1977

The Influence of Political Leaders on the Provincial Performance of the Liberal Party in British Columbia

Henrik J. von Winthus

Wilfrid Laurier University

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THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL LEADERS
ON THE PROVINCIAL PERFORMANCE OF
THE LIBERAL PARTY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

By
Henrik J. von Winthus

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of Liberalism in British Columbia from the aspect of leader influence. It intends to verify the hypothesis that in the formative period of provincial politics in British Columbia (1871-1941) the average voter was more leader-oriented than party-oriented. The method of inquiry is predominantly historical.

In chronological sequence the body of the thesis describes British Columbia's political history from 1871, when the province entered Canadian confederation, to the resignation of premier Thomas Dufferin Pattullo, in 1941. The incision was made at this point, because the following eleven year coalition period would not yield data relevant to the hypothesis.

Implicitly, the performance of political leaders has also been evaluated in the light of Aristotelian expectations of the 'zoon politikon'. The initiated reader in political philosophy will have no difficulty in detecting that this thesis has been built around the question of how man may achieve 'polity', and what stands in its way.
Throughout this presentation events have sometimes been recounted in journalistic style, more clearly to depict the nature of leaders involved, and to preserve the flavour of a bygone era.
THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICAL LEADERS
ON THE PROVINCIAL PERFORMANCE OF
THE LIBERAL PARTY IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

By

HENRIK J. von WINTHUS
University of Munich

THESIS

Submitted to Wilfrid Laurier University
in partial fulfillment for the degree of
Master of Arts in Political Science
1977
"Magnifice vir,...
When your messenger arrived,
I was on the privy, engaged
In contemplating the follies
Of this world of ours."

Niccolo Machiavelli to Francesco Guiciardini,
May 17, 1521
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vi.
INTRODUCTION

In a federal system of government major political parties suffer from a variety of factors brought upon by the very nature of federalism, i.e., the synthesis of diversified regional interest accumulation, and centristic aspirations. For the regionalist, federalism has value only in itself, not for itself. Accepting this premise, it logically follows that participation in a federal system should limit regional aspirations only with respect to prospects of achieving 'the common good', or aspects of mutual benefit.
However, it appears that nothing exists in an organized form without self-interest. It therefore seems rational to assume that federally inspired political parties naturally pursue a goal which furthers their self-image and strengthens federal rather than regional interests.

"Electoral success is the primary interest of political parties; the achievement of electoral success is their raison d'etre. In so far as they successfully pursue their self-interest, they fulfil their prime function as instruments of democratic government."^1

The most obvious practical conclusion which can be drawn from this statement (when applied to federal systems) is that federally inspired parties must try to develop and control rational organizations, suitable for conducting co-ordinated efforts to maintain or gain power at the federal level. This may lead to conflicts between federal and regional interests even among people of the same political persuasion.

The Liberal Party in British Columbia is a case in point. From its inception in 1897, the B. C. Liberal Association has been suffering from a lack of cohesion which was the result of often distinctly different interest articulation by the provincial and federal wings of the party. Federal domination of the provincial party machine has often been blamed by provincial politicians and their supporters as the major handicap in provincial campaign effectiveness. Nonetheless, the Liberals in British Columbia have repeatedly wrested the political power from the Conservatives in that province, which
points to the fact that some provincially oriented Liberal leaders were able to win the confidence of a majority within the electorate. From the foregoing it follows that a decisive majority of voters who had previously elected Conservatives, swung their vote to the Liberals; they subsequently re-elected Conservatives but after only one term of office favoured the Liberals again in a massive show of confidence at the polls. This pattern was finally disrupted, when in 1941 the electorate returned a Liberal minority government, and premier Thomas Dufferin Pattullo resigned, after the B.C. Liberal Association endorsed a motion to enter into a coalition with the Conservative Party.

To explain this pattern of voting behaviour in a different way, it seems valuable to know that most British Columbians, irrespective of political leanings, firmly believed that the federal government in Ottawa has never fully upheld its end of the bargain in the Terms of Union, which induced British Columbia to join Canadian confederation and that British Columbians always had to fight for the province's rightful share. Consequently, political leaders in B.C. — and in particular the premiers — have had to adopt a 'fight Ottawa'-policy to win the respect and favour of the voter. Today, though still very much alive, the 'fight Ottawa'-policy takes second place to more immediately pressing political problems in the minds of most B.C. voters, but in the formative years of provincial politics in B.C. this aspect played a major role, and provincial politicians had to take that factor into account.
Sydney W. Jackman has expressed the general sentiment like this:

"The men who have directed the affairs of British Columbia . . . have not been in their own eyes merely premiers of a province of Canada but rather they have been the prime ministers of the kingdom of British Columbia."2

A classical example of this attitude is the retort of premier Pattullo, who, when in the late 1930's one of the always inquisitive journalists, comparing the statements issued by the Auditor General in Ottawa and the provincial auditors, discovered that the travel expenses of the premier by far exceeded those of the entire Mackenzie King cabinet, replied:

"I am not interested in trifles; the great province of British Columbia is not interested in trifles; besides, the Prime Minister of British Columbia is definitely worth far more than the whole Federal Cabinet."3

In this thesis I have attempted to isolate and analyze a phenomenon which does not seem to have occurred elsewhere in Canadian politics. My observations lead to the hypothesis that in the formative period of provincial politics in British Columbia the average voter was more leader-oriented than party-oriented.

To test this hypothesis I have mainly relied on relevant publications on B.C. politics, as well as on government documents in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the Archives of the Pacific Press, and the Public Archives of Canada. Considering the time period under observation (1871-1941) the method of inquiry is
predominantly historical.

The main body of the thesis comprises four chapters.

Chapter One describes the period from 1871 to 1903; it is not directly related to the hypothesis since elections were not fought on party lines, which would have to be a precondition for the hypothesis. However, the chapter is significant because it provides insights into the mentality of political leaders of the time and their attitudes towards the general public.

Chapter Two treats the period from 1903, when party lines were introduced, to the election of 1916, which ended the Conservative supremacy. The chapter demonstrates the character of Conservative governments in the 'Era McBride' and sets forth the reasons for internal friction in the Liberal party.

Similarly, Chapter Three gives an account of politics in British Columbia from 1916 to 1927, which was a time of Liberal predominance but not without difficulties for the Liberals.

Chapter Four, treating the period from 1927 to 1941, exhibits the reasons for the violent oscillations in voting behaviour, until stabilized under successive Pattullo governments, to the resignation of premier Pattullo and the formation of the Hart/Maitland-coalition.

I have attempted to treat the subject without personal bias but it remains to interpret some key terms which I have used in this thesis according to my own understanding. Thus, the term
'genuine' Liberalism is synonymous with 'classical' Liberalism, and wherever I have used either of these terms, they are to be interpreted in an 'idealistic' sense. There is no room here to treat the philosophical basis of Liberalism extensively. It must therefore suffice to say that by 'classical' Liberalism I do not mean 'Manchester Liberalism', but classical Greek Liberalism. In other words, I do not approach Liberalism in a narrow economic sense, but philosophically.

Another term I have to be concerned about is 'polity'. Even some distinguished contemporary social scientists use it axiomatically — without proper care. Aristotle defines polity as "... a constitution which is a really well-made combination of oligarchy and democracy (which) ought to look like both and like neither." Realizing his dilemma, trying to create a pure form of government out of two impure ones, he added that it should be tempered by men of excellence.

The decisive ingredient in this prescription then is: 'men of excellence'. And for this ingredient I am also constantly searching in this thesis, meanwhile accepting the inadequacies of our 'polity'. 
NOTES


3. Ibid., p. 219.

In the one hundred and six years since British Columbia joined Canada, there have been twenty-six premiers. Fourteen of these men filled the office in the first thirty-two years. In this formative period no party system had yet developed, and governments rose and fell according to the support a dominant personality from among the elected members could rally behind him.
TABLE I*1

PREMIERS OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF PARTY LINES
(1871 - 1903)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE**</th>
<th>TERM OF OFFICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MCCREIGHT, John Foster</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13.11.1871 - 20.12.1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>DE COSMOS, Amor</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>23.12.1872 - 09.02.1874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>WALKEM, George Anthony</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>11.02.1874 - 27.01.1876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>ELLIOTT, Andrew Charles</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>01.02.1876 - 25.06.1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>WALKEM, George Anthony</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25.06.1878 - 06.06.1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>BEAVEN, Robert</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.06.1882 - 27.01.1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>SMITHE, William</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29.01.1883 - 28.03.1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>DAVIE, Alexander Edmund</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15.05.1887 - 01.08.1889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>ROBSON, John</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>02.08.1889 - 29.06.1892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>DAVIE, Theodore</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>02.07.1892 - 02.03.1895</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>TURNER, John Herbert</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>04.03.1895 - 08.08.1898</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>SEMLIN, Charles Augustus</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15.08.1898 - 27.02.1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>MARTIN, Joseph</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>28.02.1900 - 14.06.1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>DUNSMUIR, James</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>15.06.1900 - 21.11.1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>PRIOR, Edward Gawler</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>21.11.1902 - 01.06.1903</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Prior to 1890, it is often difficult to determine the precise date for appointment to or resignation from the premiership.

**AGE = Age at time of assuming premiership.
This was, of course, a matter of personal preference, personal or regional interests, and often outright favouritism. Although the terms "Liberal" and "Conservative" were sometimes loosely applied to individual members, they were — with the exception of Martin and perhaps, Robson — all "birds of the same feather." When representing B.C. federally, even men like de Cosmos, "A Grit in every pulsation of his heart," or Robson, "the single reformer in a dreary . . . period of provincial politics," would faithfully support the Conservative party.

The first provincial election was held in the autumn of 1871; twenty-five members were elected. From among them Lieutenant-Governor Trutch selected John Foster McCreight as British Columbia's first premier. To most British Columbians the choice of McCreight came as a surprise, but in the Lieutenant-Governor's opinion he was better versed in the law than anybody else in the province, and besides, the other members of the legislature were "queer kittle-cattle — a wild team to handle . . ." McCreight, a member of "The Ascendancy," the old, Anglo-Irish gentry, was certainly no reformer. The Victoria Daily Standard described his government as "... a body of men who had been uniformly opposed to the principles and practices of Responsible Government." His government survived the first year; but when on December 17, 1872, the Assembly opened for the second session, a statement in the Speech from the Throne triggered an attack by the reform faction of de Cosmos. The Lieutenant-Governor had implied that Responsible Government was
working well under McCreight. To this statement the reformers objected and introduced an amendment, opposing the statement in question. The amendment won by a vote of eleven to ten. Thus, the first provincial government in B.C. had been defeated on a confidence measure. McCreight and his colleagues subsequently resigned.  

Amor de Cosmos, one of the most colourful, eccentric and controversial personalities in B.C. politics, until the emergence of Joe Martin, succeeded McCreight as premier. As the founder of the Confederation League he had been instrumental in guiding a reluctant British Columbia towards union with Canada.

Under the Terms of Union which induced British Columbia to join Canada, the federal government under acting Prime Minister Sir Georges Cartier, had guaranteed to wipe out British Columbia's public debt ($1,045,000), promised a federal loan for the construction of a dry-dock at Esquimalt, the commencement of a transcontinental railway within two years, to be completed in ten years, and the yearly expenditure of $1,000,000 on the B.C. section of that railway. But what the general public did not know was that J.W.Trutch, who had led the negotiations for the colony, both in London and Ottawa, had given the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, his solemn pledge that British Columbia would not insist on the literal fulfillment of the railway clause.  

Premier de Cosmos was facing difficult times. British Columbia was beginning to feel the full impact of the depression, which made
the demand to ban oriental immigration an extremely serious issue. But to this Ottawa turned a deaf ear. The other explosive issue was that at the beginning of 1874, construction on the Island section of the railroad had not yet started, and all the federal survey money was being spent on the mainland. This, despite the promise that Esquimalt would be the terminal, made the speculating, influential business clique in Victoria highly suspicious. Matters came to a head when de Cosmos requested changes in the Terms of Union in order to realize guarantees for the building of the Esquimalt dry-dock, which he had obtained in Ottawa and London. A public meeting was held to protest the premier's action; then, with emotions running wild, a crowd of about eight hundred people, led by Senator Macdonald and Dr. Helmcken, marched on the Legislature, singing, "We'll hang de Cosmos on a sour apple tree." The Speaker evacuated his chair and de Cosmos took sanctuary in the Speaker's room. Right then and there the victorious Victorians created a Terms of Union Preservation League. After this tumultuous scene, de Cosmos, who simultaneously held a federal seat, decided to withdraw from provincial politics.

George A. Walkem, Attorney-General under de Cosmos was asked to form a government. This clearly shows that there were as yet no clear-cut ideological lines drawn in British Columbian politics. The de Cosmos faction simply broke up and was absorbed by other power groups. Walkem was a shrewd tactician. When he became premier at the age of thirty-nine, he could already look back on ten years of
political experience. In adopting a hard line towards Ottawa, even threatening secession, he got away with almost exactly the proposal which had brought down de Cosmos. But when T. B. Humphries introduced a motion criticising his policies, the government was defeated. Yet Walkem still had considerable power behind him, and it was increasing rather than diminishing. It has been said that the succeeding Elliott administration lived by the grace of Walkem and only as long as he wanted it to. Promptly, when Walkem was ready to strike, the Elliott government collapsed, and George Walkem took the reins once more. Again, it is indicative of the type of tactical scheming prevalent in the British Columbia of those times, that T. B. Humphries, whose resolution had brought down the first Walkem government, was now made Provincial Secretary and Minister of Mines in the second one. Through skillful political manoeuvering, Walkem managed to stay in office for four years, even though he sometimes had to rely on the Speaker's vote. Finally, Walkem was seeking a way out, and after the death of Supreme Court Justice Robertson, was elevated to the Bench, retiring "to the decent obscurity of the judiciary." Robert Beaven, Minister of Finance in the second Walkem government, followed but was defeated at the polls. Nevertheless he managed to "hang in" for half a year until in January, 1883, William Smithe took over.

The Smithe administration experienced few problems. The overall economic situation was now more favourable and the opposition, at least for the first year, was not well organized. Smithe also
seemed to be more constructive in his policies than his pre­
decessors had been. For the first time, relations with Ottawa
were very amiable too, much to the benefit of British Columbia.

In 1886, the opposition had formed ranks under the leader­
ship of Robert Beaven, and they charged that governmental suppor­
ters had received money from government contracts. Smithe coun­
tered by pointing out that almost all opposition members had also
profited from government contracts. An investigation showed that
everybody in the legislature, with the exception of Beaven and
Smithe, had benefited financially.\textsuperscript{16}

William Smithe had the good fortune of seeing the completion
of the transcontinental railway during his term of office. On
the fourth of July, 1886, the first passenger train from Montreal
arrived in Port Moody.\textsuperscript{17} Six weeks later, on August thirteenth,
the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway was also completed.\textsuperscript{18} The ter­
minus, however, was ultimately to be Vancouver, and no boycott or
legal action initiated by Victoria and Port Moody speculators would
change it.

Smithe seems to have occupied a power position comparable to
that of a king in a constitutional monarchy, while the real power
rested with the various business syndicates, in particular the
transportation interests. In Vancouver people would say: "The
CP.R.'s the government here,"\textsuperscript{19} while the same was claimed for the
B.C. Express Company in the district stretching from Ashcroft to
Barkerville; in Kamloops and Revelstoke, according to popular belief,
it was John A. Mara, the sponsor of various transportation enterprises, and on Vancouver Island, Robert Dunsmuir,20 the wealthiest man of British Columbia.

Stability and attitude of the Smithe government had contributed much to the fact that business cliques could get a firm grip on the wealth of the province, squandering its resources for personal gain, and thereby blocking the way to a splendid future that might have been.

"The legislature was now composed largely of acquisitive merchants, lawyers, industrialists and landed proprietors who had prospered during the days of railroad construction, taken up residence in Victoria, and then closed ranks. A single glance would reveal that all the major figures, and particularly the premiers, knew that they had an assured social position."21

The Smithe administration had run smoothly most of the time, and after the sudden death of the premier, Alexander E. B. Davie, who succeeded him, inherited a comfortable majority in the House. Davie continued Smithe's policies in principle until, after only two and a half years in office, he in turn was removed by death.

Next in line was John Robson. The Robsons had immigrated from Scotland at the beginning of the nineteenth century and settled in Lanark, Perth County, Ontario. There, as the second of his father's sixteen children, John Robson was born. Raised in the finest Scottish tradition, he has been described as "...industrious, frugal, a staunch member of the Presbyterian Church."22 He had settled down to the conventional life of a storekeeper when — like so many others — he decided to try his luck in the 1858 gold rush. John Robson and three
other young men — "The Argonauts," as they called themselves — set out for British Columbia, arriving there on June 21, 1859. Robson did not discover gold, but a fact of life, namely: "...that there were more certain, and, perhaps, more easy ways of making money than by digging for it in the ground." But for another year he still earned it the hard way as a woodcutter. Then a group of people wanting to start a newspaper in New Westminster offered him a job as editor. He took the chance and was soon so successful that he was able to buy out the original group and become sole proprietor of "The British Columbian."

"Robson was a typical crusading editor and he hated the governing clique which he considered to be illiberal, snobbish and thoroughly undemocratic."

That he did not lack the courage to back up what he wrote was demonstrated in the contempt of court case Judge Begbie brought against him. Begbie, one of the most influential political figures in the British Columbia of that time, was in Robson's own words, one

"...of the ruling element...who...looked upon the common people as unfit for consideration at all. They were the rulers and the people should bow down and serve them."

When Robson accused Begbie of having obtained crown lands illegally and having been involved in questionable dealings concerning mining claims, Judge Begbie charged him with contempt of court. Robson refused either to name his informant or to apologize and was promptly committed to prison. The people of New Westminster held a public
meeting, and passed resolutions condemning Begbie. The atmosphere became even more emotionally charged when from his prison cell "Prisoner Number Thirty-Three" wrote an editorial entitled, "Voice from the Dungeon." There were rumours that Robson's friends were planning to liberate him by force; there were also rumours that the authorities were bringing in troops. Finally Robson "surrendered," sending Judge Begbie a formal retraction and an apology, whereupon he was immediately released. The Begbie incident had greatly increased Robson's popularity among ordinary citizens. He continued his attacks on "The Establishment," but in time his political career would sweep him to positions of power and influence. Concurrently his private wealth, chiefly derived from investments in real estate, had reached considerable proportions. His associates, privately and publicly, were now the leaders of the various business interests. By the time he became premier he had broken with the Liberal party.

John Robson, the one-time champion of the underprivileged, now himself became the target of severe criticism by the press. Most of this criticism was related to the continuing policy of the Robson administration to hand out land grants of enormous acreage, timber leases at giveaway prices, and railway charters with their "fringe benefits." The latter practice in particular gave the press ample opportunity to criticize the government. All an applicant had to do to obtain a railway charter was to list the names of the directors of his company, the location of the registered office and the termini
of the proposed railroad on a standard form. The application would then have to be sponsored by a private member for a railroad bill and by a cabinet minister for a subsidy act. Following this procedure, two Victoria businessmen, in co-operation with a Senator and two members of Parliament received a grant of fourteen million acres to build a railway from the Yellowhead Pass to Nanaimo. Needless to say, the project never got started. Only then, with constant harassment by the press, and under pressure from the independent members in the legislature, did Robson embark on a programme of reform. Within a period of three years he had eliminated most of the major weaknesses in the Land and Mineral Acts.

"Coal and water resources were vested in the crown; minerals were excepted from railway charters; a limit of 640 acres was placed on purchases of surveyed crown land; and timber lands were defined and a limit placed on their sale." Further progressive plans were halted when Robson, on a visit to London, jammed a finger in a taxi door, and the resulting blood poisoning abruptly ended his life.

His successor was Theodore Davie, younger brother of Alexander Davie, and Attorney General in the Robson cabinet. His single most important achievement — at least in the eyes of the Vancouver Islanders — was to commence the construction of the new government buildings in Victoria. It decided the issue of the permanent location of the capital once and for all. The sentiment of mainlanders is reflected in the following squib which was published at the time:
"DESIABLE INVESTMENT. To be sold by auction not later than April 1st at Victoria, B.C. In liquidation for bill of sale for six hundred thousand dollars. A Going Concern. All that portion of the province of British Columbia known as THE MAINLAND situated opposite and east of Vancouver Island and separated from it by the Gulf of Georgia; together with all the livestock consisting of men, women and children."31

What was politically more relevant was the fact that three years later, in the federal elections of 1896, the mainland swung its full support to the Liberals of Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

After the provincial election of 1895, although successful at the polls, Theodore Davie resigned because of failing health. He was succeeded by John Herbert Turner, "a distinguished gentleman with a swift and snappy walk, head erect and body well-poised."32 Under Turner the rule of the "Smithe Dynasty"* continued. But when in 1898 the premier called an election, he and his supporters won only seventeen out of the now thirty-eight seats in the Assembly. Twenty-nine election protests had been filed.33

"After three years in office the Turner government, the government of special interests — of railway industrialists, coal-barons, wholesalers and importers, and lumber and salmon-canning capitalists—failed to win the support which for so long had been given to the "Smithe Dynasty."34

The Lieutenant-Governor, Thomas R. McInnes, now informed Turner that he:

* The term is Margaret Ormsby's.
"...would not feel justified in granting... another dissolution and appeal to the electorare, and as after a careful study of the situation," he wrote, "...I am convinced that you could not command a majority in the Assembly, I shall not put the Province to the delay, or to the expense, of a special Session of the Legislature, merely for the purpose of formally demonstrating what has been already sufficiently demonstrated to me by the General Elections." 

Turner objected and argued that negotiations were under way to strengthen his ministry, but without awaiting the results, McInnes invited Robert Beaven to form a government. "The course you propose is without precedent in constitutional government," Turner wrote to the Lieutenant-Governor. Three days later, Robert Beaven announced his inability to win sufficient support.

McInnes now asked Charles Semlin of Cache Creek, a former teacher turned cattle rancher, to form a government. Semlin had been leader of the Opposition during the Turner administration and should have been asked in the first place. But Semlin had only eight supporters, and apart from the still sizeable Turner group, there were other factions, namely those of Joseph Martin and Francis Carter-Cotton, opposing him. The latter two were exponents of party politics, Martin favouring Liberalism and Carter-Cotton Conservatism. Yet for the time being a way had to be found to form a ministry. Semlin at last succeeded in persuading Martin and Carter-Cotton to support his government. He chose Martin as Attorney General and Carter-Cotton as Minister of Finance. Despite the weak
basis of support, the Semlin administration introduced considerable reform legislation. Semlin himself was intent on promoting education, while Martin, though not opposed to the premier's interests concentrated his efforts on social legislation. He introduced an eight-hour work day for mine workers; result: the mine owners in Rossland shut down the mines. His Alien Exclusion Act, which might have saved British Columbia's mineral wealth for future generations of Canadians was disallowed by the federal government, following protests from Washington (D.C.).

Martin was a true Liberal in the "ideal" sense of the word — a classical liberal — and consequently as unpopular in his time as he would be in ours.

The truce between Martin and Carter-Cotton was superficial. Joe Martin's sanguine temperament allowed Carter-Cotton no reprieve. Not content with attacking his opponent in cabinet meetings, Martin proceeded to challenge him in public. Matters came to a blow when, at an official banquet at Rossland, the Attorney General lost his temper and told the assembled company that he would not be "silenced by hoboes in evening dresses (sic)."*40 Thereafter Semlin saw no other alternative than to request Martin's resignation. From then on the Semlin government limped on, sometimes having to rely on the casting vote of the Speaker to stay in office. Finally, on February 23, 1900, it was

*There are conflicting reports on this incident. 1) Margaret Ormsby claims that "civic officials and mining magnates brought undue pressure to bear on him." 2) S. W. Jackman claims that Martin "made a very tedious and boring speech. The audience became restive and Martin shouted, ..." For sources see note 40.
defeated by a vote of one on the new Redistribution Bill. Semlin, who had reason to believe that he might be able to form a new coalition, obtained McInnes' consent to a few days' reprieve. But suddenly, in the midst of negotiations, the Lieutenant-Governor charged him with inefficiency and extravagance and demanded his resignation. Semlin complied, but the House formally condemned McInnes' action by a vote of 22 to 15, and expressed its "regret that his Honour had seen fit to remove his advisers, as in the present crisis they have efficient control of the House." Under these circumstances, McInnes did Martin no favour by calling on him to form a new government. Yet in his opinion Martin was the man "best able to meet the necessity of the situation, create decisive issues and establish final order...."

It was as a reaction against the Lieutenant-Governor's action, rather than against Martin that the House emphatically carried a motion of non-confidence in Martin by a vote of twenty-eight to one. In spite of adverse conditions, the new premier vigorously proceeded to construct a cabinet and, preparing to go to the polls, turned to the Provincial Liberal Association for support. Yet this federally conceived and dominated organization, created "to unite liberally-minded British Columbians for the purposes of supporting and understanding the policies of the Liberal government in Ottawa," turned a deaf ear to his pleas. The prime reason for the decision not to support Martin seems to have been founded in the fact that in the past he had too often demonstrated a degree of individuality
which was too much to take for the "Aparatchik"-type system of the federal Liberal party machine. In his earlier political experience in Manitoba, Martin's convictions had collided with party discipline and parliamentary etiquette. On one occasion he had accused the Speaker of the House of gross partisanship. His fellow members demanded that he make a public apology and until he do so he was to be held in contempt of the House. The House then adjourned. When it met the next day, Martin showed no inclination to apologize and the House adjourned again. This was repeated several times. Finally, Martin came forward and said:

"I understand that this honourable House cannot proceed with the business of the country until I appear in my place and apologize to you Mr. Speaker. I do not wish to be responsible for any further delay in the transaction of public business, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to humbly apologize for calling you a partisan, but it was true all the same." 47

When in 1888 the Liberals under Thomas Greenway formed a government, Joseph Martin was appointed Attorney-General and Minister of Education. He performed creditably until on the separate schools and French language issues, he ran counter to government policy without having informed his colleagues. At the end of the session, Martin resigned and returned to private law practice. In 1895 he won a seat in the House of Commons as the first Liberal to be elected in Winnipeg. 48
attacked the Conservative Prime Minister, Sir John Thompson. Martin went on from strength to strength, speaking on many subjects, expressing himself coherently and cogently on them all. During Laurier's tour to the west in 1894 Martin, a sort of self-appointed western expert, had a prominent place in the entourage."49

In the federal elections of 1896, the Liberals swept to victory, but in Manitoba they fared badly. Martin lost his seat and moved west to British Columbia.

Now, as the appointed premier of B.C., Martin stood alone. When the Liberal Association, which was undoubtedly under orders from Ottawa, refused to help, Martin naively turned directly to Laurier only to receive the Prime Minister's criticism for not having dismissed the House, and his orders to appeal to the electorate without delay.50 It must be suspected that Sir Wilfrid, the Prime Minister, quietly resented Martin's brilliance and feared his independent spirit.

After three months preparation Joseph Martin launched his campaign. His programme was the most progressive one so far in the history of the province, but the concurrent emergence of the United Socialist Labour Party with an even more radically progressive programme often split the vote in favour of the Conservatives. When the ballots were counted Martin had thirteen supporters — the strongest faction in the House. Thus, in spite of all conceivable odds his campaign had been successful. But — as Senator William Templeman had predicted earlier — unless Martin tried to negotiate a coalition (before going to the polls!) with either the Turner or
the Dunsmuir factions, he would be doomed to failure. Committed to a one-man stand, Martin resigned. In the interest of public business, twenty-five members of the legislature agreed to support James Dunsmuir, a man who had "...no party predilection, excepting for the party that will do most for him," for a period of twelve months. Nothing extraordinary happened during the Dunsmuir administration, or that of E.G. Prior which followed the Dunsmuir government. Commented the "Kaslo Kootenaian:"

"British Columbia has been in her political life cursed with a horde of hoboes, who are utterly inconstant and apparently without the remotest sense of responsibility." Gilbert M. Sproat, an oldtimer from before the times of maritime union,* and a member of "the London Committee for Watching the Affairs of British Columbia," put it even more bluntly. Towards the turn of the century, as an embittered old man, he wrote:

"Most of your so-called 'up-to-date' men here, towards the close of this century, are in the category of political bats.... There is not in some respects any essential difference between the 'then' to which I refer — the ante piddling-premier period — and the 'now' that is more or less known to you. We then had Mr. Facing-both-ways, the dog-visaged demagogue, the fluent fool and the arrogant ass, just as we now have those types, and always will have them."

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* The term "maritime union" here refers to the union of the British crown colony of Vancouver Island and the mainland territory in 1864.
NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. All data contained in this table has been compiled from: Ormsby, British Columbia: A History.


8. Ibid., p. 263.


10. Loc. cit.


13. Ibid., p. 37.


15. Loc. cit.


18. Ibid., p. 304.


21. Ibid., p. 304.
22. Jackman, Portraits of the Premiers, op. cit., p. 78.
23. Loc. cit.
25. Ibid., p. 79.
27. Ibid., pp. 79-80.
34. Loc. cit.
35. McInnes to Turner, August 8, 1898, B.C. Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers, Victoria, 1899, p. 881.
36. Turner to McInnes, August 9, 1898, Provincial Archives of B.C., Victoria.
38. Ibid., pp. 320-321.


47. *Loc. cit.*


49. *Loc. cit.*

50. Laurier to Martin, April 20, 1900, *Laurier Papers*, Provincial Archives of B.C., microfilm, reel 1215.


Edward G. Prior, British Columbia's last premier of the "ancien regime", was dismissed on June 1, 1903. An investigation had revealed that members of his government were involved with a conflict of interests and that the premier's own hardware business, E. G. Prior and Co., had received a government contract to supply materials for the construction of the Chimney Creek bridge.¹

Prior tried to defend his actions but, after all the facts were known, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Henri Joly de Lotbiniere,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE*</th>
<th>TERM OF OFFICE**</th>
<th>PARTY***</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MCBRIDE, Richard (later, Sir)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>01.06.03 - 15.12.15</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>BOWSER, William John</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15.12.15 - 23.11.16</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>BREWSTER, Harlan Carey</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>23.11.16 - 01.03.18</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>OLIVER, John</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>06.03.18 - 17.08.27</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>MACLEAN, John Duncan</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20.08.27 - 20.08.28</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>TOLMIE, Simon Fraser</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21.08.28 - 15.11.33</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>PATTULLO, Thomas Dufferin</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>15.11.33 - 09.12.41</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>HART, John</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>09.12.41 - 29.12.47</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>JOHNSON, Byron Ingemar</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>29.12.47 - 01.08.52</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>BENNETT, W. A. C. (William Andrew Cecil)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>01.08.52 - 13.08.72</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>BARRETT, David</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14.08.72 - 16.12.75</td>
<td>NDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>BENNETT, William (Jr.)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Since 17.12.75</td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*AGE - Age at time of assuming premiership
**TERM - Term of office as premier
***PARTY - C/Conservative, L/Liberal, SC/Social Credit, NDP/New Democratic Party
wrote to him:

"While admitting that you must honestly have considered that you were doing no wrong, I am, to my sincere regret, unable to continue feeling that confidence in your judgement which would justify one in acting any longer on your advice.""\(^3\)

The incident provided the press with a welcome opportunity to clamor for the end of "personal government" and the introduction of party lines, although in 1902, the Conservatives, Liberals and Labour (the Provincial Progressive Party) had already endorsed the introduction of party lines at their respective conventions.

At least on the part of Liberals and Conservatives, the idea was federally inspired. With the Liberal victory of Sir Wilfrid Laurier in 1896, British Columbia Liberals had for the first time since Confederation broken into the Conservative phalanx and had sent four of the six representatives of that province to Ottawa. This performance was repeated in the federal election of 1900, and in 1904 all of the then seven British Columbia representatives were Liberals. Similarly, the federal Conservatives had an interest in regaining their former stronghold in the west — which they eventually did. But in 1896, their only substantial support came from Vancouver Island.

The "Victorians" of Victoria, B.C., were Conservatives in the literal sense of the word. One of Laurier's contacts in that city, Archer Martin, wrote:

"All the young men who come here find that conservatism is 'fashionable' and so they vote. This social power only exists because ever since Confederation it has been
### SEATS WON AND VOTES POLLED IN B.C. BY LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES IN FEDERAL ELECTIONS (1878 - 1911)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>LIBERAL</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>****</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>Votes</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Seats</td>
<td>Votes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2945</td>
<td>88.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3318</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2826</td>
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<td>1887</td>
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<td>3395</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4598</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4009</td>
<td>71.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1592</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5601</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9231</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8921</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18152</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10814</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12985</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26451</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9781</td>
<td>38.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12458</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25184</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17503</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13412</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>37368</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25622</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16350</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>43559</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Although Socialist parties occasionally fielded candidates, they never won a federal seat during these years. The greatest combined number of votes other than Conservative or Liberal occurred in 1908 (6453 = 17.3%), just to swing back to a record low in 1911 (1587 = 3.6%).

**1878:** Two Conservative seats won by acclamation (same in 1882, 1887, 1891).
**1896:** Two instances of two Conservative candidates contesting a single riding.
**1900:** Two Liberals contested a single riding.
**1904:** One Liberal seat won by acclamation (same in 1908).
### TABLE IV

**BRITISH COLUMBIA'S FEDERAL REPRESENTATION AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULAR VOTE**

*(1878 - 1911)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Liberal Seats</th>
<th>Conservative Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Legend:*

- 'L' = Liberal
- 'C' = Conservative
backed up by political power. Young men find that to be known as a Liberal means, largely, social exclusion and thus they have not the force of character to fight."

In 1897, the first Liberal Provincial Convention in British Columbia adopted a resolution to create a Provincial Association. Senator William Templeman, who had been responsible for calling the Convention, became its first president (1897 - 1902).

"Templeman, who had been elected 'federal leader' of the province by the Liberal members of parliament while still a Senator, provided the main channel of communications between British Columbia and Ottawa and thereby encouraged provincial Liberals to respect party unity. As a cabinet minister he informed Laurier of political developments within the provincial party and consequently the federal leader was able to avoid any apparent involvement in the internal disputes of the provincial party."

William Templeman was succeeded in his capacity as "federal leader" of the province by B.R. Maxwell, M.P., who served as president of the association from 1902 to 1907. During this formative period, the association was dominated by federal personalities and interest. Nevertheless, the provincial faction, under the leadership of Joseph Martin, was strong. More concerned with local needs, they did their utmost to use

"...the conventions and party platforms not only to inform the public of provincial Liberal policy but also to inform Ottawa of ... (their) position and demands."8

*After 1911, the term "federal leader" was abandoned but whenever the Liberals held power in Ottawa, the cabinet ministers from the province continued to serve in this capacity (ref. J.B. Ward, op. cit., p. 11).
In fact, some provincial Liberals were highly critical of certain sections of Laurier's programme and refused to participate in campaigning for federal elections. Thus,

"from its very inception, ..., the Liberal Party of (sic) British Columbia has experienced federally derived strains. These strains have reflected both the sectional politics of British Columbia and the administrative difficulties encountered in serving and coordinating two distinct areas of interest."[10]

Personality clashes further diminished the effectiveness of the party organization. Joseph Martin, who had narrowly been elected leader of the Liberal Party in B.C. by the convention of 1902, found himself entering a crucial election campaign with doubtful resources after the convention of 1903, held before the election, had refused to give him unanimous support.* Prominent personalities — like John Oliver — deserted him, officially over policy matters, but more likely because they expected (as in the case of Oliver) to be included as members of a future coalition government.

The problems Martin had encountered with the association during his term of office as Premier and the reasons behind it were discussed in the previous chapter. Aside from Laurier's personal sentiments concerning Martin, the Prime Minister, in 1903, was in the politically enviable position to be able to do without Martin; his star was still rising and federal interests in British Columbia were taken care of by Templeman, et al.

* Morton claims that "Martin had resigned the leadership of the Liberal Party in the province, ... and that the Liberals campaigned without an acknowledged leader." (Ref. Morton, op. cit., p. 79)
This was the general situation within the Liberal Party in British Columbia when, after the dismissal of Premier Prior, the Lieutenant-Governor asked Richard McBride to form a government. (See Table V on following page).

Richard McBride was born in New Westminster as the son of an Ulster Protestant father and an Irish Roman Catholic mother. He studied law at Dalhousie, and although he was not considered brilliant, his academic record was creditable. His facility for mixing with all social classes stood him in good stead when he ran for election as a Turner candidate. He loyally followed Turner into opposition and his early parliamentary record centered around criticizing Joe Martin. In June of 1900, he joined the cabinet of James Dunsmuir as Minister of Mines.

"Affable, poised, self-assured and polished, McBride soon became a welcome guest at the extravagant parties which Mrs. Dunsmuir gave at 'Burleith'. His genial personality, his lack of malice and his courtly manners charmed everyone. In any crowd he was a striking figure: his height, his fine build, and his mop of prematurely grey hair, resembling a perfectly finished wig, gave him an air of distinction. He was quite at home in the company of the millionaire premier and Turner, the salmon-canning magnate, who now held the office of Minister of Finance, and he never embarrassed them by indicating that his views on political and social reform were more advanced than theirs."13

In September of 1901, the Dunsmuir government was faltering and rumours of a possible coalition of Dunsmuir and Martin forces caught McBride's attention. On September 3rd, he noted in his diary:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>LIBERAL SEATS</th>
<th>LIBERAL VOTES</th>
<th>LIBERAL %</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE SEATS</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE VOTES</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE %</th>
<th>TOTAL SEATS</th>
<th>TOTAL VOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>405,506</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>416,640</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>899,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>494,427</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>450,790</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>950,763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>540,827</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>483,177</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>1,030,738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FEDERAL ELECTION RESULTS (Liberal - Conservative) (1896 - 1904)
"9:30 a.m. walked to government buildings with father. Explained the whole situation. He said, 'My boy — resign everything but your honour!' Met cabinet at 10:30. Notified Premier of my intention to resign and withdrew from cabinet meeting at 11:25 a.m."14

Two months later, Dunsmuir resigned and Prior took office as premier. Both McBride and Martin preferred to oppose the new government but were now vying for the position of Official Leader of the Opposition. The situation in the Legislature was ridiculous. Martin, designated leader of the opposition during the Dunsmuir administration, had been ineffective since coalition talks between his faction and the Dunsmuir government had been in progress. And curiously, McBride's ranks were swelled by Liberals (among them such prominent political figures as T. W. Peterson and John Oliver), who, for whatever reasons, disagreed with Martin's tactics. On the eve of the opening of the session of 1902, a memorable spectacle ensued. "Like snails carrying their houses on their backs"15 the supporters of either faction shuffled the desks on the floor of the House.*

"During prayers, Martin skipped in behind McBride, ready to seat himself in the chair of the Leader of the Opposition. Quietly, McBride's men pressed in from the sides, placed another chair in front of Martin, and

* As far as can be ascertained, the Sergeant-at-Arms had rearranged the seats. "Martin, entering the House before prayers, saw a desk with the name of McBride on it where his own used to stand, while his own had been pushed farther down the row. He grew irate and protested with his usual vigour, but just then the House was called to order and the chaplain came in to read prayers. Martin went grimly to the place assigned him but did not stay there." While the chaplain was imploring "peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety . . . Joe Martin was observed to be edging along behind his pious colleagues to come to a standstill beside McBride's chair." (ref. Morton, page 38.)
then stood back to enjoy the scuffle that ensued the minute the chaplain said the final 'amen'."16

The McBride supporters must have been surprised when Joe Martin, quickly assessing the situation, snatched the chair away from under McBride and seated himself. Richard McBride, trying to do the same, landed in his lap. To describe the following scenes without losing the flavour of such exquisite political comedy, further quotations from sources closer to the event and the "comedians" involved seem to be in order:

"... Smith Curtis (Member for Rossland and a former law partner of Martin in Manitoba, but now politically estranged) sprang forward and grabbed his former colleague by the neck in an endeavour to pull him out of the chair. Two of Martin's friends sprang to his assistance and tried to pull Curtis off, but he in turn was reinforced by two of McBride's friends, and a lively tug of war followed, with Martin and his chair as the rope. Fighting Joe was in his element. He grasped the arms of the chair and planted his feet firmly on the floor."17

No one knows any longer who else, besides the Speaker, shouted:

"Order! Order!" But finally, the calls were heeded and the Speaker gave W. W. B. (Billy) McInnes the floor:

"Mr. Speaker," McInnes began, "I have witnessed with mingled amusement and admiration the affecting spectacle of the member for Rossland with his arm entwined around the neck of the senior member for Vancouver (Martin), and have also seen the member for Dewdney (McBride) seated lovingly on the member for Vancouver's knee, but wondered whether under the circumstances the member for Vancouver did not feel inclined to take him over his knee and treat him in the good old-fashioned way."18
McInnes, although not yet thirty years old, had already earned for himself the reputation of being the Demosthenes of B.C. The members of the House showed their good sense of humour by acknowledging his speech with relaxing laughter. McInnes then went on to introduce a resolution indicating that members should continue to hold the seats occupied by them at the last session until they could come to some agreement among themselves. Thus, for the time being, Joe Martin remained Leader of the Opposition but, honour having been satisfied, Richard McBride took over for the remainder of the session of 1902, and onward until the dismissal of Prior. On the Conservative side, the situation in 1903 was also confusing. The Provincial Conservative Convention had bypassed young Richard McBride as party leader in favour of Charles E. Wilson, a member of the "Old Guard", backed up by Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper. It was therefore understandable that McBride was hesitant to announce an election campaign strictly to be fought on party lines; in fact he had hinted that he would not, and it was generally understood that John Oliver, T. W. Peterson and perhaps other Liberals who had supported him against Martin would become members of his government.

In October 3, 1903, he went to the polls. The electorate gave him a mandate by a slim majority. Out of a total of forty-two seats, he had won twenty-two. The Liberals had won seventeen, and three went to Labour representatives. McBride, who had somehow managed to convey the impression that he was sympathetic to the aims of organized

*Margaret Ormsby reports eighteen Liberals and two Socialists, while James Morton counts seventeen Liberals, three Socialists. Morton was a parliamentary journalist in Victoria at that time, and later secretary to and biographer of Premier John Oliver. Because of his first-hand knowledge, his figures have been adopted as his.
labour, was also hoping to enlist for his government the support of the three Socialists. After that had been achieved, he began to construct a government by party predilection. When he personally broke the news to those Liberals who had supported him, Charles Munro, who had no cabinet ambitions of his own, could not help commenting, "There is one difference between you and Judas, Dick. Judas had the decency to go out and hang himself."  

Joe Martin had lost his seat and, worse, he had no political home anymore. Fighting Joe took the consequences. "I have quit — retired for all time. I am disgusted with politics." These were his final comments before he retreated from the political scene in B.C., only to reappear in Britain, soon becoming a member in the House of Commons — as a Liberal! Meanwhile, after the departure of Martin, the Liberal party had reorganized under the leadership of John A. McDonald, a lawyer from Rossland, with John Oliver as Second in Command.

The foundation of McBride's future success was the choice of his friend, Captain Robert G. Tatlow, a man of natural courtesy, absolute integrity, and of progressive spirit, as Minister of Finance. The province was close to bankruptcy, and the McBride administration had had to assume a public debt of $12,000,000, but, to everybody's surprise, in 1905 Tatlow could already point to a slight surplus which rose to $8,000,000 by 1910. He also enacted a Civil Service reform without making enemies for the new government.

The first serious crisis struck the government in the spring of
1906. In connection with a land grant to the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, the Liberal Opposition charged that the government had granted a land bonus without legislative enactment. Public opinion, stirred up by the Liberal press, demanded the dismissal of R. F. ("Bob") Green, Commissioner of Lands and Works. The select committee investigating the case broke on party lines. The three Conservative members filed a report which completely exonerated the government; the two Liberal members on the committee concluded that the government had been guilty of dealing with "a clique of speculators", but no proof of corruption could be established. However, the real crisis evolved from within the ranks of the Conservative Party. In-stigated by Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper, the "Old Guard" deserted McBride. Their leader, Attorney-General Wilson, resigned from the Cabinet, and according to Pinkerton detectives whom the premier had hired, a splinter group was forming around Bill Bowser, his one-time college friend. It would be an understatement to say that the premier's relations with the provincial party machine were strained. And Sir Charles H. Tupper was casting his dark shadow on McBride. "I firmly believe our party will do well to spit the McBride Government out of its mouth," he wrote to a fellow Conservative. In this situation, unexpected help was offered — inadvertently — by the Prime Minister of Canada. Sir Wilfrid Laurier had chosen to invite the premiers of the provinces to discuss revisions of existing subsidy arrangements. McBride knew that everything now depended on his success in Ottawa. He went well prepared to make "better terms" a political issue. Arguing,
that special circumstances (sparsely settled, large, underdeveloped area) justified special treatment, he asked for a sliding scale, open to revision from time to time, to replace the fixed, annual payment.

Sir Wilfrid, however, had made up his mind to establish a "uniform, systematic and final" basis for all provincial subsidies. Laurier's offer, the sum of $1,000,000, to be paid in ten yearly installments, McBride called "simply absurd". He walked out of the conference.

Traditionally, British Columbia's general public endorsed his action. Upon the return to the province, McBride received a rousing welcome.

"In Victoria, popular demonstrations at the boat, on the street and at a public meeting, assured him that no course could have been more popular in a province which had an old tradition of 'fighting Ottawa.' By breaking the honourable peace which had prevailed since the mid-eighties, he had diverted attention from conduct which many considered highly irregular and censurable."

Although he had been in office only for a little more than three years, McBride decided that this was the right time to call an election. His winter campaign proved to be most successful. The election results of February, 1907, were: Twenty-six Conservative, thirteen Liberal, three Socialist. For the first time, both Vancouver and Victoria had returned a solid Conservative vote. Backed by a comfortable majority, and after reconstructing his cabinet, McBride ventured to appeal Laurier's decision on the subsidy issue. At the end of April he was in London, conferring with the Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin, and Mr. Winston S. Churchill, the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies, who was in charge of the bill to amend the Canadian constitution.
mission was entirely successful, and he was eagerly looking forward to further visits to London, in the meantime keeping alive his connections by "little gestures of appreciation" — gracious notes, gifts of moose-heads and grizzly-bear skins, and "tips" on business opportunities in British Columbia.  

Like Australia, British Columbia, a sparsely-populated, white settlement area, has always been very conscious of Asiatic immigration. Not that British Columbians are racists by natural inclination, but whenever the few feel threatened by many, sentiments of mistrust and even outright enmity develop. Thus, restrictive legislation had been an issue in British Columbia since the days of de Cosmos. And invariably, provincial legislation concerning Asian immigration was overruled by the federal government. When boatload after boatload of Sikhs from India, Chinese from Hongkong and Shanghai, and, after the end of the Russo-Japanese war, Japanese immigrants, rapidly swelled the numbers of already-resident Asians, the McBride government introduced a new "Natal Act", designed to drastically restrict Asian immigration. In a private letter to Earl Gray, McBride expressed his concern.

"Living as we do here among thousands of these yellow men and knowing them so well as we have come to know them makes me feel that if some of our friends in the Old Land might have enjoyed the same experience, things would have been different."  

Yet given his political expertness, his legal training, and the experience of former provincial governments who had failed in their attempts to enact such legislation, he must have known that Laurier
had no other choice than to disallow it. Consequently, his action
must be considered to have been well thought out with the object of
gaining a decisive political advantage. Throughout 1908 McBride
and his cabinet toured the province, and the federal election results
of that year proved his efforts worthwhile. The Liberals lost five
of the seven federal seats they had held since 1904.

McBride's efforts also served the purpose of preparing for
another provincial election. Economic boom conditions favoured his
marathon campaign which was advertised by the label "McBride Pros-
perity". "McBride Prosperity" was visually evidenced by Vancouver's
rapid population expansion. At the then current growth rate of
approximately one thousand people per month, the city was expected
to reach a population figure of 110,000 by 1911. Real estate agencies
in Vancouver outnumbered grocery stores by a ratio of three to one.

In 1909, Liberal leader John A. MacDonald was elevated to the
position of Chief Justice of the Appeal Court. McBride promptly seized
the opportunity and called an election to be held in October. The next
day he signed an agreement with Donald Mann to build a railway from the
Yellowhead Pass through the North Thompson River Valley to Kamloops.
Only after that were cabinet ministers given the opportunity to study
the details of the contract. Captain R. G. Tatlow (Minister of Finance)
and F. J. Fulton (Minister of Lands) resigned in protest. They were
replaced by W. J. Bowser and Price Ellison, respectively.

Quietly, and somewhat logically, John Oliver followed John A.
MacDonald as Leader of the Opposition. He did his very best to cope
with McBride's surprise attack, but what the Liberals could throw into battle was too little, came too late and — at the wrong time. To criticize McBride's "reckless railway investment" was not a convincing political argument for people "intoxicated with prosperity." Of the entire opposition only two Socialists and two Liberals, Harlan C. Brewster (Alberni) and John Jardine (Esquimalt) survived in the Legislature.

The favourable economic trend in B.C. continued, and the stability of her political leadership induced an unprecedented influx of foreign capital. German, French, and Belgian investors competed with U.S. financial interests for a share in British Columbia's wealth. U.S. investment in B.C.'s forest industry alone amounted to sixty-five million dollars by 1910. Speculation and swindling were the order of the day. Yet in times of economic exuberance, the people seemed to be oblivious to the needs of the future. The government was popular, and Richard McBride, "the popular, democratic, Imperialistic premier", was a well-known and respected personality and not only in British Columbia. Shortly before the national Conservative convention in 1911, Robert Borden offered to resign the national leadership in his favour. But McBride declined, saying that he had work to do in British Columbia. Again he declined, when he was offered a cabinet post after the Conservative victory in the federal election of that year. Instead he went to London to represent British Columbia at the coronation ceremonies for King George V.

*The term is Norman Ward's. See his article reprinted in John Redekop (ed.) The Starspangled Beaver, pp. 1-5.
**TABLE VI**

**CONSERVATIVE ELECTION VICTORIES**

**UNDER MCBRIDE'S LEADERSHIP**

(1903 - 1919)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE</th>
<th>LIBERAL</th>
<th>SOCIALIST</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17*</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>1907</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>42</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-0-</td>
<td>2**</td>
<td>47</td>
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</table>

*According to James Morton, there were seventeen Liberals and three Socialists; according to Margaret Ormsby, eighteen Liberals and only two Socialists, J.H. Hawthornthwaite and Parker Williams, were elected. (ref. Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 85, and Ormsby, *op. cit.*, p. 316.)*

**After by-election in Alberni, forty-six Conservative, one Socialist.**
Riding on the wave of success that had swept the Liberals out of the province in the federal election of 1911, McBride announced a provincial election to be held in March of 1912. Representation in the Legislature was to be increased from forty-two to forty-seven members. Otherwise, only the results are noteworthy. Forty-five Conservatives were returned, and two Socialists, James H. Hawthornthwaite from the riding of Cowichan-Newcastle, and Parker Williams for Alberni. The government then introduced the Workmen's Compensation Act*, appointed Parker Williams to the board, and won the subsequent by-election to bring the total of their numbers to forty-six, leaving Jim Hawthornthwaite to represent the Opposition. Russell R. Walker, at that time parliamentary correspondent of The Province, and later provincial organizer for the Conservative Party in British Columbia, reports that Hawthornthwaite "did an outstanding one-man job of it."37 But how difficult and frustrating it must have been for him may be appreciated through Russ Walker's following account:

"One afternoon I was passing Jim outside the assembly hall when he stopped me and said: 'Walker, everytime I leave that room to see a man about a dog, those damned Tories are in caucus.'"38

In May of 1912, McBride again went to London. During his nineteen-day visit, he had an extensive audience with the King. Shortly thereafter he learned that the King intended to honour him in his birthday list with the title of Knight Commander of St. Michael and

*According to Margaret Ormsby, the Workmen's Compensation Act was introduced in 1902. (See Ormsby, op. cit., p. 332.)
St. George. "Mr. British Columbia" was to become Sir Richard. The banquet in honour of his investiture by Prince Arthur of Connaught was the largest ever held in the history of Victoria. Concomitantly, it symbolized the apex of Sir Richard's political career.39

If the Liberal party was powerless in British Columbia, the Liberal press was not, and some individual Liberals like John Oliver were determined enough to wage a "guerilla-type" war on the government via the media.* Soon the jibes of the cartoonists became very pointed. McBride and Bowser, "the gold-brick twins," were their prime target. And the cartoonists, pointedly insinuating corruption, remained unchallenged. A Conservative party member from Victoria sent a private letter to the premier, summarizing the reaction of other party members to the attacks on the government in the press.

"Sir Richard, I speak plainly when I say that the party is in such a condition in this city, that it is only your own personality which keeps it together. There is a very great amount of unrest and dissatisfaction, and each time anything of this nature takes place, it gets worse."40

The government also came under criticism from within the Conservative party. After the announcement that yet another railway, the Pacific Great Eastern, had been chartered and given financial guarantees, Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper once again condemned the provincial government's railway policy. His critique was widely publicized. At the

* e.g., a cartoon denouncing land speculation in B.C. commented by John Oliver: "The speculators, with the connivance of the government, sometimes get their land for a dollar and a drink and sometimes for a drink without the dollar." (ref. The Vancouver Sun, March 7, 1912.)
same time, the real estate and building boom collapsed, and soon there was widespread discontent throughout the province. In the autumn of 1913, Sir Richard was off to London again to reassure British investors and attempt to attract new British capital. He left Bill Bowser who, after a cabinet reshuffle following the 1909 election, had become Attorney-General, in charge as acting premier. Bowser had a brilliant mind but in dealing with the general public, he was the antithesis to McBride. His arrogance and authoritarian attitude antagonized everyone. Sir Richard had hardly left when large-scale riots broke out at Nanaimo. William Mackenzie and Donald Mann, two big-time rogues, had bought the controlling shares of the Dunsmuir coal interests. Disagreements with the miners soon developed, and when the new shareholders introduced Oriental strikebreakers, about one thousand enraged coal miners occupied Nanaimo by force. Bowser answered by dispatching an equal number of regular troops from Victoria to the troublespot.

"This is my answer to the proposition of the strikers that they will preserve the peace if they are left unmolested by the special police. If the men will not obey the police, they must have the military, and now that we are in the field, we intend to stay to the bitter end."

That was typical of "Napoleon" — as he had been dubbed — Bowser (also known as "the little Czar," and "the little Kaiser"). Bowser further mortgaged the popularity of the Conservative government when he brusquely told seventy-two delegates of the Women's Suffrage Movement, presenting a petition with ten thousand signatures: "As a
matter of government policy, we are unable to agree that it would be in the public interest to bring down proposals of the character proposed for the endorsement of this Parliament. And this despite the fact that it was well known that both Socialists and Liberals approved of the franchise for women.

The outbreak of the First World War with its patriotic excitement distracted from the domestic difficulties of the government, but only for the moment. During the session of 1915, it became known that the provincial debt exceeded $10,000,000 and $80,000,000 in guarantees to railways. Unemployment was widespread and increasing. Much of the government's railway investment was in jeopardy when Mackenzie, Mann and Co., having exhausted their credit in London, were facing severe financial difficulties. McBride was so worried that he telegraphed Donald Mann:

"Would be very disastrous to me if Island work shut down. Must insist imperative lay some steel and carry on so at least keep up appearances."

But it was too late to hide the government's fateful involvement with that company.

"It is a melancholy satisfaction for me that what has so far happened is a complete justification of all I said and did when McBride tied British Columbia to the tail of the cart of Mackenzie and Mann."

So Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper wrote to Prime Minister Robert Borden. McBride was also personally criticized for extravagance in travelling on government expense. Parker Williams remarked that the premier's travelling expenses were high enough "at ten cents a mile (to) take
him two and one-third times around the earth, or ... eight times
around the moon, or, at two cents a mile, ... to the moon and leave
him about $1,000 spending money there."

Generally the session of 1915 was fruitless; the only bill
passed concerned the extension of the parliamentary session to
five years. The only excitement for the people in the galleries was
provided by the convulsions of a government in agony. The McBride
administration had floated a bond issue of $10,000,000, much of which
went down the drain following the collapse of the Dominion Trust Com­
pany in 1914. The depositors believed that the government had promised
to guarantee trust funds. Now the Attorney-General, whose law firm had
acted as solicitors for Dominion Trust, was charged with culpable neg­
lect for not having examined its financial standing when the bill to
charter the company was before the House. Next, W. R. Ross, Minister
of Lands, came under fire for selling public lands to speculators at
most favourable prices. And — after "Fortuna" being disgusted finally
left the Conservatives — a backbencher asked a question about the
sale of some horses and cattle from the government farm at Essondale.
Price Ellison, the Minister of Finance and Agriculture, had to admit
that he himself had bought that stock. His resignation punched
another big hole in the already porous government structure. When
three days later the premier announced that he would postpone the
promised election, a headline of the Vancouver Sun revealed: "Cabinet
is at Loggerheads and Dare not Face Electors in a Disorganized Con­
dition." The incident referred to was alleged to have occurred at
a caucus meeting on March 2. When the premier had asked for additional assistance for the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, fifteen members had revolted, later being joined by other members. It appears though that the lines broke on the personality of Bowser rather than McBride. A friend wrote to McBride privately:

"Without you at the head of the government, Dick, Bowser would have as much chance as a snowball in hell... He it is who raised the temper of the people up to a breaking strain, and it is not too much to say that they are willing to take a chance on anybody so that they could get through with him."52

The House was prorogued on March 6, 1915, and on the following day the premier announced the dissolution of the government. The Liberals immediately called a convention and selected Harlan C. Brewster as leader. Brewster wasted no time in constructing and publicizing a programme of reform.

Shortly thereafter the Ministerial Union of the Lower Mainland, under the name of its secretary, the Reverend A. E. Cooke, published the pamphlet, "The Crisis in British Columbia." It established statistically valid proof that the Conservative government had been "recklessly extravagant, intentionally partisan and willfully corrupt".53 "The Crisis in British Columbia" further charged that giant syndicates had benefited from alienating public lands, and that government supporters had been favoured in the distribution of timber licenses. The public, at a mass meeting in Vancouver, demanded a royal commission of inquiry.54 Further, the University Women's Club had taken over the leadership of the women's franchise movement, and Jonathan Rogers,
President of the Board of Trade, was heading the Committee of One Hundred in a campaign for prohibition.55

While the government was irritated by the demands of various groups sponsoring temperance, prison reform, or the franchise for women, Harlan C. Brewster diplomatically let it be known that the Liberal Party would be responsive to such proposals. Concerning the matter of prohibition, McBride promised to refer the issue to a plebiscite. But even there he failed to realize the magnitude of the new reform movement — a common failure after his frequent and prolonged visits to England seemed to put him out of touch with political developments at home. The actual power within the government had shifted to Bowser. Typical for Sir Richard McBride is that he chose his birthday (December 15th) to submit his resignation as premier. His decision came as a surprise to everyone but in a letter to Sir Robert Borden he declared that he had had the decision in mind for some time, and that he believed he could best serve British Columbia as Agent-General in London.56 Bowser was not to be envied his political heritance.

By-elections were coming up to fill the vacancies caused by the resignations of Sir Richard McBride and Price Ellison. They were to be a test of public confidence in two men with cabinet assignments. Charles E. Tisdall was proposed as Minister of Public Works and Alfred C. Flumerfelt as Minister of Finance. Both were men of proven ability but neither was elected. Tisdall was defeated by the Liberal Malcolm A. MacDonald, and Flumerfelt lost to Liberal
Leader Harlan C. Brewster in Victoria. After four years of absence, a "scouting force" of two Liberals had returned to the British Columbia Legislative Assembly. But they soon turned out to be a "raiding party," fighting the government wherever and whenever an opportunity arose. To old charges they added new ones; thus they charged that $7,000,000 had been advanced to the Pacific Great Eastern Railway illegally.  

In spite of adverse circumstances, Bowser presented a comprehensive programme. The government introduced bills to aid shipbuilding, and the development of seaports and mining industry. A $1,000,000 fund was created under a new Agricultural Credits Act to provide financial assistance to farmers, and free land was to be set aside for returning soldiers. Bowser's programme was far more positive than any McBride had been able to offer for a long time. He also had a far better grasp of economic needs than his predecessor ever possessed. But his endeavours to sway public opinion were condemned to failure when Sir Charles H. Tupper swung his support and powerful influence to the Liberals. "What about Sir Richard McBride and the Judas Iscariot who sold him," asked Sir Charles. "Who is this little Kaiser who attempted to read out of the party Conservatives who dare to have opinions of their own?" An election was called for September, 1916. All through the summer, the parties were campaigning. The Liberals concentrated on the deplorable economic conditions for which they blamed the ruinous policies of the government. During the so-called "Blue Ruin" campaign they again
received support from Sir Charles. He publicly declared that:

"The real fundamental issue between the people of British Columbia and the government and Mr. Bowser is the question of patronage."61

In a joint message to soldiers from British Columbia, he and Brewster declared that "...it is not a fight of parties, but of people against official wrongdoing."62

On the evening of September 14, 1916, the final moments of thirteen years of Conservative rule drew closer.

"Bowser fought it out spiritedly to the last, but he was waving a broom in a whirlwind, and when the ballots were counted, he found himself one of nine survivors in a House that contained also thirty-six Liberals and two Independents."63
NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

2. All data contained in this table has been compiled from: Ormsby, British Columbia: A History, op. cit.
7. Ibid., footnote #3, p. 23.
8. Ibid., p. 12.
9. Ibid., p. 11.
10. Ibid., p. 9.
11. Morton, Honest John Oliver, p. 79.
18. Ibid., p. 73.


46. Sir Charles H. Tupper to Prime Minister Robert Borden, May 6, 1914, Tupper Papers, Howay-Reid Collection, University of B.C., Vancouver.


49. Ibid., p. 386.


51. Loc. cit.


54. Loc. cit.

55. Ibid., p. 389.


58. Loc. cit.

59. Ibid., p. 391.


61. Ibid., p. 777.


63. Morton, Honest John Oliver, op. cit., p. 115.
CHAPTER THREE

LIBERALS: FOR PRINCIPLE OR PROFIT?

(H. C. Brewster and John Oliver)

The Liberals were eager and ready to form their first government in British Columbia, but Bowser held on to the office on the grounds that not all the votes from the Canadian soldiers overseas had been received and counted. In fact, for several weeks after election day, Bowser's own re-election remained doubtful until the majority of the soldiers' vote tipped the balance in his favour. Finally, on November 23, 1916, Bowser resigned, and Harlan Carey Brewster took over the reins of government.
Brewster presented a strong cabinet including three members who were themselves to become premiers in the not-too-distant future. John Oliver took over the Ministries of Agriculture and Railways, Thomas Dufferin Pattullo headed the Ministry of Lands, and John Duncan MacLean was appointed Provincial Secretary. Malcolm A. Macdonald became Attorney-General, and Ralph Smith, who had returned home after serving eleven years as a federal politician was made Minister of Finance. Charges that Macdonald had received and accepted contributions for his personal campaign fund from the Canadian Northern Railway led to the early resignation of the Attorney-General; he was replaced by John Wallace de Beque Farris. The sudden death of Ralph Smith made another appointment necessary. The vacancy was filled by John Hart, yet another premier-to-be.

If anyone had expected the changeover from Conservative to Liberal government to be a mere formality, both parties being essentially committed to the interests of the establishment, they were in for a surprise. That surprise was most clearly brought home to the second echelon of the Liberal party, which now, after the end of the long Conservative rule, expected favours from "their" government. From the outset the premier made it quite clear that he was opposed to patronage and intended to embark on a drastic programme of retrenchment. Without delay, he called on Professor Adam Shortt and put him in charge of reforming the Civil Service. Within weeks of his assuming the premiership, women
received the franchise. A Department of Labour was established and a Minimum Wage Act passed. Other plans to create a more civilized society were in the planning stage when Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden invited him to Ottawa for consultations. Brewster had had differences with Sir Wilfrid Laurier about the conscription issue, and it was an open secret that his visit to Ottawa was concerning an invitation to join Sir Robert Borden's cabinet, although in an interview with the Victoria Times, Brewster had declared: "I am not particularly anxious to vacate my seat in Victoria." Speculation about his political future came to an abrupt end when, on his way home, he caught pneumonia and died in Calgary on March 1, 1918.

During his absence, John Oliver had been in charge as acting premier. Now, on March 5th, on the evening after the state funeral for Harlan C. Brewster, a Liberal caucus elected Oliver their new leader. Brewster had initiated a new era in spirit; Oliver initiated a new era in style. "Doff your broadcloth and don your overalls," he suggested to his cabinet colleagues. Addressing the legislature, he declared:

"I have dug ditches by the side of Chinamen, when every morsel of food I carried to my mouth bore the imprint of my fingers in dirt, and I was just as good a man then as I am now and in the opinion of some members of this House, a better man." 

*In view of the war crisis, Sir Robert Borden had been advocating an all-party government in Ottawa. Brewster was known to be a supporter of such a policy.
John Oliver, proud to be just a plain "dirt farmer," was a man of little formal education who spoke with the strong accent from Derbyshire, whence he had come to Canada almost half a century ago. He was first elected to the British Columbia legislative assembly in 1900 at the age of forty-four. Asked by a journalist, after Oliver had become premier, what in retrospect he thought of that first session, he answered: "I used to look around and wonder why men of any ability had ever sent me there."

And asked about his present impression, the premier said with a smile: "Well, I sometimes wonder why they sent the other fellows." By then "Honest John" had become a master of parliamentary procedure, was well read and a forceful orator; but he always remained the modest "farmer from Delta."

Although the Liberals commanded a most comfortable majority in the legislature, the new premier was faced with a thorny problem from British Columbia's Conservative past. A select committee investigating the affairs of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway had established that corrupt practices of the McBride administration had almost bankrupted the province despite the wartime boom. The company had used up the entire amount of more than twenty million dollars in guaranteed government bonds for the completion of only one section of the line, between Whitecliff and North Vancouver, and the laying of steel from Squamish to Clinton. The McBride government had been found guilty of irresponsible handling of trust funds, the awarding of illegal contracts, and of allowing promoters
to make excessive profits. Former premier Sir Richard McBride, who had taken the responsibility for the line out of the hands of his Minister of Railways, was found to have been negligent in the performance of his duties. But the Liberal government, nonetheless, had to shoulder the responsibilities arising from McBride's venture. Commented premier Oliver:

"I am not going to become the foster father of this illegitimate offspring of two unnatural parents. It was a waif left on my doorstep. It was conceived in the sin of political necessity; it was begotten in the iniquity of a half-million dollar campaign fund. I refuse to be the godfather of any such foundling."

Now that the PGE had become the responsibility of a Liberal government, the Conservatives were eager to point out that it would be a burden to the pocketbook of the average man. On July 17, 1920, Russell Walker wrote in the Vancouver Province, then a Conservative newspaper:

"Premier Oliver, as minister of railways, pledges that the 'unwelcome foundling' will become a completed railroad just as fast as such a heavy job can be carried out. Like the proverbial cat with the nine lives, it will not die, but it continues to be the plaything of politicians, a gold-mine to contractors, a bugbear to engineers, and a millstone around the neck of the taxpayer."

But once John Oliver tackled a problem with his usual energy and persistence, progress was not far off. By 1918 the government had acquired the capital stock of the company and by 1921 the line had been completed from Squamish to Quesnel. However, the "unwanted foundling" remained a problem child; it was passed on from
foster home to foster home of successive governments, until it finally reached maturity during the long reign of W. A. C. Bennett, who saw to the completion of the line from Vancouver to the Peace River Valley.

The end of the war had also brought another major problem for the government. The returning soldiers had to be integrated into a peacetime society and to be absorbed by a declining labour market. As early as spring of 1918, the premier, in co-operation with "Duff" Pattullo, his Minister of Lands, had worked out land reclamation schemes in various parts of the province to provide new settlement areas for the soldiers, but only few of them had enough interest in farming or could see any value in rural life. An overwhelming majority declined his offer and chose to linger around in the cities without jobs. The government provided social assistance, and the premier promised that as many appointments as possible would be made to the Civil Service. But:

"...if, instead of accepting his offer, men chose to live amid the noisy distractions of a large industrial centre, and then found their ambitions unfulfilled, it was hardly his fault. The government would do what it could to assist them and their families through social legislation, but it could afford them little protection against either the power of the trade unions or the privileges of private industry."

While the premier busied himself trying to work out solutions to the problems at hand, the political termites of the party organization silently undermined his position as party leader. As
formerly among the Conservatives, the Liberal administration
now had become a tool to serve party rather than public interests.
On the visible political frontlines, the disgruntled war veterans
had formed the Soldiers' Party, and the Socialists' strength was
gathering momentum under the leadership of the radical unionist,
W. A. Prichard. The Federated Labour Party left no doubt in
people's minds that their ultimate objective was "the complete
overthrow of the present system of property and wealth production."12
But even the farmers had become disenchanted with the Liberals and
organized their members politically in a movement called the United
Farmers of British Columbia. In the legislature, the nine-member
Conservative opposition gave battle to the government wherever an
opportunity arose. On one such occasion — the premier had just
finished a marathon speech in defense of his policies — opposition
leader William J. Bowser rose to the floor. "Yes, Mr. Speaker, the
Honourable premier has done very well this afternoon, and we on
this side of the House have come to the conclusion that the premier
sleeps with a copy of the Conservative platform under his pillow."
— "No, Mr. Speaker," John Oliver retorted, "I put it in the seat
of my chair." The laughter this insult had provoked had hardly
subsided, when Bowser was on his feet again: "Then no doubt you'll
incubate some good legislation!"13

Unavoidably, the time for the next election drew closer;
premier Oliver announced it to be held on December 1, 1920. It
was not easy to find a suitable campaign platform. "We might as
well recognize, ... that the average voter cares only for the party, who gives him the most money for the least work...", a party supporter wrote to Oliver. On that note, the premier decided on an extensive public works programme as bait for the electorate, just as once Sir Richard McBride had been successful with his railroad policy. Since the Conservatives did not have a credible alternative to offer, they concentrated their efforts on criticizing the government. They charged that the government's rehabilitation programme for the soldiers was inadequate, payments under the new Mothers' Pension Act had been delayed until a few months before the election, and that the Directors of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (Premier Oliver, Finance Minister John Hart and Attorney-General deB. Farris) had placed a large insurance policy for the railway with a business firm with which the Finance Minister was connected.

The general public was irritated and as the day of decision drew closer, it became increasingly more evident to the parties concerned that in many cases the outcome of this election would be decided by the personality of candidates rather than their party predilection. Recognizing this development in time, the Liberal party procured the support of Soldier, Labour, and Farmer candidates, who had not won nomination by their own parties, in places where Liberal strength had begun to weaken. In all of British Columbia's history, there has never been such a confused situation at election time before or again. When the votes were counted, the Liberals were down
nine and the Conservatives up five seats, respectively, to a score of twenty-six to fourteen; the Federated Labour Party had won three, and independent candidates had captured the remaining four seats. The Liberals had spent eighty-three thousand dollars in the process, a phenomenal sum of money compared with previous campaign expenses, to elect a majority government. The Liberals still held power in British Columbia, but in autumn of 1921 dissension within the party became evident. John Oliver was accused of dictatorial tendencies and within two weeks, David Whiteside of New Westminster, Mary Ellen Smith (widow of former Finance Minister Ralph Smith), Attorney-General J. W.de Beque Farris, and H. G. Perry, member for Fort George, resigned. Perry explained his decision in a letter to the premier like this:

"The caucus system is, in my humble opinion contrary to all democratic principles, a relic of the early days of parliamentary Government when perhaps it was necessary to safeguard the power of parliament. Today it chokes and stifles the intellect and ideas of its adherents, making it almost unnecessary for others than the cabinet of the day to be elected, and makes of majority rule, which was intended to be democratic, a dictatorial rule of a minority within a minority."  

"Oliver had been vaguely aware that the party machine in Vancouver was becoming embarrassingly powerful and that cabals were forming against him. But until he received these resignations, it had not occurred to him that there was general fault-finding concerning his leadership."  

Rather than being deliberately dictatorial, the premier's
personal problem was that he could not break the lifetime habit of doing everything himself. Although he worked untiringly from dawn until late at night almost every day, a great part of his time was consumed by trivia, which could have been delegated. Besides, he often tried to solve too many issues at one time. Important tasks were often delayed; that was his major weakness. But when he tackled a matter of great significance, he did so with skill and determination.

One such undertaking concerned his bargaining with Ottawa in his struggle to drag British Columbia out of her financial misery. In 1921, the province's public debt stood at fifty-four million dollars. Oliver had already approached Prime Minister Arthur Meighen with the suggestion to integrate the Pacific Great Eastern Railway into the national system of railways to relieve the B.C. government of a considerable financial burden, but he met with no success. When in December of 1921, Canada again elected a Liberal government, John Oliver, a man of genuine sincerity, was certain that federal help was not far off. But instead, his plan met with a definite rebuff from Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. That was enough for "Honest John!" If the Right Honourable, the Prime Minister, carried the symbol of a "lyon" around as his middle name, he, John Oliver, was going to show him what a veritable lion British Columbia had as a premier. Oliver launched a double-pronged attack, based on the well-known demand for "Better Terms," generally, and more equitable freight rates, specifically, both of which had
public appeal in British Columbia. In particular, the freight rates issue had been well researched by the premier, ably supported by T. D. Pattullo and G. G. McGeer, a promising young lawyer and former Liberal MLA. When no positive response was forthcoming from Mackenzie King, the premier announced:

"I have never advocated separation, but if the grossly unjust treatment Western Canada is subjected to in favour of Eastern interests is to be continued indefinitely, then I do not want to call myself a Canadian."19

And in no uncertain terms, he let it be known that:

"The federal Government is treating this Province in a way that it would not dare to treat a foreign country ...if the spirit of the terms of Union is not kept, we shall go to the Imperial Government."20

Fortunately for both groups of the contestants, J. G. Turgeon, Organizing Secretary of the federal Liberal party (subsequently a Member of Parliament for British Columbia, and later a Senator), recognized the gravity of the situation. In a letter to the premier, he stated:

"It seems to me that a properly organized effort could in a very short time make the terms 'Oliver,' 'Liberal Party,' 'British Columbia,' and 'Provincial Rights,' so closely linked together as to make the interests of any one the interests of every other. To be genuinely successful, a political party must be so closely linked to something that forms the life of the people as to be its natural means of expression."21

After careful consideration, and on the advice of Pattullo, the demand for "Better Terms" was dropped. But the freight rate issue
was pursued all the more vigorously, offering itself to the provincial government as a superb plank in the upcoming election campaign of 1924. It might ensure victory for the Liberals.

At a convention in 1922, the Conservatives had re-affirmed Bowser as party leader with a comfortable majority. While the leadership of both traditional parties was preparing for the next election — still more than half a year in the future — something unexpected happened. The Young Conservatives and other dissident elements within the Conservative party, who had opposed Bowser's re-election as party leader, approached Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper with a proposal to lead a reform movement opposing both Liberals and Conservatives. Sir Charles consented and in turn approached General Alexander Duncan McRae, a multi-millionaire, and other members of the Vancouver business community, to provide the necessary financial backbone for the movement. Numerically, the movement was further strengthened by former supporters of the United Farmers of B.C. and the Soldiers' Party, as well as by dissident Liberals. In the interest of economy and to secure the abolition of privilege, Sir Charles H. Tupper believed, British Columbia needed a party with distinctly provincial interests, disavowing any connection with a federal party. Thus, the movement was constituted as The Provincial Party, and at a convention in December of 1923 elected General McRae as its leader — Sir Charles preferring to remain "behind the stage" as the new party's ideologist. Regarding A. D. McRae, Gerry McGeer wrote to the premier:
"He is the Brigadier General type in war, the millionaire type in times of speculation, and the great business man, all of whose investments were failures during times of peace and in times of depression he is the great reformer — the man with a remedy for all the ills of the country but who confines his remedies, or limits his indications of them, to ruthless and vicious criticism and personal attacks on the men who are trying to do things."24

The new party was certainly a force to be reckoned with. It attacked the established parties with the slogan: "Put Oliver out: Don't let Bowser in."25 Since the public media were firmly entrenched behind the traditional parties, the Provincial Party publicized its views in a series of pamphlets, entitled, "The Searchlight," published at irregular intervals under the auspices of the party. It was ably and cleverly edited, showing the expert workmanship of distinguished journalists.26 The publication lavishly dished out accusations to both sides. It claimed that the premier as well as the leader of the opposition had accepted "slush funds" from contractors for the Pacific Great Eastern Railway. Making the history of the PGE its prime target, "The Searchlight" charged:

"Behind the whole scandalous affair lies a black story of political patronage, of reptile funds, of benefits from the same hand, of betrayed trusts, of guilty knowledge commonly shared...what Mr. Bowser had overlooked in giving the builders, Mr. Oliver supplied."27

Oliver ordered an audit of the books of the PGE, and finally established a royal commission, which found no proof of corruption in connection with campaign funds, but since certain alleged evidence
had previously been destroyed by fire, the odour of the charges still lingered on, damaging the credibility of the government in the eyes of the public.

Tilts with Bowser and other opposition members were now relatively harmless, both Liberals and Conservatives focusing mainly on the threat the emergence of a strong third party represented. Oliver launched a counter-attack at the leader of the Provincial Party, intimating that General McRae, the "unscarred hero,"* had entered politics to further his selfish interests, and that his business transactions of the past — particularly those in connection with the sale of town lots in Port Mann — would hardly bear investigation. Whether or not General McRae deserved the taunt "unscarred hero," in this political campaign, he performed very creditably. Not only was he able to refute the premier's allegations, but also to regain his position as the most serious challenger in this contest. In one of his temperamental outbursts, John Oliver had made the mistake of calling upon McRae to discuss the charges and counter-charges at a public meeting. McRae responded instantly and invited the premier to a barbecue of roasted ox in the newly created riding of Salmon Arm,** as his choice for the contest. Oliver's cabinet colleagues advised against the meeting and the premier reluctantly ignored the invitation.  

* A reference to the fact that throughout his military career General McRae had never seen front line duty.  
** The government had gerrymandered the area of Salmon Arm out of the Kamloops riding in order to ensure a better chance for the Liberals to retain the Kamloops seat.
to all acceptable forms of duelling, Oliver must therefore be declared the loser. But McRae's party was not the winner either. The seat for Salmon Arm was won by the Conservative candidate, Rolf Bruhn, one of the finest individuals ever to serve the public interest of British Columbia.

Rarely before in the history of the province had a campaign been so muddled. The old-line parties just did not know how to deal properly with the sudden appearance of a new contestant on their battle grounds. The general public got utterly confused. In the end, all three party leaders were defeated. But it speaks well for A. D. McRae that he lost only by a narrow margin against such a well-respected candidate as Mary Ellen Smith. William J. Bowser, after twenty-one years in the House, resigned from the party leadership. John Oliver recovered two months later. Kenneth Campbell of Nelson relinquished his seat, and Oliver regained it by winning the subsequent by-election. When he returned to the legislature, the witty H. D. Twigg, Conservative member for Victoria, greeted him: "There you sit by the grace of God and the Labour Party and the member for Alberni."*30 The standings in the House were: twenty-three Liberals, sixteen Conservatives, three each for Labour and Provincial Party, plus three Independents.**

*Major R. J. ("Dick") Burde, Independent, an Oliver supporter

**According to Scarrow, there were 27 Liberals (including 3 Independent Liberals), 16 Conservatives, 3 Labour, and only 2 Provincial members. (ref. Scarrow, Canada Votes, op. cit., Table 70, p. 224. Ibid., p. 226, explanation of party totals for 1924.)
Soon after the election results were known, the Provincial Party began to disband. Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper declared that the movement had achieved a great moral victory; he credited the Provincial Party with having been instrumental in bringing about the personal defeat of Oliver and Bowser. After Bowser's resignation, General McRae and many of his followers returned to the Conservative Party who had elected Robert Henry Pooley as their new leader. The Liberals had lost their majority in the House, but with the return of Oliver, after the Nelson by-election, they were assured that they could count on the vote of Dick Burde, the Independent member for Alberni. It was also felt that in most cases Oliver would be able to enlist the support of some other Independent members, and, since the Liberals had an admirable record for introducing social legislation, the Labour Party would not join in any attempts to defeat his government. Since all cabinet members had been returned, no changes were necessary in that respect, except that Dr. MacLean replaced John Hart, who had resigned on the eve of the election, as Minister of Finance. The Liberals had not fared so badly after all.

Oliver now concentrated his efforts on a renewed freight rates campaign, which soon began to show positive results. The Railway Commission ordered freight rates on grain for export to be equalized between the east and the west. It had the immediate effect that the volume in grain shipments flowing through Vancouver jumped from almost zero to fifty million bushels per year. Where
there had been only one grain elevator, half a dozen new ones had to be added. Shipping and building were stimulated, and the city expanded in every direction. It was a prosperous time for the province. The government was about to conclude negotiations for the return to provincial control of ten million acres of land which had long ago been granted to subsidize the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Finance Minister Dr. MacLean could point to a budget surplus, to be set aside for the construction of new roads and bridges. The public debt was reduced by three million dollars.

Then came the federal election of September 14, 1926. John Oliver provided active support for the Liberal cause and campaigned himself in his usual energetic style. The Liberals won the election, gaining one hundred and twenty-eight seats out of a total of two hundred and forty-five. But of the fourteen representatives from British Columbia, only one was a Liberal. The disappointed B.C. "federals" now blamed the weakness of the Liberal party in British Columbia on the weakness of the provincial government. This was not only unfair, but utter nonsense. In fact, the Liberals had gained in percentage of popular votes. But for a considerable number of federal Liberals from B.C., the effective results of that election meant that the feeding troughs of political patronage were out of their reach. On October 5th, forty prominent Liberals confronted the premier at a meeting in the Hotel Vancouver, accusing him of having made incredible and foolish mistakes.
Oliver growled that the main weakness of the Liberal party arose from the fact that there were "Liberals for principle and Liberals for profit." And on that note the meeting adjourned!

The spring session of 1927 saw the introduction of new legislation by the government, foremost of all an Old Age Pensions Act, sponsored by Oliver himself. Well-argued by the premier, the Act was passed unanimously and put on the statute book as the first of its kind in Canada. Right after the close of the session, a Liberal convention was held in Vancouver, attended by delegates from all parts of the province. John Oliver received standing ovations and dominated the convention from start to finish. Under his inspiration, a more progressive platform was adopted. It included work towards a health insurance programme, and maternity benefits, more aid for agricultural development, an extended highway system, improvements in the educational system, and an investigation of the possibilities of developing hydro-electric power. And yet he warned

"There are still injustices to be remedied. We must clear away the accumulated debris that has gathered in the course of construction, and on the solid rock of fact erect a structure of equity and justice. It will be my greatest joy to see the provinces get together on an equitable basis, so that by co-operative effort Canada may attain her proper destiny."
"political friend and foe alike as a man of unblemished honour and devotion to the public welfare."38

Two months later, Oliver went on an extended visit to the United States — so the official report stated — but it was soon learned that he was undergoing surgery at Mayo Clinic; the diagnosis: incurable cancer. On July 3rd, the premier returned to Victoria, only a shadow of his former self. He met the cabinet on July 14th to discuss his succession. Four days later he urged the caucus to choose a new premier. At first the members refused, but on his insistence named Dr. MacLean, who had been acting premier during Oliver's absence, "Premier-Designate."39

John Oliver was weakening day by day. During the last four weeks before the inevitable end, he received innumerable letters of sympathy from friends, but many also from his former political enemies. The one that moved him most was from William J. Bowser. Bowser had always admired Oliver, and in that letter he fully expressed it. John Oliver lost no time in dictating a reply, warmly thanking Bowser and sincerely wishing him well for the future.40

The fight was over.
NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE


17. Perry to Oliver, November 10, 1921, *Oliver Papers*, Provincial Archives of B.C., Victoria.


24. McGeer to Oliver, confidential, October 29, 1923, Oliver Papers, Provincial Archives of B.C., Victoria.


34. Minutes of a meeting, October 5, 1926, Oliver Papers, Provincial Archives of B.C., Victoria.


CHAPTER FOUR

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS
(J.D. MacLean to T.D. Pattullo)

John Duncan MacLean had been a very competent administrator and a loyal "Second-in-Command" to a capable and inspiring premier. His role under John Oliver was not unlike that of Bill Bowser under Sir Richard McBride. But he — like Bowser — failed to portray a leader image, the type which British Columbians liked when the need arose.
"He had an orderly mind and his speeches were like sermons or University lectures—carefully prepared, enunciated and articulated precisely, and the information given clause by clause. Everything he said was logical and reasonable but it was very, very boring."1

His conservative nature was reflected in the programme he presented. Contrary to the new platform, adopted at the last Liberal convention, there would be no innovations for some time; no new policies, just consolidation of the achievements of the past. The Liberal caucus was not satisfied with such stationary tactics, but since the members had to prepare for the next provincial election, the issue was not seriously raised. The election was announced to be held on July 18, 1928, and on receiving this message, Dr. Simon Fraser Tolmie, "the absentee leader"² of the provincial Conservative party, resigned his federal seat and hurried home.

Dr. Tolmie had served as Chief Veterinary Inspector for British Columbia and later for the Dominion from 1904 until 1917, when he resigned in order to offer himself as a federal candidate in the upcoming election. He represented Victoria and, following the resignation of T. A. Creerer in June, 1919, joined Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden's cabinet as Minister of Agriculture. He retained this position also under Prime Minister Arthur Meighen until the government was defeated in the general election of December, 1921. Tolmie himself was re-elected and in 1923 became chairman of the Executive Committee of the Conservative Party, which position included the duties and powers of a chief party organizer. Although
the Conservatives won the election of October, 1925, Prime
Minister William L. Mackenzie King did not resign until, in the
summer of 1926, the Governor-General asked Arthur Meighen to
form a government on condition that he would call an election forth­
with. Tolmie again defended his seat successfully, but his party
lost. ³

In November of 1926, the provincial Conservative party in
British Columbia held a convention in Kamloops; its main objective
was to select a new leader. The party had been in the doldrums
since the provincial election of 1924. Now they looked to Simon
Fraser Tolmie for salvation. The successful politician was hesitant
to accept the nomination, but on the delegates' insistence he agreed
to a compromise. Nominally he would be party leader but remain in
Ottawa until conditions would require his presence in British Colum­
bia. That moment had come, when premier MacLean called the election
in 1928. ⁴

To advertise their leader, the British Columbia Liberal
Association published a pamphlet: "The Man Who Rose To Be Premier —
A Modern Version of the Parable of the Faithful Steward." ⁵ But
who cared in a province where people like their leaders to be either
earthy or flamboyant — and, preferably, both? The pamphlet de­
picted MacLean correctly as "a safe man and a capable man to entrust
with the helm of state at this hour — one whom all can hold in
trust and honour." ⁶ Meanwhile Tolmie was sweeping the province,
receiving a warm welcome wherever he went. The huge "animal
doctor,"* who knew how to handle Latin and Greek as well as how to practice farming on his model homestead in Saanich (Vancouver Island) was a native son of British Columbia and understood the people. Not unlike John Oliver, he knew how to portray himself as part of the people — not above them — uncomplicated and friendly. Once, at a rally in a rural area he said:

"Because I weigh less than half a ton on the hoof, and beefy, but well sprung, have a good top line and deep chest, and a bovine temperament, I never go off my feed, or start pawing dirt and bellowing in the political field. What more could you ask of the leader of the Conservative herd?"

That kind of language the people, outside the metropolitan area of Vancouver, understood. And the election results proved it. The Conservatives won thirty-five seats and 53.3% of the popular vote; the Liberals were reduced to twelve seats on 40.5% of the votes cast (an increase of 8.2% over the previous election, when they held twenty-three seats); Labour reached an all-time low with only one member elected, and a total of only 16,649 votes in their favour, representing 4.6%.  

Of the thirty-five Conservatives elected, thirty-one were newcomers. Only R. H. Pooley, W. A. Mackenzie and Canon Joshua Hinchcliffe had previously been in the Legislature. This, of course, presented a serious problem in constructing an effective

* Tolmie was well above average height and also weighed well in excess of 300 pounds!
cabinet, and the shortcomings would soon be made apparent by members of the opposition. But at first the Conservatives encountered few problems. The economy was booming, and Ottawa "presented" the premier with a victory earned by John Oliver. On Christmas Day, 1928, Tolmie returned from Ottawa with the agreement that the lands and resources of the Peace River country — long ago set aside as railway subsidies — would be handed over to provincial control. The euphoria that swept B.C. made the spirit of the early years of "McBride Prosperity" reappear.

Meanwhile, the opposition began to regroup. MacLean announced his intention to retire from politics which sent the Liberals in search of a new leader. Early in January, 1929, a Liberal caucus elected Thomas Dufferin Pattullo as Leader of the Opposition. The executive committee of the party endorsed the decision, which was formally acknowledged by the provincial Liberal association a year later. The procedure had been somewhat unusual, but effective. Efficient and decisive leadership was what the Liberals needed most, and that "Duff" Pattullo would provide.

Thomas Dufferin Pattullo was born in Woodstock, Ontario, in 1873. A third-generation Canadian, he grew up in the unique environment created by traditional Ontario Liberalism. After trying his skills briefly in banking and journalism (his father owned the local newspaper), Pattullo, like so many other young men in his time, succumbed to the lure of the West. Through the mediation of Wilfrid Laurier he was appointed private secretary to the Commissioner of the Yukon, and in 1897 arrived in Dawson City. After three
years, Pattullo resigned from government service to join
J. Redford as a partner in the operation of a brokerage firm.
The company was successful and in 1908, the partners decided to
open a branch office in Prince Rupert. Duff Pattullo moved to
the rapidly expanding port city to manage the new branch. Two
years later he was elected a member of the city council, and
in 1913 became mayor of Prince Rupert. In 1916, Pattullo won
the nomination as the local Liberal candidate for the upcoming
provincial election, and played his part in the Liberal avalanche
which buried the incumbent Conservative government. He was
appointed Minister of Lands in the Brewster cabinet and later re­tained the same portfolio under Oliver and MacLean. 11

The session of 1929 turned out to be a boring and unproductive
one. The Tolmie government proved to be unimaginative and often
helpless in its inexperience. The government announced no plans
for new public works or increased spending on social benefits,
yet W. E. Shelly, the Minister of Finance, declared that he in­tended to float new loans; the increase in the provincial debt
he thought to offset by a slight increase in taxes and a reduction
of the grants to the municipalities and the University of British
Columbia. 12

Pattullo never missed a chance to castigate the government
for its policies, or lack of policy, and called it "...the most
pernicious party and administration...the country has ever experienced." 13
And, referring to the government's unscrupulous practice of patronage,
he commented: "The government is too weak-willed, weak-minded, and
weak-backed to resist the importunities of the hungry horde of heelers." Public confidence in the Tolmie administration was fading away rapidly, and by the time of the Wall Street crash, in October of 1929, it had all but vanished. The repercussions of the world-wide financial disaster became immediately noticeable and its effects were soon felt on British Columbia's delicate economy. The rapidly swelling numbers of the unemployed further compounded the government's difficulties. With the premier's consent, a panel of businessmen, the Kidd Commission, began to investigate the provincial finances. It reported its findings in April, 1932, and suggested a budget cut from the already extremely limiting $25,000,000 proposed by the Minister of Finance, to $19,000,000. It further suggested the closure of the P.G.E. Railway, drastic reductions in the expenditure on education, including the elimination of all grants to the provincial university, and advised that the legislature be reduced to twenty-eight members. Considering the corporate mentality of business cliques, the recommendations were not at all surprising. But the premier was shocked. He refused to comment on it before journalists, and would not even allow the leader of the opposition to have a look at it.

Meanwhile, Pattullo was gathering information on the electorate's perception of the government's performance. From Fort George, H. G. Perry wrote:

"The government is assuredly in bad in Central B.C. Every hour of the day I am listening to stories of such gross
errors as sometimes appear almost unbelievable. The patronage is the coarsest that ever existed in any state and is fast developing in the mind of the people a disgust that is leading to Socialism or any other ism that is newer and offers a change... Stories of waste are so numerous and strange that they are hard to believe and yet are true."

Early in September, 1932, Tolmie publicly suggested the formation of a coalition or "national government" which would "appear to be able to render the best service to the state..." Shortly thereafter he offered Pattullo a cabinet position. Pattullo's reply was courteous, but contained a firm "no". He suggested that the premier use his immense majority in the House as a basis for his authority to govern, or call an election. Tolmie was in a dilemma. At that point, Bowser, who was as opposed to coalition government as Pattullo, formed a non-partisan movement. Pattullo at once realized the potential threat such a movement could pose to the Liberal party and concentrated his attacks on Bowser. During the years in opposition, Pattullo had spent time and energy, and a considerable portion of his personal wealth in building the most efficient political organization British Columbia had ever known. He would not allow it to be destroyed by a political hat trick of the old Tory juggler. Under a non-party government, Pattullo commented, "the worst forces of both political parties would concentrate to hold control, with the public the common prey." In the spring of 1933, the premier appealed to the leader
of the opposition a second time in a desperate effort to win his co-operation.

"No one can form any opinion as to the length of the present depression; in fact no one can predict what the future may bring forth.... I think this is one time when we should forget partisanship for the present and associate ourselves for the benefit of the Province and the people."20

Pattullo's reply came promptly:

"At your time of life and in your condition of health I do not like to speak harshly, yet it seems that this is a time when one should speak bluntly and frankly.

During nearly five years of office you have had in your Government men of experience in public affairs, and men who had been looked upon as leading men, and you have also had a three-to-one majority in the House. Your supporters in the House were looked upon as leading citizens in their respective districts, yet you must go afield looking for other leading men to join you in government.... Instead of dealing with the immediate present, you appear to be mostly concerned as to the possible outcome of the approaching election. I do not share your alarm. In any event, it is the business of the people to express their wishes."21

On September 1, 1933, the government's mandate expired and, after more than five years in power, Tolmie called the election for November 2nd. The party was in complete disarray. Only the premier and three other members actually ran as Conservatives; thirty-one joined the non-partisan movement, and the rest disappeared among the thirty-three Independents of all colours.22 To
the left of the Liberals a strong Socialist movement, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (C.C.F.) had emerged, ready to challenge the supremacy of the old-line parties. In the beginning the C.C.F. had to contend with a host of sectarian Socialist groups, but after an overwhelming majority of B.C. Socialists had reached agreement on the principles of the Regina Manifesto in August of 1933, the C.C.F. gained more cohesiveness. By the beginning of October, it had drawn up a twelve-point programme designed to appeal to farmers, trade unionists, small businessmen, doctrinaire socialists and, in general, the masses of the unemployed. The Vancouver Sun commented:

"The C.C.F. need not be surprised if many people regard their platform as the kind of platform Sir John Macdonald described: 'Something to get in on — not to stand on.'"

Yet the C.C.F.'s advocacy of a planned socialized order had wide appeal throughout the province.

Pattullo answered the challenge with the slogan, "Work and Wages." A Liberal government, he declared, would create a new social system, characterized by wider measures of government control, regulation and direction. Individual initiative and private ownership would be preserved but capital and the surplus of wealth production would be used "for the benefit and not the detriment of the people as a whole." He designated the future period as "socialized capitalism." His programme Pattullo described as one of practical idealism, much more concrete than the "visionary
socialism" of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. 27

The Non-Partisan movement had nothing to offer but stringent austerity measures, and when in the last week of the campaign Bowser died of a heart attack, it went into the final battle without leadership. Tolmie had virtually defeated himself with statements like: "Why change? We are the only group with depression experience." 28 The voters' choice was practically one between C.C.F.-Socialism and Pattullo's "New Deal"-Liberalism.

Pattullo's arguments prevailed. The electorate returned thirty-four Liberals and only seven C.C.F. candidates. However, the C.C.F. had polled 31.5% of the popular vote against the 41.7% of the Liberals. Of the total of two hundred and nine candidates, seventy-two represented political groups of varying significance; thirty-four ran as Independents. Combined they polled 26.7% of the popular vote. 29 (An itemization of the performance of these segments is shown in Table VII). 30

When the session of the eighteenth legislature opened, Premier Pattullo presented his cabinet. It was the most impressive display of talented personalities the House had ever witnessed. Besides, the cabinet was regionally and ideologically well balanced. John Hart became Minister of Finance, Gordon Sloan, son of William Sloan, former Minister of Mines in previous Liberal governments, took over the Attorney-General's department. Frank M. MacPherson received the Public Works portfolio, while K. C. MacDonald headed the Ministry of Agriculture. A. Wellesley Gray, former mayor of
VOTES POLLED BY INDEPENDENTS AND POLITICAL GROUPS, OTHER THAN LIBERAL OR C.C.F. (1933)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGNATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CANDIDATES</th>
<th>NUMBER OF VOTES POLLED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-Partisan</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unionist</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Front of Workers &amp; Farmers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour and Independent Labour</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent C.C.F.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Liberal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>101,907</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ELECTED: 2 Non-Partisan, 2 Independent, 1 Unionist, 1 Labour
New Westminster, was designated Minister of Lands; George Pearson, Minister of Mines and Labour. George M. Weir, Pattullo selected as Provincial Secretary and Minister of Education. The railway portfolio, the premier reserved for himself. It was an unpleasant assignment, since it made him the custodian of the P.G.E. dragon that swallowed substantial amounts of the provincial revenue.  

Ideologically, Hart, MacDonald, and MacPherson were old-style Liberals of the Oliver variety; Pearson and Weir were impatient reformers, much admired by the C.C.F.; Wells Gray and the premier were pragmatic liberal idealists, and young Gordon Sloan soon displayed similar tendencies.

Regionally, Hart and Pearson represented Vancouver Island, Gray the Lower Mainland; Weir and Sloan spoke for Greater Vancouver, while MacDonald and MacPherson stood for the central and north-eastern Interior, respectively. Duff Pattullo was King of the North, based on his "capital," Prince Rupert, and Fort George felt honoured when H. G. Perry was chosen to be Speaker of the House.

Pattullo and Hart both had extensive cabinet experience, and most of their colleagues had been Members of the Provincial Legislature for more than five years. Only Sloan and Weir were new to the House. But both men were highly regarded in their professions, Sloan as a junior partner in the law firm of one-time Attorney-General de B. Farris, and Weir as Chairman of the Department of
Education at the University of British Columbia.

There were no complaints from old-time cabinet ministers for not having been considered but G. G. McGeer was incensed over his exclusion. He declared himself an Independent. In a note to Mackenzie King, McGeer tried to justify his decision, pointing out that there was a need for opposition to the Patullo government, since Pattullo "catered to the worst element in the Liberal party."33 It was well known that Gerry McGeer was in politics for self-aggrandizement and profit,* and the premier was not at all sorry to be rid of the Irishman. On McGeer's defection he commented: "There is some satisfaction in having one's judgement so speedily confirmed."34

The session of 1934 was characterized by extensive social legislation. A number of bills were introduced to aid hospitals, improve the educational system, and to relieve the tax burden on wage earners. Considerable improvements in the labour laws were made, and the feasibility of government health insurance was investigated. Provincial loans were made available to the municipalities to cover the full cost of unemployment relief for one year.35 A variety of other measures were introduced, designed to fulfill the election promise of "work and wages," and to create a more equitable society. To

* e.g. as a legal advisor to the provincial government during John Oliver's freight rates campaign, in 1923, G. G. McGeer had presented a bill for his services of nearly $77,000.00. In comparison, the average monthly income of a labourer at that time was approximately $85.00 — or $1,000.00 per year!
Thomas Dufferin Pattullo, it was as much a matter of Christian ethics as of personal responsibility as a political leader, to help people in need.

Special circumstances sometimes require special measures. But when the government introduced Bill 36,

"...an Act to provide for the Exercise by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council of certain Powers during the Interim between Sessions of the Legislature,"36

the ideologically diversified opposition united to denounce the premier, and even accused him of fascist tendencies. "The Province" and the pseudo-liberal "Vancouver Sun" launched a bitter campaign against the government. Gerry McGeer dubbed the so-called Special Powers Act (S.P.A.) "Supreme Provincial Assininity."37

Pattullo explained that the uncertain state of relations between dominion and provincial authorities, particularly concerning the existing financial sharing agreements, made the Act necessary in order to protect British Columbia's interests and empower the provincial government to react instantaneously to any federal enactments considered detrimental to British Columbian interests.38 The S.P.A. was the most ingenious "fight Ottawa"-bluff ever invented and proved to be a highly effective weapon in the tug-of-war to extract increased loans and grants from the federal government. But the people of British Columbia did not fully recognize the premier's worth.

"In normal times your average British Columbian is a busy, bustling happy
The depression years were not normal times, and an insecure population expected too much too fast from a government whose good intentions were hampered by a chronic lack of funds.

The outbreak of war in September, 1939, soon restored the economy but the political climate in British Columbia had changed. The Conservative party, shattered in 1933, had made a slow but steady recovery. Simultaneously, since 1935, when the Liberals returned to power federally, the premier's control of the provincial party machine diminished. In the election of 1937 his supporters had still shown confidence in his government; however, there was a slight but noticeable decline in their numbers. Patullo did not heed the warning; supremely self-confident, he called an election for October 21, 1941. The Liberal strength in the House was reduced to twenty-one members; the Conservatives had returned twelve, and the number of C.C.F. members elected had doubled since the previous election. They now held fourteen seats, and the remaining seat went to an Independent Labour member.

Shortly after the election Pattullo went to Ottawa for consultations with the federal government. During his absence R. L. Maitland, the provincial Conservative party leader, called for an all-party administration which the C.C.F. declined to consider. But negotiations between Liberals and Conservatives continued. When the premier returned to Victoria, he found that he had already lost control of the situation. On November 14th John Hart publicly
announced that he favoured a coalition government. Three days later Pattullo dismissed him, and two days thereafter MacDonald was dismissed for the same reason. On December 2nd the Liberal Party Association met, and a motion for coalition was carried by a vote of 477 to 312. The premier resigned on December 9, 1941, two days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

"Pearl Harbour shattered more than the United States' fleet. It hastened coalition government in B.C., which in turn shattered both old-line parties. The chaos in the Pacific was reflected in a small way in the floundering attempts at jealously-encumbered governmental administration in this province. Unlike the war, which ended in 1945, the battle in B.C. had to run its course — to complete destruction of old-line party government."

Thomas Dufferin Pattullo remained a Member of the Provincial Legislative Assembly until, in the election of 1945, he was finally defeated by a C.C.F. candidate. During these years he constantly predicted that the Liberal party in British Columbia would go down to disastrous defeat and would be eliminated as a serious political force for at least a generation as a consequence of her participation in the coalition government. History proved his prophecies to be correct.
TABLE VIII*

SEATS WON AND VOTES POLLED
BY THREE MAJOR PARTIES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA
(1933 - 1941)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>LIBERAL</th>
<th>CONSERVATIVE</th>
<th>C.C.F.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEATS</td>
<td>VOTES</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>159,131</td>
<td>41.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>156,074</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>149,525</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All data in this table compiled from: Scarrow, *Canada Votes*, op. cit., Table 70, p. 224.
Observations and Conclusions

In the absence of discernable party structures, the first thirty-two years of provincial politics in British Columbia are characterized by a high degree of individual leadership. Contrary to the practices of 'personal government' as it existed in British Columbia at that time the voter's influence on the political process was limited to electing a local candidate. In most cases the voter would have no way of knowing prior to the election what kind of power constellation his representative might be joining. Quite often that decision depended on what the
elected member considered personally most profitable.

Mounting pressure of public opinion, supported by progressive Members of the Legislative Assembly, finally led to the introduction of party lines. From then on candidates were identifiable by a party label. The provincial election of 1903 returned a Conservative government, opposed by a numerically strong group of Liberal competitors.

The basic problem with the Liberal Party in British Columbia was that the party suffered from internal friction which rendered it at least partially ineffective. The major source of this friction was derived from an apparently insoluble dispute about policy priorities and personality clashes.

Politically organized Socialism, at that time, was not a serious challenge for either the Conservative or Liberal party. Ideological fragmentation and sectarianism were in this case to blame as the major sources of failure. Thus the Conservative party was able to maintain firm control of the provincial government for a period of thirteen consecutive years. At one time — which may be considered the culmination point of that period — the superiority of the Conservative party was so overwhelming that Liberal representation of the province was totally eliminated, provincially and federally.

For those Liberals more concerned with provincial interests the humiliating defeat was a blessing in disguise. It greatly reduced federal influence within the provincial Liberal Association.
Concomitantly, the deterioration of leadership in the Conservative party paved the way for the re-emergence of Liberal representation in the Legislative Assembly, culminating in the Liberal election victory of 1916.

The Liberals predominated for a period of almost the same length as had their predecessors. In sharp contrast to the Conservatives, the Liberals introduced considerable social legislation, and generally proved to be responsible administrators. Yet in 1928 the Conservatives swept back to power with a landslide victory. Five years later another 'landslide' of equal magnitude returned a Liberal government.

In British Columbia political landslides occurred with a high degree of frequency and predictability. This phenomenon seems to be related to my hypothesis and tends to support the view that the great majority of British Columbians had no permanent party predilection. It was rather the leaders who inspired British Columbians to vote for a certain party. Their ability to preserve or increase their personal popularity would become a dominant factor in determining their party's degree of success at the polls. From 1903 to 1941 eleven provincial elections were held in British Columbia; six of them resulted in so-called 'landslides', three each for Conservatives and Liberals.

In 1903, the Liberal party machine by way of political 'assassination' eliminated Joe Martin, the only competitor Richard McBride might have had to fear — a fulminant example of how an Ottawa-
inspired Liberal party administration arraigns the tentative development of liberal spirit in a Canadian province. Yet it must be admitted that in all likelihood McBride would have won the election in spite of a better organized Liberal resistance. He was — at that time — the dominant political figure, the first native-born British Columbian to reach for the highest office in the province.

McBride's first election victory had been a narrow one. After all, 'Fighting Joe' Martin had been a formidable opponent; besides, McBride, like Martin, did not have the fullest support of his party. Once in power he more than amply displayed his great abilities as a politician. The following election, in 1907, brought him a two to one lead over the Liberals. The election was won by skillfully employed 'fight Ottawa'-tactics. Economic boom conditions helped to increase his popularity and 'McBride Prosperity' became a trademark for his policies. In the election of 1909 the Conservative party won thirty-eight seats, the Liberal party two, and three years later, after the election of 1912, the Liberals had lost even their last two seats.

On December 15, 1915, McBride, then Sir Richard, resigned the premiership and his seat to become Agent-General in London. Within nine months of his departure the Conservative strength in the Legislature had been reduced from forty-six to only nine members, facing thirty-six Liberals. Obviously, party preference could not account for such a drastic change of mind by the voters, but the dislike for
McBride's successor, William J. Bowser, could. Bowser was a master administrator but, unlike McBride, unpopular. He could not express his feelings — if he had any — for ordinary people. Har­lan C. Brewster, on the other hand, was not only well respected but also well liked throughout the province.

After Brewster's untimely death, John Oliver became premier. In the election of 1920 he defended his position against Bowser, and retained a two to one ratio over the Conservatives in the Leg­islature. Although the Liberals lost nine seats while the Conserva­tives gained five, it was a remarkable victory for the Liberals. Firstly, the election had been fought under most unfavourable eco­nomic conditions, brought on by the after war depression; secondly, the B.C. electorate had shown confidence in a premier who had at­tained this office only by a caucus decision. (In the cases of Bowser and MacLean it did not).

The emergence of the Provincial Party, challenging both old­line parties with the slogan: "Put Oliver out, don't let Bowser in!" made the election of 1924 a muddled affair. Utterly confused by the charges and countercharges the party leaders hurled at each other, the voters rejected all three of them. The case is perhaps singular in the history of democratic elections but not at all surprising, if one considers that the B.C. voter was indeed more leader-oriented than party-oriented. Sometimes the voter also forgives; 'Honest John' Oliver regained his seat in a by-election to take the reins of government once more, and his popularity increased with his success.
The next cycle of 'landslides' began in 1928. Since 1916 provincial Liberal governments had served the public well by introducing progressive reform legislation without ruining the provincial finances. The province was experiencing the economic results of Oliver's successful freight rates campaigns. Yet the achievements were attributed to Brewster and Oliver personally—not credited to the Liberal party. How little a party label mattered to most British Columbians was clearly demonstrated when the voters defeated John Duncan MacLean, whom Oliver himself had nominated as his successor, and instead chose Simon Fraser Tolmie. Dr. MacLean was a man of impeccable character and undoubtedly a very capable administrator. But neither he himself nor his party was able to convey a favourable image of his qualities to the electorate. Not unlike Bowser he grew up in the shadow of a premier whom the people admired; not unlike Bowser he became premier by caucus decision (i.e. without the consent of the sensitive electorate); and, not unlike Bowser he had difficulties in communicating with the general public. His challenger, Dr. Tolmie, had an admirable record as federal Minister of Agriculture, was affable, and a native-born British Columbian— a factor which does matter in the evaluation by the B.C. voter.

One of the twelve Liberals who survived the Conservative 'landslide' was Thomas Dufferin Pattullo. As Leader of the Opposition he relentlessly exposed the incompetence of the Tolmie government. The electorate took notice and sent Tolmie to defeat. It was the first
time that an immediate reversal had taken place. A landslide victor had been crushed by the landslide victory of his challenger. The 'landslide' cycle closes with Pattullo's repeat performance in 1937.

Whether the loss of ten Liberal seats in the election of 1941 should be attributed to a resurgence of Conservatism, as it often occurs in war times, to the increased popularity of the C.C.F. or the voter's impatience with the slow realization of the premier's long term goals, must remain unsolved. The fact remains that in the years under Pattullo's premiership, British Columbia enjoyed the sensation of polity. The most difficult economic times did not bring Pattullo's government down; the C.C.F. pledged that they would not — but the disloyalty of Duff Pattullo's friend, 'Judas' Jack Hart, did. Under the Hart/Maitland coalition, B.C. politics promptly reverted back to semi-oligarchic practices, as in the times before the introduction of party lines.
NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

4. Ibid., p. 211.
5. Ibid., p. 204.
7. Ibid., p. 212.
10. Ibid., pp. 221-222.
11. Ibid., pp. 219-221.
17. Ibid., p. 214.
18. Ibid., pp. 223-224.
20. Tolmie to Pattullo, March 27, 1933, Ibid.

24. *The Vancouver Sun*, October 20, 1933, Pacific Press Archives, Vancouver, B.C.


28. *The Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 1933, Pacific Press Archives, Vancouver, B.C.


30. Ibid., p. 226.


32. Loc. cit.


34. Pattullo to King, November 29, 1933, Ibid.


This bibliography does not claim to be an exhaustive list of works pertaining to the topic. Besides sources cited in the text I have listed those which I considered to be significant for the pursuit of this study. Of particular value have been:

Howard A. Scarrow, *Canada Votes*: An indispensable handbook, filled with detailed federal and provincial election data.

Margaret Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*: Detailed and precise information, combined with a style that exudes warm human feelings, provide the reader with a true-to-life picture of British Columbian society.

Martin Robin, *The Rush for Spoils*, and *Pillars of Profit*: These two volumes cover British Columbia's political history up to the 1972 election. They offer a wealth of meticulously researched material. Unfortunately the author frequently lets his strong socialist bias interfere with his otherwise scholarly work.

Sydney Jackman, *Portraits of the Premiers*: An extensive "Who is Who", covering the lives of all premiers of B.C. up to, and including, the Hon. W. A. C. Bennett. The author has succeeded in describing all these different personalities with unfailing impartiality.

Russel R. Walker, *Politicians of a Pioneering Province*: A delightfully unconventional account of B.C. politics in the nineteen-twenties. This book is filled with first-hand knowledge about every
single B.C. politician of that time. An enjoyable book even for the reader with little interest in politics.

**BOOKS**


**Dissertations and Theses**


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