recalled at this point, however, that John Dearlove's findings from his study of the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea cited in the previous chapter (p. 131) suggest that local authorities, and thus the parties which control them, do have the scope to develop their own policies and are not simply the passive agents of the central government. (The role of parties as policy-makers will be examined further later

in this chapter). Nevertheless, the ability of local authorities to perform this policy-making role may be curtailed somewhat by the common perception, noted above by Bulpitt, of the position of municipal authorities vis-a-vis the central government and of the resulting expectation of much of the public that local governments should act in the role of trustees. These are expectations not unlike those commonly held by the public in this country.

Part III: Perceived Benefits of Party Involvement in Local Government

The very fact that party politics has become so prevalent in British local government of course suggests that many Britons perceive that some definite benefits are derived from party involvement in the operation of local authorities. In this section of the chapter we shall examine and attempt to assess the most important of these perceived benefits.

Certainly the main impetus behind the party 'politicization' of local government has come from members of the national parties themselves. Their motivations for becoming involved in local government historically have often had little to do with concern over the way local authorities operate, however. In fact, Bulpitt asserts that the chief motivations of these individuals has been to keep the other party out of

power in an authority and to use the authority as a base to further their prospects of election nationally.²⁶ The benefits to be derived here are thus ones which accrue directly to the national party. Although this is definitely part of the answer for national party members becoming involved in local government it is by no means the whole answer. As previously noted in Chapter II, within British society there clearly exists a high degree of class differentiation. The two major parties in Britain have largely evolved as representatives of particular interests in society and there is thus motivation for them to wish to represent these interests in local government as well as at Westminster. This is a view strongly held by John Gyford who asserts that, despite some local variations "... there is much truth in the notion that locally, as well as nationally, the two major parties represent distinct sets of supporters living different lives and bringing different values and experiences to bear on local problems and their solutions".²⁷

This latter motivation for national parties becoming involved in local politics in Britain provides a clue as to why the same phenomenon has been much less prevalent in Canada. Canadian society, as was discussed earlier, is not as class-oriented as its British counterpart and the two major

political parties in Canada, the Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties, are seen more as 'omnibus' parties than as representatives of particular classes. Again, it is interesting that the one Canadian party that can perhaps be seen as representing particular class interests, the New Democratic party, is also the party which has over the years been the most heavily involved in local politics in this country.

Turning to less partisan motivations for party involvement in British local government, many supporters of such involvement view parties as performing a number of worthwhile roles and thus as a means of preventing or alleviating a number of potential problems in British local government. Of particular interest to us here, of course, are the areas of concern which have also been noted in Chapter I as being worrisome vis-a-vis municipal government in Canada -- decision-making and participation.

Within the general area of decision-making the first subject which should be considered here is the effectiveness of leadership on local councils in Britain. John Gyford views sufficiently organized party groups as providing exactly the kind of leadership functions cited in Chapter I as missing in most Canadian city councils. He states that they secure "... the passage through committee and full council of

approved recommendations, whatever their source. They also serve to encourage debate and criticism by the mere fact of their organized existence²⁸ He also notes that the existence of a minority group on council provides British local government with the equivalent of a parliamentary opposition committed to acting as a censor of government which subjects all its actions to detailed scrutiny. The importance of such an opposition group in relation to overall direction on city councils was of course clearly indicated in the discussion on Canada.

Ivor Gowan discusses a similar 'direction-providing' role as having been assumed by party groups on British councils. He states:

If the party in question has won the previous election and is therefore in control of the council its main purpose will naturally centre on the task of making that control effective and of steering that party policy through the council machine. If the group is in a minority it will seek to concentrate on opposing the majority party and on giving expression to its own views at the appropriate stages of council business.²⁹

Direction on British councils is further guaranteed by the existence, in general, of a council leader on party-dominated councils. To repeat a very relevant quote from Gowan cited earlier in this chapter, "The leader of the council is, of course, the dominant figure of the majority party ...

He guides and controls his party's contribution to the business and debates of the council and without superseding the functions of committee chairman (sic) in matters relating to their special field, he makes major pronouncements on council policy".³⁰

Concerning the highly related area of coordination, in Richard Buxton's view party groups on British councils have not, and largely cannot, fulfill successfully the role of coordinator in local government. He states that "... coordination ... is an activity which calls essentially for professional expertise",³¹ something which most councillors just do not have. It would seem difficult to disagree with Buxton on this point. Councillors in Britain (or anywhere else for that matter) do generally lack the necessary technical expertise to achieve the highest levels of coordination of local government activity, although continuing membership on a committee does allow for the development of a certain degree of specialization by a councillor and perhaps eventually a degree of 'expertise' within a particular policy area. Nevertheless, as Peter Richards maintains, councils should still operate more effectively and coherently where political parties are present. "It follows that where the business of a local authority is conducted on a party basis it is more likely to be planned and con-

sistent than if it depends on unorganised and changing views of individual councillors".³² This view would certainly appear to be reflected in Gyford's findings. He states that parties provide "... a common frame of political reference for the officers, and a common source of information, inspiration and allegiance for the councillors, thereby unifying an otherwise fragmented pattern of government".³³ This is because parties are able to provide the sense of direction discussed above to the various committees and departments and provide the bureaucratic officers of the local authorities with some guidance as to what policy proposals council will find acceptable. Thus, although parties do not in any way represent the ultimate means of coordination, they do seem to be able to bring greater coherence to the activities of British local authorities.

Turning to the area of long-range planning and priority or policy setting, in J.G. Bulpitt's view, party groups on British councils have generally been unsuccessful in their attempts to act as 'continuous policy-making' bodies.³⁴ Gyford makes the following statement concerning the ability of party groups to act in this manner: "Clearly ... the evidence suggests that we cannot automatically assume that all Groups are able or inclined to formulate policies".³⁵ He points out that the sheer numbers and complexity of the documents councils

must deal with in such areas as transportation plans and programs, and budget proposals defeats many attempts by party groups to achieve the effective planning of policy and often leaves them dealing either with policy in very vague, general terms, or pushing particular pet concerns.³⁶ On the other hand, however, he cites a study which did find that "... in some authorities operating on party lines the party group 'makes a more significant contribution than any single "constitutional" committee toward general policy initiation'".³⁷

In Richards' view parties have the following impact in this area: he states that party politics "... probably assists continuity and certainty of policy, for once the dominant group has decided upon a course of action it is loath to retract".³⁸ Thus, although there is no guarantee that parties will be successful policy formulators, they do seem to be able to provide greater consistency to the policy initiatives of a local authority, whether they originate with the administrative officers or within the party group.

The fourth area of concern vis-a-vis decision-making involves accountability. The question being addressed here is whether the party system in British local government enhances accountability — whether it acts to submit local government operations to the control of the voters. Theoretically, electors should vote according to which party's direction of the

local government they most favour. Buxton is highly critical of this assumption. He asserts that "The overwhelming majority of electors treat local elections merely as an extension of the political contest at national level, and vote for their councillors not on the record of the individual candidates, or even of the city administration, but rather according to their current view of the performance of the national government on purely national issues".³⁹ This view certainly appears to be supported by the findings of a 1963 study of British local elections conducted by David Butler and

Donald Stokes. The study found that ninety per cent of the respondents voted for the party that they personally identified with nationally. Moreover, four out of five of the respondents indicated that there were no local issues which had especially concerned them when they had voted.⁴⁰ Buxton believes this pattern still exists and has great difficulty in perceiving anything to improve it because of what he sees as the extreme apathy of the majority of the British electorate concerning local government issues. He states, however, that "... party politics do at least give the electorate something to vote about, and some indication of the general attitude that candidates are likely to adopt towards their duties".⁴¹

It should be noted that the most recent British local elections, held May 3, 1979, cast a somewhat different light

on the theory that voters cast their ballots strictly on the basis of national issues, however. On the same day that the Conservatives won a majority in the national election the Labour party managed to poll the highest percentage of votes in the local elections. Labour received 43.9 per cent of the municipal votes cast, closely followed by the Conservatives who received forty-two per cent. The Liberal party polled 11.4 per cent of the total vote. These results represented a swing to Labour of 2.8 per cent, a swing to the Liberals of 3.4 per cent, and a swing away from the Tories of 5.6 per cent since the May 1978 local elections.⁴² Labour gains had been expected by most observers because the national and local elections were being held simultaneously and thus Labour supporters, who are notorious for responding in very small numbers to local elections, were expected to also cast local ballots while they voted for their candidate for Westminster. Nevertheless, the final results were considered somewhat surprising. The Economist makes the following comment:

The synchro-poll for national and local elections did turn out broadly as expected. Doubling the number of people who voted in last year's council elections worked to Labour's advantage. There also appears to have been some quite sophisticated vote-splitting. [emphasis mine]⁴³

The Economist indicates in their article that in a number of individual constituencies the results in the local elections

were different from those of the national election. "There is no systematic pattern in the differences, but more than a hint that Labour tended to pull more local election votes in Toryish towns (e.g., Southend) and the Tories in Labour-dominated towns (e.g., Coventry) -- a vote against one-party arrogance in town hall?"⁴⁴ The Liberals, in particular, experienced a quite different fate in the local versus the national election. Although they did not field candidates in all the municipalities, where they did participate the Liberals almost always fared better than in the national elections in those areas. For example, in the four cities where all three major parties ran locally the Liberals received 18.2 per cent of the municipal votes cast while in these same cities they received only 13.7 per cent of the national vote.

Although by no means conclusive, findings from the May, 1979 local elections would seem to suggest that at present in a number of cities in Britain many voters do, in fact, base their decisions on which candidate should represent them in council on more than just the national issues. It can be suggested that these voters also take into account the performance of the governing group on council when making these decisions. Certainly the fact the parties now dominate most local councils in Britain has made the leaders responsible for council actions more visible to these voters.

Despite the indications above that some voters may, through their ballots, hold their municipal representatives accountable for their actions there is some question as to how much the councillors themselves are influenced by the opinions of their constituents. John Dearlove found in his study of the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea that most councillors also held the theory that policy stances or actions of local parties have little effect on electoral outcome and that elections are decided by voter national party identification and assessment of the national political situation. Thus councillors did not consider it necessary to be highly sensitive to public opinion or local issues. Dearlove states "Their belief that electors had little interest in, or knowledge of, their activity, and voted on the basis of party label or an assessment of national politics, was one which allowed them very much more freedom from constituents".⁴⁵ This attitude will undoubtedly only change if the trend towards voting on the basis of local issues evident to a limited extent in the 1979 election becomes stronger and more apparent to councillors in future local elections.

The general inability of city governments to enhance participation in civic affairs represents the second general area of concern noted in Canadian city government. The first element of this problem relates to low participation rates in

city elections. Many observers, of course, hold that party politics in local government should result in higher voter turnout and citizen participation. Certainly citizen apathy concerning local elections and government is a major problem in most Western democracies and thus the potential for positive impact in this area from party involvement is of great interest. However, whether parties actually have this kind of impact on the British local electorate seems in some doubt. Ashford, for example, shows that according to a study he conducted Britain experienced a decrease in voting levels in local elections between 1949 and 1967. During this period the mean percentage of eligible voters who actually voted dropped from 50.2 to 42.1. This, of course, was a time when party involvement in local government was intensifying. Ashford asserts that these results reflect to a certain extent "... the distrust of conflict and partisanship outside the halls of Westminster that permeates the British system".⁴⁶ It should be noted (as Ashford does in his article),⁴⁷ however, that the problem of a drop in voter turnout in local elections since World War II is one that is shared by most Western states, a couple of which have largely nonpartisan local government. Thus it may be unfair to blame parties in Britain for a trend which seems so widespread. The response of most supporters of party politics in British local government to

Ashford's findings would undoubtedly be that the decrease in voter turnout in local elections since 1949 would have been much higher if parties had not become so heavily involved in municipal politics. In addition, according to this same study the Labour Party enjoyed a higher voter turnout where it had less council strength, causing Ashford to suggest "... that partisan local government, however distasteful it may be in British politics, does bring more voters to the polls".⁴⁸ Perhaps because his preliminary findings conflict with each other, Ashford hedges somewhat on his final conclusion. He states that with their reorganization of local government around metropolitan centres the British "... have instituted a system that eliminates the fragmentation of local government and that constitutes the most clearly urban-centred local government system among the industrial democracies".⁴⁹ Ashford maintains that the effects of this system on participation and partisan behaviour will be a major test of whether increased party competition and social differentiation at the local level increases participation by citizens in local government.

In a very interesting experiment conducted during the 1971 British municipal elections J.M. Bochel and D.T. Denver provide some powerful evidence that good party organization in the form of effective canvassing and election day activity can have a very positive effect on voter turnout.⁵⁰ The two authors each

helped orchestrate an intense Labour Party campaign in a particular ward in two different cities. In what was considered a safe Tory seat (Scotforth ward, Lancaster) -- because it had been held by the Conservatives since the 1920's and because the Tories had taken over two-thirds of the votes cast in the previous municipal election -- Labour, after intense campaigning, was able to increase its share of the vote from the previous election by 20.2 per cent and post a narrow victory. In the other ward studied (Craigie in the city of Dundee) -- a marginal seat taken in the previous election by the Progressive Party -- Labour, after an intense campaign, increased its share of the vote from the previous election by 9.3 per cent and won the seat. The two authors concede that there had been a general swing to Labour in both Lancaster and Dundee during the 1971 municipal election but point out that the mean increases of Labour's share of the vote in all other wards in the two cities were significantly lower than in Scotforth and Craigie (13.3 per cent in Lancaster and 6.4 per cent in Dundee). Thus the intense campaigning would appear to have been quite effective. It would seem doubtful that independent candidates could muster the kind of organizational forces necessary to bring about such a dramatic increase in voter turnout, however.

It should be noted that, despite this indication above

that parties can, by proper utilization of their electoral machinery, play a key role in facilitating turnout at local elections, Denver, in an article co-authored by Gordon Hands, indicates that parties in Britain generally fail to play this role. They assert "... our observation of local parties convinces us that they are rarely efficient electoral machines".⁵¹ Denver and Hands also reiterate the potential of parties in this area, however, stating "... where concentrated efforts are made (by parties), then the effects on turnout can be dramatic".⁵²

What seems to be apparent from this discussion on parties and voter turnout in local elections is that simple utilization of party labels will not guarantee an increase in voter interest. Rather, party machinery must be used to its fullest extent if a positive impact is to be made on turnout rates. According to Denver and Hands, however, parties have generally not been doing this in British local elections and thus have failed to fulfil a function (increasing turnout) which they appear to be quite capable of accomplishing.

The second element of the participation problem in Canadian city government noted earlier in this paper concerns the 'unrepresentativeness' of city councils vis-a-vis society as a whole. Certain fairly affluent societal groups seem to be overrepresented. However, it would indeed appear that the

party involvement in local government has worked to curtail this situation in Britain. Gyford, for instance, views the involvement of parties in British local government as an extremely important means of making it more representative. To support this position he contrasts the British situation, where a working-class party (Labour) exists in most authorities which attempts to represent the less privileged segment of society, to that which Lipset found in the United States in his 1964 study. According to this study, in American cities where there was an absence of a party oriented to the lower strata, 'conservative forces' were winning most municipal elections. Gyford further states that in urban areas in Britain "With larger authorities and larger electoral areas the importance of party as a means of enabling individuals to wage a local campaign seems likely to increase rather than to decrease. This is particularly true for working-class candidates, for whom parties are in any case the chief avenue of recruitment to the council chamber".⁵³ Gyford also makes the following observation which serves to clarify the impact of party on 'breadth' of opportunity to run in local elections:

... the ability of party organizations to plan and finance a campaign has probably enabled many individuals to stand for the council who would otherwise have lacked the resources to do so; it is certainly

the case that the proportion of contested seats, and thus the number of potential councillors, is higher in local authorities organised along party lines than in those where independents dominate.⁵⁴

Buxton makes a similar point to that of Gyford. He asserts that party managers consider local elections to be important to party performance in the national election and therefore attempt to ensure that every local council seat is contested in order to maintain the party machine. Thus:

In this way, many people who would not otherwise become involved in local government are put under positive encouragement to stand, and given the necessary financial support. There is a distinct overlap between the presence of working-class candidates and the presence of party organization ... Moreover, whilst employers may be forthcoming with time off work once a man is actually elected a councillor, they are not likely to extend the same consideration during his candidature, and in these circumstances the burden of fighting an election without the backing of a party organization could well become intolerable for anyone in demanding employment.⁵⁵

On the basis of the discussion above it would seem quite fair to state that party involvement in British local government has, in fact, clearly had the effect of enhancing the representativeness of local councils.

To briefly sum up the conclusions from this discussion on the effects of party involvement in British local government on the particular areas cited as being of concern in

Canadian city government, in the area of decision-making the major findings are as follows. Parties do appear to facilitate leadership and direction on British councils. In the highly related area of coordination, it seems that parties probably fall short of being truly effective coordinating agents. However, they do seem to bring greater coherence to the activities of local authorities. In the area of policy formulation and planning, it appears that parties often do not succeed in being truly effective in these tasks. Nevertheless, they do seem to provide greater consistency to the policy initiatives of a local authority. Finally, on the question of accountability, it seems that some local voters do take into consideration the performance of the governing group on council when casting their ballots and that the greater visibility provided local decision-makers by their clear party affiliations has aided such voters in making these electoral decisions.

Turning to the area of participation in local government, first, it appears that simple utilization of party labels does not increase the interest of local voters. However, it also appears that when party machinery is used to the fullest extent (something which does not generally happen in British local politics) positive impact can be made on turnout rates. Secondly, it seems that party involvement in local government has enhanced the representativeness of British councils.

Thus, it would seem fair to suggest that parties in British local government can be seen as having a positive impact (of differing degrees) on all the troublesome elements of local government emphasized earlier in this paper as being of particular concern in Canada.

At this point it is necessary to place the findings arrived at so far in this chapter within the particular analytical framework, the 'Comparable Cases' approach, being utilized in this paper. It has been clearly illustrated in the first part of this chapter that most British local authorities, particularly those in urban areas, are dominated by political parties. This situation obviously differs from that in Canada where nonpartisan local government has been shown to be the norm. The respective levels of party involvement in city government in the two states of course represent one of the two operative variables in this analysis. It has been subsequently noted in this chapter that the political weaknesses cited as being significant in Canadian city government clearly seem less severe in British local authorities and that this state of affairs appears to be directly linked to party participation in local government in Britain. The respective severity or significance of these political weaknesses in city government in the two states represents the other operative variable in this analysis. Thus, as hypothesized in the Introduction, given the

broad similarities between the political systems in the two states and between the particular sectors of these systems of interest here (the control variables) which were illustrated in Chapters II & III, British city governments with their high level of party involvement (independent variable) would indeed appear to be less susceptible to the problems (dependent variable) which are perceived in Canadian city government.

Before leaving this particular discussion there would appear to be some additional benefits stemming from party involvement in British local government which deserve to be noted here. Gyford asserts that parties facilitate the organizing of local elections, as well as serving, to a certain extent, to aggregate various community interests because of their close personal and organizational links with local social and economic groups. These links enable the parties to receive and absorb interest group demands and include these demands in the policy-making process. Gyford feels that this interest aggregation role "... may help to account for the comparatively modest degree of independent pressure group activity at the local level in Britain compared with the United States".⁵⁶ The two beneficial functions of parties which Gyford cites above are strategic in any system of government. They are also elements which are largely missing in the generally nonpartisan municipal politics of Canada.

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Peter Richards provides some interesting comments with which to conclude this discussion concerning the perceived benefits which stem from the involvement of parties in local government in Britain. He is extremely critical of the view that local government must be kept 'apolitical'. Richards maintains that:

To argue that politics should be taken out of local government is, in part, to misunderstand the nature of politics. In a democracy we argue freely about the proper aims and methods of public policy. This is political discussion. Inevitably, the major questions which confront local authorities, education, housing, planning, raise issues which are political in nature and attract the attention of political organisations.⁵⁷

Part IV: Perceived Problems of Party Involvement in Local Government

Although the phenomenon of parties operating in local government prevails in most urban local authorities in Britain and continues to grow, it has its share of detractors. They cite a number of problems which they feel are inherent in the politicization by parties of local government. It would seem to be essential, given the purposes of this paper, to examine the most crucial of these arguments. First, however, it is perhaps worthwhile to examine briefly the historical basis of much of the negative sentiment concerning the involvement of

parties in local government in Britain.

Douglas Ashford asserts that the strong utilitarian trend which caused the growth of modern bureaucracy in the nineteenth century in Britain brought many of the same values forward concerning local government as did the American reformers of local government in the United States. In both cases it was perceived that corrupt, partisan local politics threatened the efficiency of local government.⁵⁸ In addition, J.G. Bulpitt maintains that present-day anti-party attitudes have firm roots associated with the traditional view that local decisions should be based on 'common agreement' and that divisions of opinion concerning these local public matters should be avoided. "Thus politics (in the sense of conflicts of interest) need not occur, and political parties are bad since they are based on such conflicts".⁵⁹ Those persons that retain this attitude regard the present involvement of parties in local government as 'illegitimate' since they believe it to produce a situation where issues are not 'discussed and decided on their merits'.

It is on this sense of the illegitimacy of party involvement in local government that the key criticism concerning the concept is based. For instance, parties are perceived to make decisions in private, as well as to promote conflict of an artificial nature over purely technical and administrative issues. According to Bulpitt, however, these views

"... concerning the illegitimacy of parties in local government are theoretically unsound: they stem from mistaken ideas about the nature of politics and the desirability of restricting organized political activity".⁶⁰ He asserts that one cannot separate issues that are legitimate matters for party dispute from those which are not. Whether they become disputes depends on the persons involved. Concerning the technical nature of many of these issues, Bulpitt states that technical decisions will always follow a political decision -- one based on what course to follow given the fixed nature of scarce resources. The fact that an issue is less important than some other matter does not mean that it should not cause conflicts of interest.

Bulpitt may be dismissing these criticisms too quickly, however. Concerning the first complaint cited for example, that parties make decisions in private, Buxton maintains that it is hazardous for a party group to make decisions on issues without the benefit of administrative officials present to brief it on possible technical problems. Only the party members who sit on the committee which dealt with a particular issue have the benefit of the officers' report on this issue and of the discussion concerning this report. "It is therefore not surprising that Groups sometimes come to decisions based on inadequate or garbled information, or that impression, feel or straightforward prejudice can take the place of realistic

assessment of the often very limited practical alternatives open to the authority".⁶¹ Buxton considers the popular rationale that local officials should be kept out of group meetings because this is analogous to civil servants not being allowed to address the House of Commons to be a very weak argument. He cites the view that the House of Commons has the role of deciding principles rather than of administering services in furtherance of those principles as is largely the case with local government. Buxton asserts that the exclusion of officials from group meetings seems designed to ensure that the group exposes itself to the hazards of making a decision without the benefit of any advice rather than to ensure that it bear the responsibility for acting upon the advice of the officers. "It is most dubious whether any principle of democracy demands inefficiency of this sort".⁶² Buxton also maintains that there are technical and administrative issues with no real party connotations which often wrongly become subjects of dissension between a group and one of the committees.

These are certainly valid criticisms. Local government is by nature more concerned than its national counterpart with administrative services and technical matters and thus for party groups to make decisions on such services and matters without availing themselves of the expert advice of

administrative officials, as apparently occurs in some British local authorities, is irresponsible. Despite Bulpitt's assertion that one cannot separate issues that are legitimate matters for party dispute from those which are not, it can be argued that many of the administrative and technical matters dealt with by local governments are, in fact, not 'political' in nature and thus should not be decided along partisan lines. This, of course, is not to say that British local governments do not deal with some real policy issues which result in some 'legitimate' party conflict, however. (Some such issues were suggested at the end of the preceding section.) Gyford, in fact, argues this latter point quite strongly. He cites the "... fundamental issues which cannot be brushed aside, issues of basic local government policy and also of the defence of the different interests for which the parties stand and by which they are sustained".⁶³ Some examples Gyford perceives of such issues which have resulted in legitimate divisions along party lines in certain localities in Britain include levels of expenditure, housing programs, education, planning, rents, and compulsory purchase.

Gyford notes and comments upon three additional common criticisms of party involvement in British local government. First, it has been argued that channelling candidacies for council seats through a party leaves the choice of who will

run for local government in the hands of relatively few people, discourages qualified people from entering the race, and encourages the selection of candidates on the basis of service to the party. Secondly, critics claim that party groups on council stifle free discussion and neutralize council's role in the local government process because all the important decisions are made in the majority group's caucus. Lastly, the critics assert that parties "... promote conflict within the local community and that this is harmful and unnecessary".⁶⁴ This last point is probably the weakest of the three. As Gyford states, at the scale of local authorities as they now exist in Britain there are bound to be differing social groups with conflicting political ideals. The second criticism, that party groups will stifle free discussion and neutralize council's role in local government, seems also to be of questionable validity. It can reasonably be argued that free discussion should still be possible within the party group itself as well as within the standing committees which are, after all, committees of council. As well, final debate and resolution, of course, still takes place in council.

There would appear to be some validity in the first criticism, however. Certainly the local party leadership in British cities and towns dominated by parties has the major role in recruiting 'suitable' members, although the local

Labour party organizations stress the need for party experience in their prospective candidates much more than their Tory counterparts. The other aspect of this common criticism, that party politics curtails the opportunity for many potential candidates to run locally, does not, as the discussion in the previous section clearly shows, appear to be particularly valid. Party politics, in fact, seems to make local government more open to a wider range of people.

From the discussion above it would appear that the two most serious problems which can arise out of party involvement in British local government are, first, that party groups may make decisions in private without the benefit of the expert advice of administrative officials and, secondly, that parties may promote conflict over non-political administrative and technical issues. The fact remains, however, that these problems are not an unavoidable side-effect of party activity in local government in Britain. Parties do not have to operate in a manner which would allow these problems to arise. They can and should and undoubtedly often do take advantage of all the expert advice which is available to them before making decisions, and they do not have to make every routine administrative issue which comes before council a vehicle for party conflict. Concerning this latter point, Richards in fact asserts that "However intense party activity may be, a mass

of minor matters remain to be settled by committee debate and by consultation between chief officers and committee chairmen".⁶⁵

Conclusions

In Canada, because of the relatively limited scope of open and intense party involvement in local government, it is still possible as well as valuable to argue the pros and cons of the politicization along party lines of municipal government. In Britain, however, party politics is such a pervasive element of local government in urban areas that it is no longer worthwhile or even sensible to debate in an 'either one or the other' fashion the issue of parties versus independent councillors, when discussing urban local authorities. Party politics in these urban authorities, and increasingly in the new large non-urban authorities, is generally an established fact. It has become an integral and legitimate element of the British local government system largely because of the perceived gains from party local involvement to the parties themselves and to the system in general. Although 'perceived' gains are stressed here it would nevertheless seem apparent from the discussion in this chapter that the national parties and the British local government system are affected positively by the politicization by these parties of local

government -- that many of these perceived benefits are, in fact, quite real. In making the above supportive statements concerning party involvement in British local government, however, we do not wish to obscure the fact that some definite problems may arise out of this local party activity. Two such serious potential problems were highlighted in the previous section of this chapter, but, as was pointed out then, such problems should be avoidable.

All in all, then, it would seem fair to suggest that the politicization of British local government by parties has been a generally positive political development for Britain, for the British local electorate, and for the municipal authorities themselves.

ENDNOTES

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- 26 Bulpitt, op. cit., p. 18.
- 27 Gyford, op. cit., p. 90.
- 28 Ibid., p. 82.
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- 30 See footnote #22.
- 31 Buxton, op. cit., p. 89.
- 32 Richards, op. cit., p. 117.
- 33 Gyford, op. cit., p. 90.
- 34 Bulpitt, op. cit., p. 121.
- 35 Gyford, op. cit., p. 80.
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CHAPTER V

Conclusions

As was stated in the Introduction, the chief goal of this paper is to assess whether full-scale involvement by political parties in city government represents a viable means of alleviating the political problems perceived to be associated with urban government in Canada. The main problem faced in attempting such an assessment is the fact that there is a dearth of examples of full-scale party conflict in Canadian city politics which can be utilized in performing an analysis. This has forced us to turn our focus to another state where significant party involvement in city government does take place, after first establishing that most of the major features of the political system of this alternative state and the major features of the sub-systems which are of particular interest here, the party system and the municipal system, are sufficiently comparable to their Canadian counterparts. This approach is consistent with a method common to comparative analysis, the 'Comparable Cases' or 'Most Similar Systems' approach. The state which we have utilized is, of course, Britain where, as has been illustrated in Chapter Four, local government is dominated by political parties. The discussion in Chapters Two and Three serves

to establish that the political systems of the two states, and the relevant subsystems of each, are sufficiently comparable to allow the utilization of Britain as the basis for the assessment of the relative merits of party politicization, provided due consideration in this final discussion is given to the crucial differences noted between the two states. However, before proceeding with this assessment it is perhaps wise for the sake of overall coherence to restate briefly the major findings of each of the preceding chapters.

In the first chapter of this paper, which provides an overall historical perspective on municipal politics in Canada, the dominant nonpartisan tradition in Canadian local government was illustrated and an attempt was made to explain its dominance. It was pointed out that certain historical factors had instilled within the Canadian population the view that nonpartisan municipal politics is the norm. It was also noted that established parties have, until recently, generally lacked interest in direct involvement in local politics, that civic electoral arrangements in this country do not encourage such involvement as those of the United States often do, and that there has not been the impetus to partisanship that exists in Britain in terms of representing particularly significant class interests and making significant party gains via local involvement. This discussion further

indicated that, despite the strong nonpartisan strain, a covert, indirect relationship has often existed between the established Canadian parties and the municipal political sphere. The second part of Chapter One illustrated the increase in interest in partisan city government among some members of political parties who are active at the civic level and some observers of urban politics which has been in evidence in recent years, and discussed the impetus behind it.

In the second and third chapters of this paper the goal was to determine, through a comparison of the political systems of Britain and Canada, and in particular, through a comparison of the roles and functions of parties and the structures and functions of local government in the two states, whether there was justification for analyzing party involvement in British local government and relating these findings to Canadian city governments. To put this into the 'Comparable Cases' framework, we were attempting to establish that one could control for most of the major characteristics of the two political systems and of their respective party and municipal systems by illustrating convincingly their similarity. As has already been noted in this final discussion, the conclusion arrived at was that the two states are broadly similar, in terms of their major features in the areas being compared. These features can

therefore be considered controlled for and the analysis of the British experience with parties in local government and the relating of it to Canada can be viewed as justified, so long as necessary heed is paid to those few additional areas of difference between the two states which were found in the comparative discussion. These areas of difference were as follows: the federal nature of Canada's political system; the ideological, class-based nature of Britain's political parties; and the differing internal decision-making structures and electoral formats of many of Canada's city governments.

The findings of the core chapter of this paper, Chapter Four, represent the most crucial conclusions in the paper as they provide the basis for the assessment of the viability of full-scale party involvement as a means of alleviating the major political problems of Canadian city government. The general conclusions from this analysis of the British situation were that parties do clearly dominate local politics in that country, particularly in the urban centres, and that this domination has been, on the whole, a positive development. Concerning more specific findings, the following conclusions were reached. First, party involvement in British local government appears to have had, in differing degrees, a positive impact on all the troublesome elements of local government emphasized in the Introduction as being of particular concern in Canada. Secondly, party

involvement appears to provide some additional benefits to local government through the ability of parties to facilitate the organization of local elections and to aggregate numerous group demands within the community. Thirdly, there are some distinct benefits from involvement in local government accruing directly to parties which have helped draw them into municipal competition in Britain. Finally, party involvement in British local government has, in two areas in particular, the potential for some negative impact on local government as well. These potential problems are, that a situation may be created where party groups may make decisions in private without the benefit of expert advice from administrators, or that parties may promote conflict over 'non-political' administrative and technical issues. In terms of the 'Comparable Cases' framework being utilized in this paper, of major importance here is the fact that large differences do appear to exist between Britain and Canada with regard to the particular operative variables being analyzed, the levels of party involvement in city government (independent variable) and the significance of the particular political weaknesses under examination (dependent variable).

It is now time to turn our attention to the actual assessment of full-scale party politicization of Canadian urban government as a means of alleviating those particular political problems discussed previously. The first area of

political weakness we cited involved decision-making. With regard to the leadership element of this problem, it has been pointed out in the discussion in Chapter Four: that governing parties in British local government are able to secure the passage of approved recommendations through committees and the full council and thus are able to provide a sense of direction to the business of the local authority; that parties serve by their very existence to encourage debate and criticism on council, as well as to encourage the emergence of an opposition group, which further facilitate direction on council; and that, most importantly, an effective leader generally emerges on a party-dominated British council who, as head of the governing party, can provide council as a whole with policy direction. It is the nature of the parties themselves which allows them to fulfil these functions. Parties in British local government reflect to a great extent the highly cohesive nature of the parliamentary parties in that country. It is this cohesion which allows the leader of the governing party to provide real direction on council, and allows the party to generally stand together when recommendations come before council. Obviously this cohesion is also crucial to the other party or parties on council which wish to provide truly effective opposition and criticism. As has been noted in Chapter Two, Canadian parliamentary

parties share with their British counterparts this high level of cohesion. This model of party behaviour is thus the one most likely to be adopted at the municipal level in this country if parties were to become dominant civic actors in Canada. Thus, it would seem logical to suggest that, if full-fledged party involvement of this type were adopted in Canadian cities, the same type of impact on overall leadership on councils should theoretically result. However, it is here that one of the systemic differences which was stressed earlier between Britain and Canada comes into play -- the difference between municipal decision-making structures of British cities and those of particular Canadian cities.

It was noted in Chapter Three that many Canadian cities have been provided with decision-making structures which attempt to separate the legislative and administrative functions, namely the council-commissioner and council-manager structures. By reducing the impact of the legislators (the council) vis-a-vis the execution of policy, such structures undoubtedly also reduce the ability of the council leadership to provide overall direction to civic affairs. As Jack Masson states, the council-board of commissioners system "...fragments power and provides for a weak executive."¹ It would thus seem that, before a governing party could succeed fully in providing effective leadership to these city governments,

their decision-making structures would have to be changed by the respective provincial governments to a more typically parliamentary format where legislative and executive functions were fused (i.e., a version of the council-committee system). Thus, in a system reformed in this manner, the leader of the council and his 'cabinet' (an executive committee) would emerge from within the governing group on council. (Unless the council leader was given the title of 'mayor', the post of mayor would undoubtedly be a ceremonial one in a system of this type as it is in Britain. A separately elected mayor with executive powers would be inconsistent with the parliamentary format.)

Concerning the highly related issue of a lack of coordination on Canadian city councils, it has been indicated that in Britain the ability of governing parties to provide a sense of direction to the various departments and committees and to provide bureaucratic officers with guidance as to what policy proposals council will accept brings greater coherence to the actions of British local governments. Although this falls below the achievement of truly 'coordinated' municipal activity it reflects a positive step toward it. Looking at Canada, greater coherence in city government activity should also be possible here, given similar levels of party control and of cohesion within the governing party. (This party

control and cohesion is, of course, dependent upon the type of adjustment to decision-making structures discussed above being made.) Achievement of this greater coherence may seem like a modest accomplishment but, given the general dearth of 'order' vis-a-vis municipal activities in Canada described in Chapter One, it would be one which would undoubtedly be greatly welcomed.

The third element of the decision-making problem involves failings in the area of long range planning and policy or priority-setting. It appears that the same problems which curtail the effective actions of parties in this area at senior levels -- the complexity and large scope of matters with which governments must now deal -- also face governing parties in British local authorities and serve to reduce their ability to act as effective policy-makers and planners. Nevertheless, it appears that parties do facilitate greater consistency in the policy initiatives which are taken by local governments, wherever these initiatives have originated. Again, such greater consistency vis-a-vis policy should be welcomed in Canadian cities, given the problems in the policy area alluded to in Chapter One, and it would seem likely that comparably cohesive parties could provide this greater consistency in our city governments.

Concerning the fourth element of the overall decision-making problem, that of limited accountability, the findings from the last chapter suggest that many voters in local elections in Britain, unlike the common conception in that country, do base their electoral choices on more than just national issues. Therefore it has been further suggested that these voters take into consideration the performance of a council's governing group when voting (and are thus able to hold them 'accountable'), largely because in the party-dominated councils such a group is actually visible. The problem remains, of course, that the ability or even desire of an electorate to hold their elected representatives accountable for actions taken by government is highly debatable in all 'democratic' systems at all levels of government. The limitations on accountability, brought about by such factors as voter ignorance or apathy and problems of a systemic nature, represent an issue which has been mulled over by scores of democratic theorists and one which is beyond the scope of this particular paper. It is encouraging nevertheless to note that some municipal voters in Britain, because of the partisan nature of the local political battle, do appear to be able to focus their attention on the local arena and discern the major actors and the roles they play. It would seem logical to assume that full-scale party

involvement in Canadian city government could similarly aid in the identification of the important actors and issues in our municipal arenas for those voters (however few they might be) who are willing and able to make a critical assessment of their local government.

Turning to the second general area of concern, 'participation', in terms of voter turnout it is clear from the analysis of the situation in Britain that utilization of party labels alone in local elections does not represent the ultimate answer to low turnout rates as many Canadian observers, as well as some elsewhere, have long alleged. Simple utilization of these labels does not guarantee an increase in interest among the British local electorate. However, the discussion in Chapter Four does seem to indicate that when party machinery is utilized to its fullest extent in the campaign there can be a positive impact on turnout rates in local elections. One faces problems when attempting to assess the significance of this finding for Canada. It was made clear in Chapter Two that a significant difference exists between political parties in Britain and Canada in the areas of organization and level of ideological commitment. Given the large, ideologically-motivated organizations of British parties, it is perhaps more easy to visualize these parties being able to mount the kind of

successful campaign described in Chapter Four than their Canadian counterparts (at least the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives) with their small organizations and largely nonideological natures. The NDP, however, which as has been noted earlier, has perhaps more motivation than any other established Canadian party for becoming seriously involved in city politics, would appear to be much more capable of mounting such campaigns.

Concerning the second participation-related issue, the lack of 'representativeness' of Canadian city councils, it would seem that party involvement in British local government does help to increase the electoral opportunities for the less advantaged segments of society and thus to allow councils to reflect more accurately the actual socio-economic makeup of the community. Parties in Britain can provide the financial and organizational resources necessary for successful campaigning which most individuals lack. This is particularly crucial for working-class individuals who are undoubtedly the least able to mount their own independent campaigns. Labour party support of such candidates has thus been of distinct importance. In Canada party financial and organizational support for municipal candidates is generally lacking because the parties are largely absent from the local political arena, while, not surprisingly, city politics is

clearly dominated by the more 'advantaged' elements within Canadian urban communities. Thus it would appear that, if the more disadvantaged urban dwellers in this country are to achieve the kind of representation their counterparts enjoy in Britain at the municipal level, a party which is clearly oriented to their particular interests must operate on a large scale in Canadian city politics. The NDP with its orientation to the working class and to social democratic goals is the obvious established party to play such a role*,

*It is perhaps of relevance here to note the following findings from a detailed statistical study on the Winnipeg city council. During the 1972-75 term the 'nonpartisan' Independent Citizens' Election Committee (ICEC) group included, for the whole or a part of this time, individuals with the following backgrounds: thirty-seven councillors were in the professions, the finance, insurance and real estate field, were general business executives, or were involved in trade; five others were classified in a miscellaneous category, but included a retired police chief, a spouse of a professional, a spouse of a general business executive, a spouse of a finance, insurance and real estate executive, and a supervisor for a public utility. These persons could probably all be viewed as enjoying fairly high socio-economic status. The only two ICEC members who could not be viewed as enjoying such status were the single skilled labourer and, perhaps, the councillor listed under the transportation category and described as a supervisor for a taxi association. Turning to the NDP group on Winnipeg council during this period, of the thirteen councillors affiliated for the whole or part of this time with the party, six were identified in the professional, finance, insurance and real estate, and general business executive categories, while the other seven included a postal worker, an organizer for the NDP Youth, an electrician, a general

although it is clear from the election results over the years that it has not been particularly successful in making this appeal at the national level.

In the final section of Chapter Four it was noted that two fairly serious problems potentially stemmed from party involvement in British local government -- that party groups may make decisions without the benefit of the expert advice of administrative officials, and that parties may promote conflict over issues of a non-political, administrative and technical nature. Obviously, if such party involvement were to emerge in Canadian city government, some probability of these related potential problems arising would also exist. This should be cause for concern about the 'politicization' of Canadian cities, since the two potential negative developments represent a decrease in the efficiency of city government. The performance of a municipality's responsibilities has to suffer if decisions are being made without adequate

employee for the CNR, a mechanic for the CNR, a painter for the CPR, and the director of the Indian-Metis Friendship Centre. It would seem clear from this that less advantaged groups were much more widely represented within the NDP group than they were within the ICEC. (Source: Report and Recommendations of the Committee of Review -- City of Winnipeg Act, Appendix IV (The Rea Report)). Government of Manitoba, 1976, pp. 49-51)

consultation with the administrative experts, or if decisions on technical matters are being 'muddled' by partisan considerations which are largely irrelevant to the object of the particular decision. In the discussion on Britain, however, it has been pointed out that these problems are not unavoidable side-effects of party involvement in local government as parties do not inevitably have to operate in a manner which would allow them to arise. It would in fact appear that in British local authorities numerous technical matters are settled in committees and by consultation between committee chairmen and the administrative officers responsible rather than by the caucus of the governing party. It would also seem clear that, given the technical nature of much of the business of local government, governing party groups on British councils often must take advantage of expert advice available before making policy decisions.

Turning our attention concerning these potential problems noted in Britain to Canada, it can be argued that because of the fragmented, non-cohesive nature of most Canadian city councils they are presently likely to defer almost totally to expert administrative officials and their advice when it comes to making most policy decisions. Such a situation would seem to contain its own particular dangers in view of the role of councillors as our elected representatives and 'designated' decision-makers at the

civic level. It can perhaps be suggested that full-scale party involvement could lessen this total dependence of city politicians on the administration. This should not undermine extensively the positions of the administrative officials, however, because as in Britain the technical nature of much of the business of Canadian local government demands that there be heavy emphasis on administrative input into municipal policy. Similarly, the routine technical matters which are presently dealt with in council committees in most Canadian cities should, as is the case in British councils, continue to be handled in this manner for the most part, despite the presence of parties and partisanship on councils. Exceptional cases will occur, however, and thus there remains some cause for concern which cannot be dismissed totally.

It would seem logical at this point, in light of the above discussion, to comment on the potential problems cited in Chapter One (p. 53) as being anticipated by many Canadian observers if full-scale party involvement in city government were to emerge in this country. These observers have asserted that the electorate's disenchantment with the particular party governing municipally could lead to the defeat of that party's candidates at the senior levels of government, regardless of the candidates' merits, because of the association between the two party branches. This

argument would appear to lack real credibility. This is because a similar case can be made for the effects of provincial governments on their fellow party members at the national level and certainly no one has suggested that provincial politicians drop their party labels in order to protect the national parties or vice versa. Such a proposal would be dismissed as ludicrous. What can be gleaned from the British case is that the chief concern there is over the impact of national party images and issues on the support of the local party rather than on the opposite relationship. This concern appears to be well-founded as it is clear that national issues do often impinge upon the voting decisions of the majority of the British local electorate. On the other hand, it also seems clear that a significant number of these voters do base their electoral decision in a local government election on other than national issues. These people would appear to be able to differentiate local concerns from those which are more national in scope.

Turning to Canada, it appears that on this point the federal nature of our country may be very beneficial. It can be argued that Canadians are, in fact, even better equipped to discern and differentiate local issues, given their experience in a federal system and the resulting support patterns which have emerged within that system. They have been more conditioned than British voters to picking out

issues as they pertain to the particular level of government for which an election has been called. Support for this view can be found in the fact that numerous studies have shown that Canadians quite often vote for one party federally and another provincially. Thus, if party politics ever did come to play a dominant role in Canadian city government one might expect that local voters would be even more willing and able than their British counterparts to distinguish the strictly or largely local issues and make them, to a certain extent, the basis for voting a particular way.

Opponents of party involvement in Canadian city government have also argued that it would be potentially dangerous if the same party were in power at all three levels of government. They claim that such a situation could seriously strain a party's organizational and financial resources and, in a situation where a municipal and a provincial or federal election were occurring almost concurrently, could result in the municipal contest being ignored while the party concentrated its attention on the other election. This, on the surface, appears to be a logical argument. Concerning the first point, financial and organizational strain could very conceivably occur if a party held power at all three levels of government. However,

such widespread success could perhaps also result in increased support both financially and organizationally for the party in question. Thus the likelihood of the negative impact suggested by these observers is anything but clear. In addition, it should be pointed out that situations where one party controls all three levels of government and where elections occur at roughly the same time both would happen very rarely; as aberrant cases the significance of problems stemming from such situations diminishes greatly.*

In addition, opponents of partisan city governments within the established parties have expressed the fear that if they held power provincially they would face political rivalry from their own group on city council (not to mention from an opposition party which holds power locally) and cite the fact that this sometimes occurs between federal and provincial branches of a party. What must be pointed out, however, is that the relationship between federal and provincial governments in Canada, both of which enjoy significant constitutional powers, is quite different from

*It is, nevertheless, worth noting again that in Britain in 1979 the rare event of simultaneous national and local elections occurred. One result was that voter turnout for the council elections was double that of the previous year. (See p.176 of this paper.)

that which exists between provinces and city governments which are, after all, creatures of the provinces and thus have no constitutional sphere of authority in their own right. Municipal governments in this country are ultimately dependent totally upon the provinces in terms of powers and heavily dependent upon them in terms of financial resources. These facts would certainly appear to curtail the possibility of a party-dominated city government acting as an effective rival to a provincial government. Such rivalry between governments at the national and local levels does not appear to be a major concern in Britain, undoubtedly because of the similarly subordinate position of local government vis-a-vis the government at Westminster.

The final fairly common argument against partisan Canadian city government which was cited in Chapter One involved the view that parties in opposition provincially should concentrate their efforts on achieving provincial power rather than 'wasting their time' in the municipal sphere: because provincial legislatures represent the real source of meaningful change; because of the financial and organizational limitations parties face (which have already been discussed above); and because municipal party involvement will confuse the electorate while diffusing the party's overall effort. The two new points here would also appear

to be open to contention. Concerning the first point, parties should also be able to effect change if they gain control of city hall because, as was emphasized earlier, the pressures of urbanization have increased the scope and cruciality of business of city governments in Canada. These governments are now, therefore, dealing with important policy issues. (They also, in some cases, represent populations larger than those of some of our provinces.) Turning to Britain, the nature of the present responsibilities of that country's local authorities have been characterized in a similar manner. The governing parties of these authorities thus are making some important policy decisions and can effect change.

The other new aspect of this argument suggests that civic party branches confuse the electorate and diffuse a party's overall effort. To respond to this point, first, it would seem logical to suggest that, on the contrary, rather than further confusing the municipal electorate, party involvement can do nothing but make less confusing the plethora of 'independent' unknown quantities standing for 'who knows what' presently putting themselves forward as candidates for council seats. As Richard Buxton has been cited as stating earlier in this paper concerning Britain, "...party politics do at least give the electorate something

to vote about, and some indication of the general attitude that candidates are likely to adopt toward their duties."² Secondly, it is arguable that involving themselves in civic battles and thus becoming more familiar with urban issues should, rather than diffusing party efforts, heighten their ability to appeal to urban voters in provincial and federal elections. It is clear that in Britain such local involvement is perceived as a means of maintaining the party organization in 'fighting trim' and thus as anything but a source of diffusion of overall party strength. It has been illustrated that the Labour party in fact established itself as a serious national contender after earlier successes at the local level. The British Liberal party's 'revival' in the early 1970's can also be attributed partially to earlier successes in local government elections.

It should also be noted that all of these anticipated problems relating to partisan city government in Canada are relevant only if national/provincial parties are vying for electoral office in municipal elections. Thus, although they seem of dubious validity anyway, these potential problems would be meaningless in a situation where the local arena

was the battleground for purely local parties.*

It would seem essential at this point to provide some kind of 'all-encompassing' assessment on the viability of political parties as a means of alleviating the political problems perceived in Canadian city governments, in light of the points which have been made in this chapter. The above analysis would suggest that full-scale party involvement can have a positive impact on these political problem areas, given certain developments. It also suggests that, as in Britain, certain new problems related directly to this party involvement may also arise. These potential problems are worthy of concern. However, it would also appear that they are not unavoidable and, given the nature of business of local government, unlikely to arise very often. Concerning those party-related problems anticipated by some Canadian observers, the above examination seems to indicate that none of them are particularly compelling in terms of providing firm grounds against the party-politicization of Canadian

*The question of which type of party can operate best in city politics, an established national one or one which is purely local, comes to mind here. This is a valid and interesting point of debate but it is a question which demands an extensive discussion which is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this paper.

city government. In fact the overall conclusion arising from the discussion in this paper is that such politicization by parties would represent a very positive step for city government in this country. It holds the potential for consistent, coherent, visible, and interesting urban government in Canada, qualities which for the most part would appear to be lacking at present in Canadian cities.

Discussing the merits of a particular development is, of course, a largely futile exercise if the possibilities of it actually happening are remote. In the latter part of Chapter One some causal factors were cited which seemed to increase the likelihood that Canada's large urban centres would soon become the sites of full-scale party competition. These included the fact that urban industrial communities generally produce distinct groups with interests different from other groups, and that an increase in urban-related problems has forced provinces to create larger, more financially sound urban political entities, which because of their size and complexity of responsibilities, represent authorities where party involvement in their affairs is a viable proposition. These factors, of course, exist quite apart from any perception of the gains which can be made by the municipal political system and by any national/provincial parties, which could also act as a positive force towards the

politicization of Canadian cities.)

Given the existence of such factors as increased urbanization and the establishment of large-scale local authorities necessary to full politicization by parties of Canadian urban government, it would appear that there remain two crucial tasks to be performed by the supporters of party involvement in city government which, if carried out successfully, might eventually ensure this development.* These tasks would in fact appear to be essential. The first task involves convincing the provinces to make certain structural changes to the governments of some cities which

*It should be pointed out that some observers of comparative local government view party politicization to be an inevitable stage in the process of political development. Thus they assert that, rather than urbanization providing necessary but insufficient factors for politicization, it presents the necessary conditions for which party politicization is a natural developmental outgrowth in the overall process of 'modernization'. Torstein Hjellum, for example, holds this view concerning Norway. Concerning the necessity of 'urbanization' for this development he states, "By and large it seems that a necessary prerequisite for politicization is some degree of economic modernization: the economic structure must be differentiated beyond some minimum level, communication among the inhabitants of the community must be adequate, and the local unit must be of a minimum size." (Source: T. Hjellum, "The Politicization of Local Government: Rates of Change, Conditioning Factors, Effects on Political Culture", Scandinavian Political Studies. Volume 2, 1967, p. 76)

will facilitate party involvement. The changes include the expansion in size of the generally very small Canadian councils, the move from the at-large election format utilized in some cities to one based on single-member wards, adaptations to the particular decision-making structures used in many cities, and an adjustment in the municipal tax structure.

Concerning expansion of the size of councils, as was pointed out in Chapter Three, larger council size makes the organizational benefits which parties bring to a legislature and to the electoral process much more attractive, if not essential. Such benefits are, of course, much less alluring at present in a city like Vancouver where the council has only eleven members or in the many other Canadian cities with relatively small councils. On the subject of electoral format, it appears evident that at-large elections preclude the involvement of working-class groups in city politics because they negate the ability of these groups to appeal to the sectional interests so necessary to their electoral success. The British case has shown us how a working-class oriented party operating fairly successfully at the local level can help stimulate full party politicization in many cities by forcing opposition groups to openly confront them in the civic arena. At-large elections also appear likely to forestall the type of tight party cohesion during

elections so important to the overall electoral success of all parties by creating the probability of competition between candidates of the same party as they vie for the support of the same city-wide or ward-wide electorate. Thus the adoption of single-member wards by cities presently operating under the at-large system would appear crucial before any attempts to bring full party competition to these cities can be successful.

With regard to decision-making structures, it has been noted elsewhere in this chapter and in Chapter Three that many Canadian cities have structures which attempt to separate the legislative and administrative functions of government. Because the council-commissioner and council-manager systems greatly reduce administrative (executive) control for councillors, they in turn undoubtedly reduce the incentive for parties to organize in order to seek control of these councils. As stated earlier, these structures, because of their separation of functions, also preclude the type of overall leadership of city government by a governing party which typifies the parliamentary style of politics at other levels. Clearly then, the development of full-scale party competition in cities with these structures is highly unlikely. The replacement of these decision-making structures by the provinces in question with structures which are

similar to basic parliamentary models, in which the legislative and executive functions are fused, would thus appear mandatory if full party politicization is in fact to occur.

Concerning the need for an adjustment to the tax structure in our urban municipalities, as J.F. Hough has insightfully noted (see p. 47 of this paper) the present high level of dependence on property taxes in cities transforms a low income voter from an individual who favours an expansion of government services at senior levels into one who supports low government expenditures at the municipal level. This situation can have tremendous negative impact on a party like the NDP which favours high levels of government services but which would also be heavily dependent on the low income voters for electoral success at the municipal level. As relative success by the social-democratic NDP at the local level can also be a possible catalyst for entry by 'right-wing' parties into the municipal arena, this tax structure problem takes on even greater potential import. Supporters of party politicization will find they have influential allies when it comes to reform of the municipal tax structure, however. The inadequacy of the municipal tax base for meeting the greatly expanded demands of the modern city is a glaring problem and one which has

aroused concern in numerous circles -- political and academic.

The second essential task which must be undertaken by supporters of party involvement in Canadian city government involves illustrating convincingly to the municipal voters that city government does in fact deal with real policy issues, not just housekeeping matters, and that these policy issues provide a legitimate basis for conflict between parties. The electorate must also be convinced that definite systemic gains will result from party activity in local government. The accomplishment of this task is essential because, although supporters of overt party involvement in civic politics may have perceived changes in the business of urban government which make the involvement of parties a beneficial and logical development, such changes, as evidenced in the Toronto and Winnipeg cases discussed in Chapter One, have not been made clear to the municipal electorate in this country. The equating of nonpartisanship with municipal government has long been an element in Canada's political culture. It will take a significant educational effort to alter this fact. Donald Higgins puts the cruciality of the accomplishment of this 'educational' task in perspective:

Perhaps the most important qualifier of party success in city politics is that the cities' electorate have yet to be convinced that parties and the parliamentary model ought to be applied in city politics. Thus, before disciplined political parties win council seats at the polls, they have to win legitimacy in the minds of their

electorate.³

To conclude this paper, full-scale party politicization seems clearly to hold the potential for being a positive development for urban government in this country, particularly in terms of those areas which now concern so many observers of the municipal political sphere in Canada. However, it also seems clear that such a development will not just happen automatically. Certain structural reforms are necessary in some cities, and the general attitude which prevails among voters, city politicians, and indeed among party politicians at the senior level in Canada, that party involvement in the civic arena is illegitimate and unnecessary, will have to be altered. At the present time, it is not clear that there is a sufficient body of support for party politicization to create the kind of pressure necessary to bring about these structural reforms or to present persuasively the facts concerning the changed nature of urban government and the potential positive role for parties within it. However, it is our view that in the near future support for this development will mount significantly as city dwellers in this country become increasingly aware of the political inadequacies of their urban governments. It is the author's hope that an academic thesis such as this one may help in the growth of this awareness by contributing to the overall debate on city government in Canada and its problems.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jack K. Masson, "Decision-Making Patterns and Floating Coalitions in an Urban City Council", Canadian Journal of Political Science. Volume 8, 1975..
- 2 See Chapter Three, endnote #42.
- 3 Donald J.H. Higgins, Urban Canada, Toronto: 1977, p. 244.

APPENDIX I: THE STRUCTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Conurbations

Mixed Urban and Rural Areas

English Provinces

6 Metropolitan Counties	39 Counties
36 Metropolitan Districts or Boroughs	296 Districts or Boroughs
Parishes or Towns (in some places)	Parishes or Towns (except in larger urban areas)

London

Wales

Greater London Council

8 Counties

32 London Boroughs

37 Districts or Boroughs

Communities or Towns
(except in larger urban areas)

Reproduced from P.G. Richards, The Reformed Local Government System (Revised 3rd Edition). London: 1978 p. 57

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