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# The Defeat of Imperial Urbanism in Québec City, 1840–1855

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Article abstract

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Ultimately, this imperial urbanism was a failure. While the essential structure of municipal governance remained intact until 1855, local issues became immediately entangled in provincial party politics. Major business leaders were replaced by professional and small retailers as the dominant group on the City Council. The very ethos of improvement ensured that the under-financed city government became dwarfed by other agencies, such as the banks, the Gas Company and of course railroads. The case of Québec City in the first years of the Union illustrates the failure of attempts to transplant Utilitarian approaches to state formation into a colonial context.

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## Introduction

The historiography of municipal structures in Québec City has traditionally treated the city's incorporation in 1832 by the Legislative Assembly as a basic point of departure. From Antonio Drolet's 1968 contribution to the Société Historique de Québec's municipal history,[1] to the recent works of John Hare, Marc Lafrance and David-T. Ruddel,[2] the break in the city's formal existence between 1836 and 1840 is treated as an insignificant gap in an essentially continuous development.

This is an error. In fact the city's second incorporation by the nominated Special Council of Lower Canada under Governor-General Charles Poulett Thomson marks the real beginning of Québec's corporate history. The new incorporation was not merely a revival of the old act. It expressed on the part of the Imperial authorities a new understanding of the role of local government in the general fabric of British society. The British Municipal Act of 1835 was regarded as a major change in political structuring. Joseph Parkes, the Radical organizer, saw this act as "the steam engine for the mill built by Parliamentary Reform."[3] This new perception was applied to Canada. The incorporation of Québec formed part of an explicit plan to impose a British character on Lower Canada through a network of government institutions. Under the aegis of this system the old capital developed its local political culture as well as the characteristics of a modern urban community.

Alain Baccicalupo identifies Lord Durham, along with Louis-Hyppolite LaFontaine, as the co-founder of Quebec's municipal system.[4] It is certainly true that the importance of local government was a theme of the Earl's Canadian policy. In his Report, he refers to "municipal institutions of local self-government, ... the foundations of Anglo-Saxon freedom and civilization."[5] Nonetheless, in this as in other areas, Durham's reputation comes from his ability to express broad concepts in forceful prose, rather than from the substance of his accomplishments.[6] The creation of Lower Canada's municipal organizations was left to groups working from different principles. This was to be particularly evident in the incorporation of Quebec.

Charles Poulett Thomson, the last Governor of Lower Canada and the first Governor of the United Province of Canada, has been seen as simply the executor of Durham's political testament.[7] Certainly Thomson called the refusal of the Imperial Government to include local institutions in the Union Bill itself "this almost destruction for all good purposes of the Bill." As with his predecessor, he felt that only the removal of local issues from the arena of the Legislative Assembly could produce a healthy political climate for economic development.[8] It must, however, be remembered that Thomson reflected a strand of British politics quite different from that of Durham. A businessman by background and a pragmatist in action, he represented a coarse antithesis to Durham's vast inherited wealth and aristocratic populism. Thomson was a Utilitarian, a friend of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill and a member of the Political Economy Club.[9] Janet Ajzenstat has outlined the political differences that existed between Durham's liberalism and the Utilitarians' principles with particular emphasis on the Lower Canadian situation.[10] Similarly, while Durham felt that political reform was a necessary precondition for commercial prosperity,[11] Thomson was very much of the school that maintained the importance of commercial development as the guarantor of liberty. The priority for Thomson of development over political rights is manifest in his approach to the Union of the Canadas. In his eyes, the purpose of the Act was to achieve the political stability necessary for economic development. If,

*Résumé*
*En 1840, la ville de Québec a acquis de nouveau son statut de ville incorporée sous une ordonnance du conseil spécial du Bas Canada. Cet article insiste sur le fait que l'ordonnance exprimait une conception précise de l'urbanisme. Façonnée d'après certaines idées du rôle que jouaient les villes pendant l'Age de Réforme en Angleterre, l'ordonnance cherchait à enraciner plusieurs structures municipales sans aucon lien politique afine d'encourager le progrès et 'l'amélioration.' Au même temps, ele devait établir l'hégémonie des élites commerciales anglophones de la ville. En effet, l'ordonnance exprimait dans l'arène locale les grands ebjectifs du Gouverneur Charles Pulett Thomson (Lord Sydenham) au niveau provincial.*

*Enfin, cet urbanisme impérial a échoué. Malgré que ses structures de base sont restées en place jusqu'en 1855, les affaires locales se sont mêlées avec la politique provinciale. Les chefs de commerce ont été remplacés par les avocats, les notaires, les médecins et les commerçants de détail. L'idée même du progrès a fait en sorte que d'autres agents, tels que les banques, la Compagnie du Gaz et bien-sûr les chemins-de fer éclipsent un Conseil de la ville sans resources financières solides. Le cas de la ville de Québec dans les premières années sous l'Union démontre l'échec des tentatives d'insérer un modèle utilitarien de l'état dans une société coloniale.*

as Ajzenstat argues, the assimilation of the French Canadians was a fundamental expression of Durham's liberalism and "the central tenet" of his Report,[12] it was for Thomson at best the incidental by-product of Upper Canada's necessary hegemony.[13]

Among the documents awaiting the new governor in 1839 was the final report of the commission Durham had appointed to inquire into municipal affairs. It was a virulent attack on the structure of the former City Councils of Montréal and Québec. Four aspects of the old act were attacked in particular. The most basic of these was the nature of the municipal franchise. Under the act of 1832, only proprietors of a house and its grounds who paid assessment were entitled to vote. This, the report declared, made each of the two Upper Town wards of Québec "a constituency little better than a close club."[14] The Report also found fault with the old law's definition of the qualifications for election to the municipal councils. This was criticized by the Commission because of "the impossibility of ascertaining whether it be actual or nominal."[15]

The Commissioners were particularly irritated by the manner in which the city had been divided into wards. Under the old system, Québec City had consisted of ten wards, each electing two members. Upper Town contained four wards, Lower Town two, and the suburbs formed four. This, the Commission found, made sense neither in terms of population nor of assessment. In short, "In this distribution of wards no sound governing principle is discernible; nor indeed, principle of any kind."[16] Finally, the Commissioners felt that the old legislation had vested inadequate powers in the municipal authorities. The corporations of Montréal and Quebec

had, in fact, hardly any substantial authority beyond the superintendence of streets ... And if the administrative powers conferred upon the corporations were little, the resources at their disposal were less. The average yearly revenue of the City of Québec for five years was £5,500, a sum which, with strict economy, would barely suffice to pay the corporate officers, and maintain an efficient constabulary police.[17]

Such criticisms appear rational and moderate. Nonetheless, behind all of them lay a central point: the old system unfairly excluded commercial British Canadians from their fair share of power.[18] The qualification for municipal electors, based on real estate

conferred a monopoly of local influence on the old race of settlers to the prejudice of the new; and this too, in places depending on trade for their prosperity, and where the commercial classes have always been recruited from without. It is hard to believe that the House of Assembly had any other motive in fixing the municipal franchise than the desire to secure the ascendancy to the Franco-Canadians.[19]

In the same way, the qualification for election to the Council was objectionable because of "its tendency to exclude from the management of corporate affairs persons highly competent to conduct them with advantage, viz. those whose capital is embarked in trade."[20] The result was that in a commercial city commercial men were "thrown into a hopeless minority in the local administrative bodies."[21] The political structure of the city prevented a self-proclaimed dynamic minority from using the municipalities' resources for the benefit of trade.[22]

Nowhere in his despatches to the Colonial Office did the new Governor make reference to the Commissioners' Report,

citing instead the influence of his appointed Special Council.[23] He certainly accepted the importance of a legislative incorporation for the two cities as a key to the operation of the new political order in the colony. He advised Lord John Russell, the Colonial secretary that, along with the reform of the police system created by Durham and the creation of district courts, the ordinances incorporating Montréal and Québec were "absolutely necessary before the union takes place, to admit of it being brought into operation with safety."[24] To justify the terms of his legislation incorporating Montréal and Quebec, he simply described it as consonant with current practice. He had, after all, been a member of the British government that had passed the *Municipal Reform Act* of 1835. Writing to Russell, he placed his municipal legislation clearly in the tradition of British reform. He declared that

> The principles on which these Ordinances have been framed is that adopted for the Corporations of England, with some slight variations, and for the different incorporated Towns of Upper Canada.[25]

Nonetheless, it is not surprising that the Ordinance closely paralleled the recommendations of the Commissioners' Report. Charles Buller, the Chief Commissioner, was in British politics a Utilitarian of much the same school as the new Governor, and had acted as one of Thomson's sources of information before the new Governor's departure for Canada.[26]

The specific clauses of the Ordinance followed closely on the recommendations of the Report. The powers of the city, particularly to raise funds, were increased. There was only one aspect of the ordinance derived from the Commissioners' Report that Thomson felt necessary to explain to his superior. This was the

change in the basis of the municipal franchise. The Governor stated that the old basis of freehold ownership "gave the utmost dissatisfaction especially to the British Population who were thereby very generally excluded from the constituency."[27] A simple household franchise was established.

In contrast, Thomson presented to the Colonial Secretary no explanation of the most important part of his new constitution for the City of Quebec, the division of the city into wards. In the place of ten electoral districts, there were to be only six: Palais and St. Louis in Upper Town, Champlain and St. Pierre in Lower Town, and St. Roch and St. Jean in the suburbs. Each ward was to elect three representatives, and the Council was to elect the Mayor from among its members. The significance of this change becomes apparent considering the relative populations of the different wards.(See Table 1.) The four small urban wards, together comprising only 38.8% of population,[28] elected two-thirds of the Councillors. Even allowing for the bias inherent in a property franchise, the disproportion was striking. In 1843, the urban wards contained together 1209 municipal electors out of a total of 3709 (32.6%).[29] Clearly

the new 'governing principle' for the division of the city was that of property. The Commissioners' Report, citing the assessment of 1837, showed that the suburbs had provided slightly less than a third of the city's total valuation on real estate. Thus, the new division of the city reflected as closely as possible the assessment rates reported by the Commission. Of equal importance was the ethnic composition of the over-represented wards. In Lower Town, St. Pierre was the focus of the commercial community, while Champlain was the Irish quarter. From 1832 onwards Upper Town had become increasingly anglicized.[30] Palais Ward and St. Louis wards had become the preferred residence of the *bureaucrats* and professionals, French and English, who could be counted on to support the government, and also of many merchants escaping the insalubrious Lower Town after the cholera epidemic of 1832. Thus, by 1842, the four urban wards contained 12,342 inhabitants, but only 3,891 French Canadians. Of this latter group, nearly half (1,565) were concentrated in St. Pierre.[31]

Thus, it can be seen that Quebec City represented a microcosm for the implementation of Thomson's general

Table 1: Distribution of population in 1842 by wards

| Ward | Population | % total | % French | # Coun |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| St. Louis : | 2,754 | 8.7% | 26.7% | 3 |
| Palais : | 2,282 | 7.2% | 41.1% | 3 |
| St. Pierre : | 3,612 | 11.4% | 43.3% | 3 |
| Champlain : | 3,689 | 11.6% | 17.6% | 3 |
| St. Roch : | 10,710 | 33.8% | 87.3% | 3 |
| St. Jean : | 8,686 | 27.3% | 69.2% | 3 |
| Total | 31,733 | | | 18 |

Adapted from *Le Canadien*, 3 juin 1842, recapitualting the 1842 census

colonial policy. An abrupt change in political structures could liberate a dynamic and progressive English commercial minority from the moribund control of a French-Canadian majority. The result would be the efficient use of available resources to encourage economic growth. The existing structures in Quebec City made necessary the kind of social engineering Thomson planned for the entire United Province of Canada.

## I    The Appointed Council:

The Special Council of Lower Canada empowered Thomson to name directly the City Council that would govern Québec from August 8, 1840 to December 1, 1842. This Council expressed the Governor's policy not only in its composition, but also in its administrative and developmental priorities. There was a clear majority of both anglophones and merchants.[32](See Table 2.) The new Council rapidly proceeded to give the civic administration an English flavour. By a vote of 9 to 6,[33] George Futvoye was elected over a French Canadian to the city's most important office, that of City Clerk. Futvoye, a recent arrival in Canada, claimed as his only qualification that he had "been during two years Secretary of the most extensive parish in England and that, at a time when the greatest activity was required."[34] The vote was on almost purely linguistic lines. No French Canadian supported Futvoye;

only one anglophone supported his opponent. Another city position created a clear division, that of "Advocate to the Corporation." By a vote of 8 to 6, George Okill Stuart, of the great *bureaucrate* clan, was appointed over a French Canadian. No francophone supported Stuart; no anglophone supported his rival.[35] A similar division appeared in the election of the City's Fire Inspector. John Frew, a unilingual anglophone, defeated a French Canadian. Only one French Canadian councillor figured in the majority.[36] The fact that the French-Canadian candidates for the positions of Clerk and Advocate had both supported Sydenhamite candidates in the general election of 1841[37] emphasizes that language rather than politics was the deciding factor in the distribution of city patronage. On the administrative level, it is evident that the Governor's appointees had secured an essentially English civil service for the City. Of its salaried employees the three most highly paid officers, the Clerk (£300), the Fire Inspector (£300) and the Treasurer (£250) were anglophones.[38] The Chief of Police, Captain R. H. Russell, was a unilingual anglophone, and commanded an entirely anglophone police force.[39]

Durham's commission of inquiry into local government had commented on the predominance of French in the city government under the old incorporation;[40] in their turn, Sydenham's appointees were

clearly determined to impose a British flavour. *Le Canadien* commented on this push for anglicization:

> Sous ce rapport Lord Sydenham avait déjà été assez loin, mais la majorité du Conseil n'a pas voulu faire mentir le proverbe ... : Valet du diable fait toujours pis que son maitre (sic).[41]

This Sydenhamite majority showed the same determination in the pursuit of Thomson's objective of local responsibility for local development. As Durham's Commission had noted, the city's revenues from a network of assessments, market fees and licenses created by previous legislation did not suffice to pay for the minimum standards of service a modern city required. A major source of expense was the Police Force, established by Durham but modified by Sydenham.[42] The city had no control over the force, but total responsibility for its financing, and its expenses in 1840 amounted to nearly half the city's revenue under the old system. At the same time, pressure within the Council for gas illumination and a regular water supply had begun.[43] New concepts of security, salubrity and protection from fire were increasing the overall responsibilities of the Corporation. It is to be noted that the two principal promoters of these projects were both British Canadians from the wealthier urban wards, and both strong political supporters of the Governor. For such projects, a considerable expansion of the city's financial base would be necessary.[44]

The attempt to create a new tax structure was intensely divisive, both within the Council and within the city at large. The ability of this nominated body to impose taxes had already become part of the province-wide agitation against Sydenham's general policy.[45] This movement constantly invoked the principle of 'no taxation without representation'; as

Table 2: Councillors appointed by Sydenham in 1840 by occupation and language

| Merchants | | Professionals | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anglophone: | 9l | Anglophone: | 2l | Total Anglophone: | 11 |
| Francophone: | 4l | Francophone: | 4l | Total Francophone: | 8 |
| Total Merchants : 13 | | | Professionals : 6 | | |
| Total Anglophones : 11 | | | Total Francophone : 8 | | |

the first municipal election in 1842 was to demonstrate, a large part of its emotional appeal came from the resistance to any direct taxation of the French-Canadian residents of the suburbs.[46] The resulting conflict effectively paralysed the city government from March 9, 1841 to June 14, 1842.

On the former date, Ebeneezer Baird and Robert Shaw, both merchants and both stalwarts of the Sydenhamite faction, moved for a consideration of the taxes to be levied to meet the city's needs. In amendment, H.-S. Huot and Joseph Parant moved a series of resolutions declaring that the current Council should impose no taxes, and that an Address be presented to the government calling for immediate municipal elections. The result was a tie, and by the casting vote of the Mayor, R.-E. Caron, Huot's amendments were carried.[47] The financial obligations of the city, particularly those for the Police, continued, and the Corporation found itself increasingly dependent on the goodwill of the directors of the Quebec Bank and, in particular, of its Cashier, Noah Freer. The urgency of the situation was increased when the Legislature, still under Sydenhamite control, rejected the petition based on Huot's resolutions.[48] The political deadlock continued throughout a series of meetings where debate became "passablement orageuse."[49] Meanwhile, the debts of the city to the Quebec Bank mounted and its arrears increased. The Provincial Government took legal action against the city, and finally, disbanded the Police Force. Work on the city's roads was suspended. At this point, the Mayor's letters to Freer took on a tone that can only be described as begging.[50] Again, the recorded divisions of the Council on this topic followed very closely along linguistic lines. Throughout this period, the anti-tax agitators maintained steady pressure through a series of public meetings, petitions and editorials.[51]

Finally, faced with the choice between anarchy and taxation, the opposition crumpled. From April until June, the details of a new scheme of taxation were hammered out at ever-more ill-tempered meetings. *Le Canadien* attacked the new proposals as unduly favourable to the wealthy and sneered at the system's defenders for invoking "sentiments et idées Britanniques."[52] Why, the paper asked, were professionals, rentiers, banks and assurance companies not being taxed?[53] On June 14, a by-law "to provide Funds toward defraying the expenses of the City of Quebec" was passed.[54]

The whole process lays clear the tensions created by Thomson's urban policy. Yet despite the most intransigent opposition, the Governor's appointed Council succeeded in harnessing municipal resources for local ends. Its British and commercial block, although by the narrowest of margins, had demonstrated its power. Thus the thrust of Thomson's urban policy was clear. It involved the dominance of the British community in municipal affairs. For the Governor, this was synonymous with the entrenchment of the commercial community's power. The intended effect of this change was to be the liberation of urban affairs from provincial politics. A rational business administration would ensure the dedication of resources to local economic development. The institutional basis for this lay in the division of the city into wards in a way that favoured British residents. From

1840 to 1855, despite extensive controversy, this division remained constant. The actual development of the city's municipal institutions under an elected Council is the test of the Governor's successes and failures.

## II The Struggle over the Wards :

An overview of the Québec City Council between 1842 and 1855 suggests that Thomson secured his basic objective: the establishment of the British minority in a position of dominance. (See Table 3.)[55] In that period there were only four years of equality between the two language groups; in every other year anglophones predominated. This is particularly striking in that from 1846 on, the two French-Canadian suburbs each elected four, rather than three, councillors.

The division of the city remained a rancorous issue throughout this period. On October 13, 1843, Joseph Laurin of St. Roch moved a series of resolutions calling for modifications to the Ordinance incorporating the City. The most important of these called for the creation of two new suburban wards. Only eleven Councillors were present. A resolution calling for an Address to the government for these changes was also adopted.[56] The organ of the British commercial community, the *Mercury*, cited "the maxim that property and intelligence should be represented rather than population" and referred to the anti-development and anti-tax attitudes of the suburbs.[57]
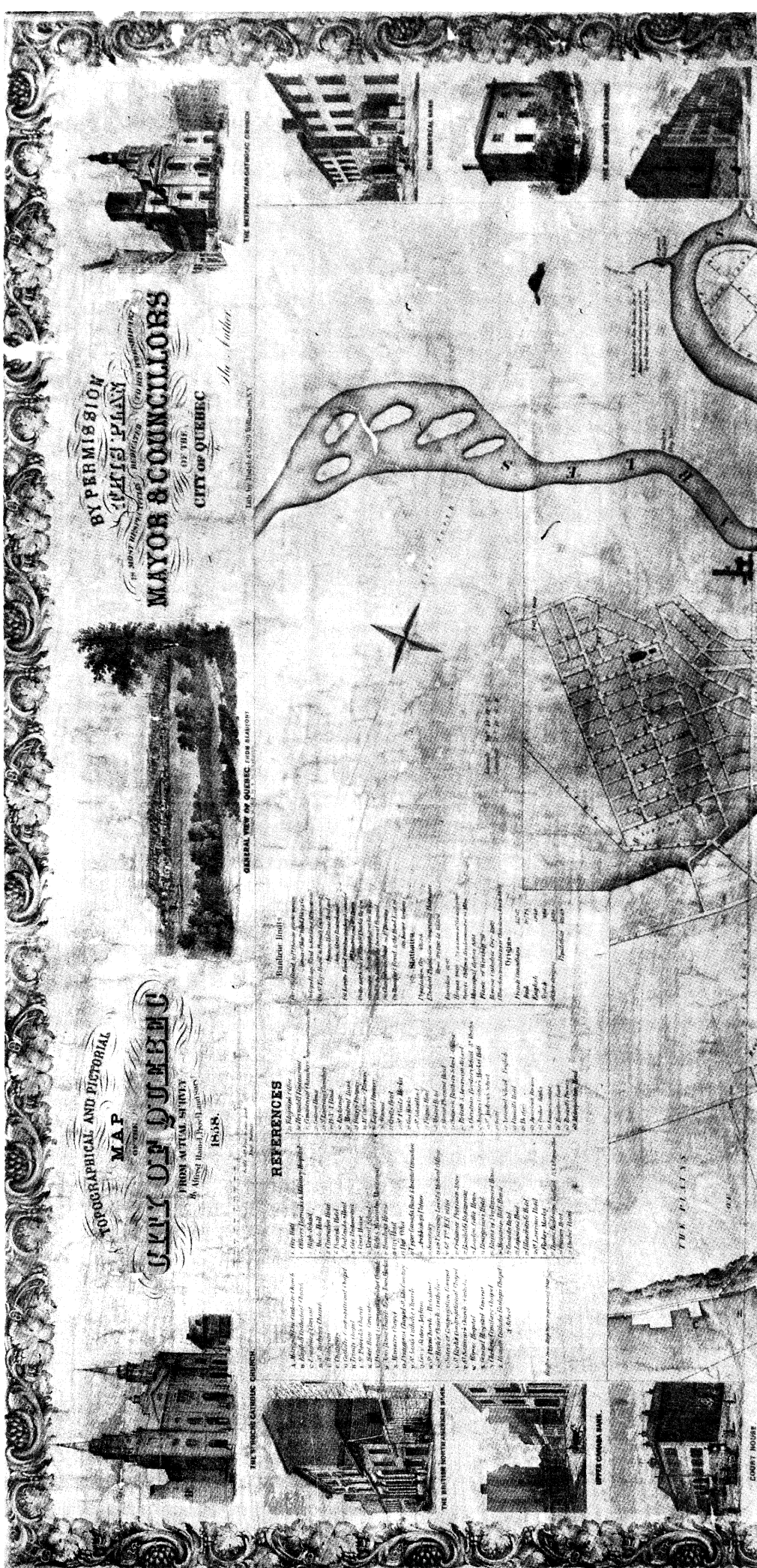
Table 3: Distribution of Councillors by Language Group, 1842-1855

| Year | 42 | 43 | 44 | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Br.: | 9 | 9 | 9 | 12 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 13 | 12 | 12 |
| Fr.: | 9 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 |

The result of this agitation was a remark-
able series of transactions at the Council
meeting of October 27 where fifteen
councillors were present. In the absence
of Caron, William Petry, the Vice-Presi-
dent of the Quebec Bank and a Council-
lor for St. Louis, was called to the chair. It
was his vote that carried motions to
reconsider the proceedings of October
13, to strike Laurin's resolutions from the
minutes of the Council, and to direct the
City Clerk to withdraw the petition to the
Government based upon them. This was
not a case of privileged urban wards vot-
ing against the suburbs. No francophone
voted for any of these motions; no anglo-
phone voted against them. Thus, the
French-Canadian representatives of St.
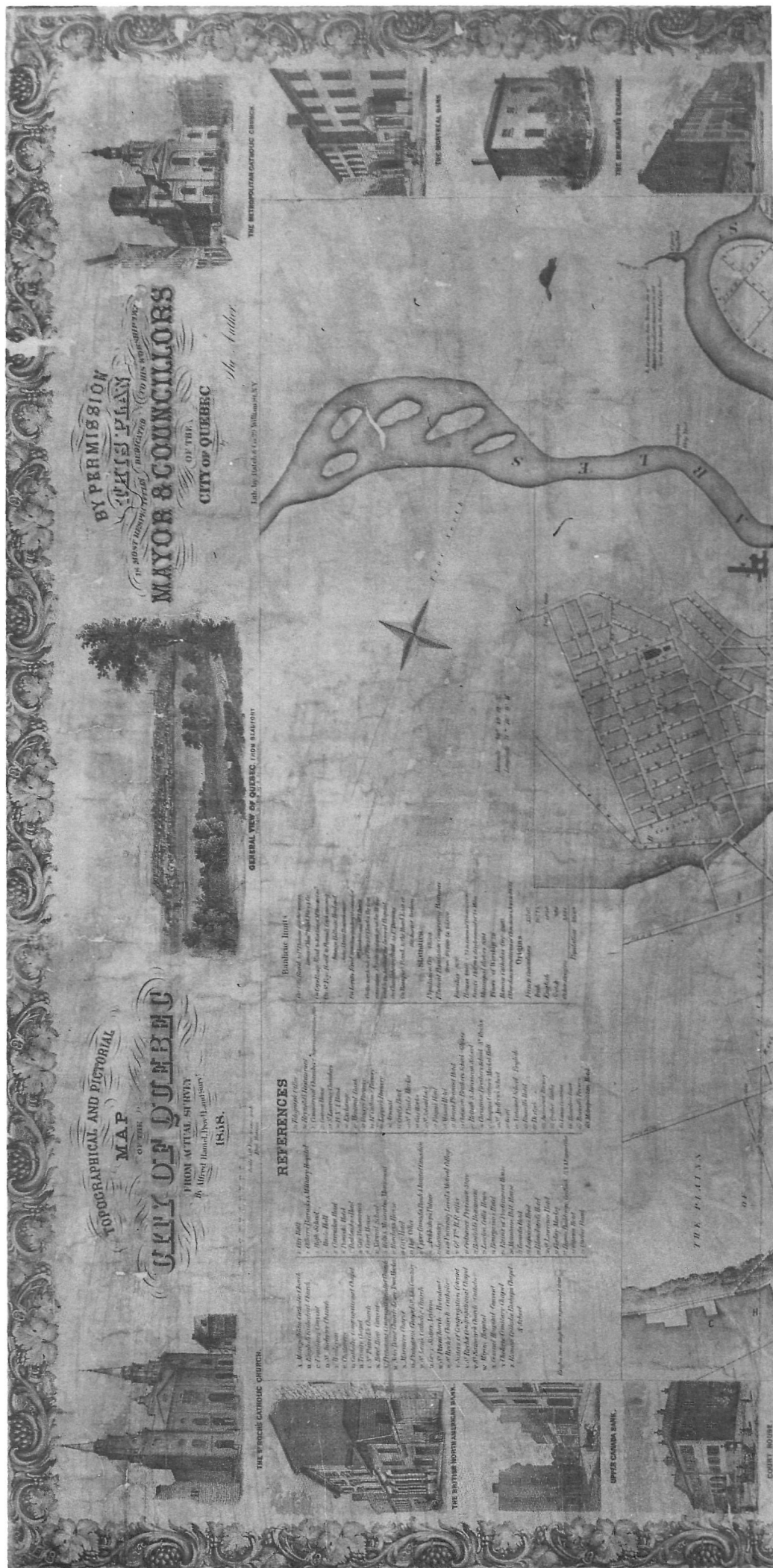Pierre and Champlain voted in the minor-
ity.[58]

The expansion in 1846 of suburban rep-
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The expansion in 1846 of suburban representation was brought about by the lobbying of Jean Chabot, one of the members of the Legislative Assembly for the city. This motion had not been passed through the City Council; it had, as the Québec *Mercury* put it, been "smuggled" through a committee of the Legislature most of whose members owed "their present position as members to the numerical influence of these very suburbs."[59] The next major attack on the ward system took place in 1850, again a year in which the linguistic groups were evenly balanced on the Council. The city's population had grown to 37,365; the number of voters had increased to 4,786. Of these, the urban wards contained 1,500 (31.3%). In assessment, however, the suburbs supplied less than 30% of the city's £12,565.[60] Thus, the underlying basis for the division into wards remained solid. Jean Chabot carried an amendment to a bill expanding the powers of the city. This amendment gave the suburban wards twelve rather than eight representatives.[61] All ten anglophone members voted to petition against this division of the City. All the
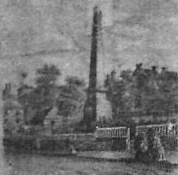
THE OLD CHATEAU.

CITY HALL.

CITADEL.

MONUMENT TO WOLFE & MONTCALM.

THE GREY SISTERS ASYLUM.

THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE.

THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

COURT HOUSE. PLACE D'ARMES. ENG. CATHEDRAL CHURCH.

THE LATE PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

MARINE HOSPITAL.

GENERAL HOSPITAL.

THE METHODIST CHURCH.

THE ESPLANADE.

ST JOHN'S GATE.

ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH.

CITY PROPERTY

ORDNANCE PROPERTY

ORDNANCE

ANDERSON

HOTEL DIEU

Irish organizer in the City. His election for Champlain in 1846 was merely an expression of this position. The main challenge to his dominance came in 1849 from Charles Alleyn, who identified himself with the more radical Irish nationalism of the post-famine period.[70] Alleyn became active in the Irish wing of the Annexationist movement in 1850, and carried both Champlain and the vice-presidency of the St. Patrick's Society in 1851. Alleyn, as with many of his fellow radicals, moved into the political mainstream to became Mayor and a member of the Legislative Assembly in 1854. He also rose to cabinet rank.

## IV  The Fading of Big Business :

This politicization of municipal affairs was complemented by the second major flaw in Thomson's policy. His object was, after all, to have not simply a British-dominated Council, but also one run by major figures in business. This was clearly indicated by his original nominations to the Corporation, which included the cream of Québec's business élites. Even the nationalist *Le Canadien* expressed its approval at the standing of the Governor's nominees.

> Plusieurs de ces messieurs sont de grands propriétaires; d'autres sont à la tête d'un commerce considérable; deux d'entre eux, MM. Munn et Black, constructeurs de navires, ont des rapports étroits avec une portion très nombreuses de la classe ouvrière.[71]

George Black, Peter Langlois, François Buteau and John Munn represented the intertwined timber and shipping interests that were so closely allied to the Liverpool market. Ebeneezer Baird, Louis Massue and John Jones were merchants of the first rank.

Hare, Lafrance and Ruddel, relying on Marcel Plourde's figures, have con-

cluded that during this period "les marchands anglophones" controlled the Council's committees.[72] When studying such a limited number of individuals, making the distinction between professional and commercial figures becomes difficult. For example, T. W. Lloyd, was not only a lawyer but also the co-proprietor of a major brewery;[73] John Greaves Clapham, a notary, derived most of his income from urban real estate.[74] It could also be argued that the timber cullers, operating under provincial license according to a set range of fees, were in fact professionals, rather than commercial figures. Finally, all committees were required to have at least one representative from each ward. As a result, committee membership was not directly related to political influence. Some committees hardly met at all; others had high rates of absenteeism. This makes necessary a reconsideration of Hare, Lafrance and Ruddel's
conclusion.

Major business figures rapidly vanished from the Council. While both the Vice-president of the Quebec Bank and the general manager of the Bank of Montreal at Québec were elected in 1842, neither stood for re-election. The city was clearly dominated by professionals and small merchants. While of the 78 men who served between 1840 and 1855 only 23 were professionals[75], it is important to note that of the 109 chairmen of standing committees who have been identified, 68 were professionals. All of the mayors during this period were professionals. At the same time, councillors with commercial backgrounds tended to serve fewer years on the Corporation. During this period there were 275 spaces filled on the Council.[76] Professionals occupied 117 of these, suggesting longer tenures of office. Of the twelve men who sat on the Council for more than six years during this period, only three were connected with business and none of these

were major traders. George Hall, who served from 1846 to well after 1855, was a grocer, as was Michael Connolly. The third, a dry-goods merchant was a French Canadian, Joseph Robitaille. (See Table 4.)

There are several explanations for the failure of major businessmen to take a commanding lead in municipal politics. The simplest one is that businessmen are usually busy with business. This was par-

Table 4:  The following is a list of the six most common identifiable occupations for Councillors from 1840 to 1855:

| Professional: | | Commercial: | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Doctors : | 30 | Merchants: | 71 |
| Lawyers : | 68 | Grocers : | 29 |
| Notaries: | 25 | Cullers : | 14 |
| Total : | 123 | Total : | 114 |
| Percent: | 44.9 | Percent: | 41.6 |
| Total Identified : | | | 237 |
| Percentage of all Councillors : | | | 86.5 |

Note: Many of the merchants are clearly retailers of such goods as hardware and dry goods.

ticularly true in Québec City between 1840 and 1855. Its dependence on the highly unstable British market for timber and ships made it susceptible to crises. Thus, one of Thomson's nominees to the Council in 1840, François Buteau, found himself virtually bankrupt by 1844.[77] Thomas C. Lee, once one of the city's largest shipbuilders, was broken by the crisis of 1848. This became important as the responsibilities of Council members increased. In theory, the Council met fortnightly; in practice meetings were often continued night after night. In addition standing and special committees multi-

plied, many of which had extensive delegated powers.

## V  *The Overshadowing of the Council :*

The abstention of entrepreneurs from the Council is also partially explained by the third major flaw in Thomson's urbanism. Paradoxically, the extent to which the Council fostered social development diminished its relative importance within the city. A range of other corporate bodies operated during the period. Some of these were created independently of the Council, but became associated with it; others were products of the Council's own activities. Finally and most disastrously, there were bodies to which the Council linked itself. In dealing with the first category, the Council retained its formal authority. Thus, for example, the Catholic and Protestant School Commissioners were named by the Corporation under the legislation of 1845. These nominations were never controverted, and indeed appear to have been automatic. The corporation appears to have respected absolutely the Commission's autonomy. The city was also responsible for its funding without having any control over the amount. This caused difficulties for the city finances; in 1847 the Catholic School Commissioners secured a writ against the city for funds that were six months overdue.[78] In the same way, the traditional responsibility of the Quebec Board of Trade for the nomination to the Mayor of a range of Inspectors became formalized in 1845. A candidate had to be approved by the provincially-appointed Board of Examiners and supported by the Board of Trade.[79] Thus an independent body dominated by anglophone merchants exercised considerable influence in civic affairs.

Two major bodies, both dominated by anglophones, came into existence as a direct result of the Council's activities: The Quebec Gas Company and the Aqueduct.[80] As mentioned earlier, street lighting and the supply of water were among the first concerns identified by Sydenham's appointed Council. In the following years the Corporation tried every possible approach to securing these services. Finally, in 1847, a private company was found to take over the powers the government vested in the city for gas lighting alone.[81] The question of the water supply was not resolved until 1850, when the city was empowered to issue £125,000 of debentures for the construction of an aqueduct. The aqueduct was to be a separate financial body whose manager would be answerable to the Council.

The ultimate over-mighty subjects of this period were of course the railroads. Québec, anxious to regain from Montréal its position as Lower Canada's most important city, was an early and eager investor in railways. The city pledged £50,000 for the purchase of stock in the Quebec & Richmond Railroad and in 1853 decided to take £100,000 of stock in the North Shore Railroad. This sum alone amounted to five times the city's annual budget.[82]

Such massive expenditures severely limited the Council's ability to initiate new policies. As T. W. Acheson remarks, "All nineteenth-century cities were woefully underfinanced."[83] Québec consistently overestimated its revenues and underestimated its expenses. Throughout the 1840s it constantly approached the Québec Bank for short term loans. In 1848 the Council pledged one third of its annual revenue to amortize its debts to the bank.[84] During this period Noah Freer, the Bank's General Manager, was arguably the most powerful man in the city. In 1851 Angus McDonald and Charles Alleyn moved in Council that

seeing the credit of the Corporation is rising and that money is cheap and plenty in England and elsewhere, the Water Committee be instructed to take into consideration the propriety of redeeming the debentures already issued bearing interest at 7 per cent, and report to the council at the next meeting.

The motion was defeated,[85] but by the end of the year the City had committed itself to raising £115,000 in England. The city was often was often dependent on the good offices of local merchants. In 1853 William Stevenson was offered a 1% commission for his assistance in raising £50,000 in London to complete the waterworks.[86] The city's finances became so complex that in 1854 the Legislature passed an act to consolidate its debts. One clause enabled the Treasurer or the Sheriff to impose taxes unilaterally to pay overdue interest.[87] Manifestly, the Council had lost much of its power.

By 1855 there were clearly a wide range of civic activities not directly connected with a seat on the Council. City politics faced considerable competition from outside interests for the limited work force of the English Québec minority. T. W. Lloyd, for example, abandoned municipal politics to become manager of the Aqueduct. In 1853 he resigned this position to become Secretary of the Quebec & Richmond. This evolution made the gradual francicization of the city's civil service more acceptable. In 1844 George Futvoye was replaced amid considerable controversy by F.-X. Garneau, a notary and sometime historian.[88] In 1851 the city acquired its first French-Canadian Treasurer in Augustin Gauthier. R. H. Russell, however, remained Chief of Police until 1858, and the force remained predominantly British until the same date.[89]

## Conclusion :

Fernand Ouellet has commented on the fondness of the French-Canadian élites for political solutions.[90] Charles Poulett Thomson's attempt to transform Canadian society by constitutional change suggests that this was a characteristic of many early Victorian figures. Thomson admitted that he had been denounced as "a hard-hearted theorist—a cold-blooded political economist," and did not deny the charge. Despite this declaration, he never produced any grand statement of principle. As the member for Manchester, he defined his principles: "in one sentence, to buy as cheap, to sell as dear as possible."[91] In fact, he was one of those people that Stanley H. Palmer has described as " 'enlightened statists' who sought to impose unpopular ideas for the public good."[92]

His programme, a combination of political and administrative changes, has an attractive if mechanistic clarity. By imperial fiat, non-political local governments dominated by the dynamic British commercial community would sponsor local development. Thus, the provincial authorities would be free to administer national projects without parochial concerns. The resulting utility and efficiency would produce peace and prosperity. Municipal structures would be for Canada, as for England, "the steam engine for the mill built by Parliamentary Reform."[93]

Recently, Ian Radforth, Allan Greer, Bruce Curtis and Brian Young have attempted to identify Thomson as a crucial figure in the history of Canadian state formation.[94] Whatever his successes in other areas, he must be seen as a failure in his approach to urbanism in Québec City. While the city became involved in the promotion of economic development, it was in a manner antithetical to his design. Local and national politics became interwoven, professionals and small retailers dominated the Council, and the British ascendancy was overthrown.

Perhaps most importantly, the utility of the system was profoundly undermined by its perceived lack of legitimacy. When Sydenham went on to use the Special Council to create a rural municipal structure for Lower Canada, John Neilson and his anti-Union group found this to be a most useful issue in broadening their anti-Sydenham organization beyond the city in both French and English parts of the province.[95] In contrast, the Governor's municipal policy evoked little controversy in Montréal. There, his priorities closely paralleled the existing distribution of economic and social power.[96] In Upper Canada, Toronto's incorporation had been achieved by the Legislature prior to the Union, and while Robert Baldwin opposed the rural legislation for Canada West presented by Sydenham's ministers, it too was passed by the Assembly. Thus it never became a focus of local and provincial politics in the way that the Lower Canadian ordinances did. In this sense, the roots of defeat for both the theory and practice of Sydenham's imperial urbanism lay in its imperial nature.

## Acknowledgements

## Notes

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3. Stuart J. Reid, *Life and Letters of the First Earl of Durham,* Longmans, Green, And Co., 1906, vol. ii, p. 72.

4. Alain Baccicalupo, *Les administrations municipales québécoises,* 1984, t. 1, p. 283.

5. C. P. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report,* Oxford, 1912, v. ii, p. 99.

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9. Ian Radforth, "Sydenham and Utilitarian Reform," in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan : State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Canada,* Toronto, 1992, pp. 64-102.

10. Janet Ajzenstat, *op. cit.,* pp. 55-72.

11. *ibid,* pp. 24-28.

12. Janet Ajzenstat, *op. cit.,* p. 3.

13. Michael M^c^Culloch, "The Death of Whiggery; Lower-Canadian British constitutionalism and the *tentation de l'histoire parallèle,*" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association,* 1991, p. 202.

14. C. P. Lucas, *Lord Durham's Report,* Oxford, 1912, v. iii, p.209.

15. C. P. Lucas, *op. cit.,* v. iii, p. 212.

16. *ibid,* p. 207.

17. *ibid,* v. iii, p. 200.

18. The anti-French-Canadian tone of the Report is not surprising, in that one of the three Commissioners was Adam Thom, the notorious francophobe journalist.

19. C. P. Lucas, *op. cit.,* v. iii, p. 209.

20. *ibid,* v. iii, p. 212.

21. *ibid,* v. iii, p. 199.

22. *ibid,* v. iii, p. 237.

23. Co. O. 42, vol. 310, C. P. Thomson to Lord John Russell, June 25, 1840.

24. Co. O. 42, vol. 310, C. P. Thomson to Lord John Russell, June 27, 1840.

25. Co. O. 42, vol. 310, C. P. Thomson to Lord John Russell, June 25, 1840.

26. G. Poulett Scrope, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

27. Co. O. 42, vol. 310, C. P. Thomson to Lord John Russell, June 25, 1840.

28. John Hare, Marc LaFrance, David-Thierry Ruddel,*op. cit.*, p. 326.

29. Quebec *Mercury*, November 18, 1843.

30. David T. Ruddel, *op. cit.*, pp. 209-210.

31. *Le Canadien*, 3 juin, 1842.

32. Marcel Plouffe, "Quelques particularités sociales et politiques de la charte du sytème administratif et du personnel politique de la cité de Quebec, 1833-1867," thèse de maîtrise en histoire, Université Laval, 1971, pp.73a-b provides a computer-based study of the ethnic and occupational composition of the Council and its committees. Unfortunately, for the period covered in this paper, his figures are incorrect, largely as a result of his misidentification of Dr. Joseph Morrin. The presence of 19 figures in this list reflects the fact that for the period 1840-1842, Thomson named eighteen members of the Council and a Mayor.

33. Archives de la ville de Québec (AVQ), Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, August 20, 1840.

34. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, August 15, 1840.

35. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, October 15, 1841.

36. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, January 28, 1842.

37. Poll Book printed as an appendix to the Report of the Select Committee on the Petition of John William Woolsey and others: *Journals of the Legislative Assembly*, Appendix NN, A 1841.

38. *Annual Reports of the Treasurer of the City of Quebec for the Years 1841-1855*, Québec, 1st November 1840-31st October 1842.

39. AVQ, Comité de Police;Dossiers Administratifs; Finances; Listes de Paie, April, 1841.

40. C. P. Lucas, *op. cit.*, v. iii, p. 199.

41. *Le Canadien*, 31 janvier, 1842.

42. Michael McCulloch, "'Most Assuredly Perpetual Motion' : Police and Policing in Quebec City, 1838-1858" *Urban History Review*, Vol. XIX, No. 2 (October, 1990), pp. 100-113.

43. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, October 2, 1840, motion of Alderman Jones for gas illumination; Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, October 29, 1841, notice of motion of J. G. Clapham for water supply.

44. For a more extended discussion of this topic see Michael McCulloch, "Wood Blocks and Water Pipes: The politics of the street, Quebec City, 1840-1855" delivered at the Canadian Historical Association Meeting, University of Prince Edward Island, June 1, 1992.

45. *Le Canadien*, 3 août, 1840.

46. *Le Canadien*, 16 novembre, 1842 (e. g.), meeting in St. Roch where the candidates were pledged to oppose "tout système de taxation qui pourra être proposé."

47. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, March 9, 1841.

48. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, October 1, 1841.

49. *Le Canadien*, 16 avril, 1841.

50. AVQ, Correspondance de la Corporation, vol. 1, April 8, 1842, Ed. Caron to Noah Freer # 344.

51. Quebec *Gazette*, October 4, 8, 1841, 28 February, March 16, August 8, 1842 (*e. g.*) John Neilson, the *Gazette*'s editor, was the principal organizer of the movement.

52. *Le Canadien*, 15 avril, 1842.

53. *Le Canadien*, 18 avril, 1842.

54. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 3, June 14, 1842.

55. From 1842 to 1846 the Council was composed of eighteen members. An additional member for each of the two suburban wards was elected from 1846 to 1855. There are no figures for 1845; elections were changed from December to February in that year. Again, these figures do not agree with those of Marcel Plouffe (pp. 73a-b).

56. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 5, October 13, 1843.

57. Quebec *Mercury*, October 14, 1843.

58. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 5, October 27, 1843.

59. Québec *Mercury*, December 21, 1844. It took the bill until 1846 to come into effect.

60. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: registre 8, 2 août, 1850.

61. AVQ, Comités spéciaux: Rapport du Comité Spécial sur les amendemens (sic) faits en Chambre au bill d'incorporation dressé par le Conseil, 15 au 18 Juin, 1850.

62. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 8, June 25, 1850.

63. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 9, May 6, 1853. It is to be noted that the one anglophone to oppose the motion was Thomas C. Lee of St. Roch. Lee, a onetime bankrupt shipbuilder had allied himself with the Annexationist party in 1850.

64. Marcel Plouffe, *op. cit.*, p.73a.

65. Quebec *Mercury*, October 26, 1843.

66. Michael McCulloch, "Whiggery," pp. 202-6.

67. National Archives, MG 11 Co. O. 42 Q277 pt. 2, p. 469, January 18, 1840.

68. For an outline of annexationist support in St. Roch, see Michael McCulloch, "English-speaking Liberals in Canada East, 1840-1854," doctoral thesis, University of Ottawa, 1986, pp. 397, 438-42, 496.

69. Michael McCulloch, "The Death of Whiggery," pp. 209-10.

70. Michael McCulloch, "English-speaking Liberals," p. 396.

71. *Le Canadien*, 10 août, 1840.

72. ohn Hare, Marc Lafrance and David-T. Ruddel, *op. cit.*, p. 237. Problems with Plourdes's figures are discussed in n.35.

73. *Le Canadien*, 12 janvier, 1842.

74. Quebec *Mercury*, November 12, 1844.

75. Professionals are defined as lawyers, doctors, notaries and military officers.

76. This includes 254 regular spaces on an annual basis and 21 extra spaces caused by by-elections and special circumstances.

77. John Hare, Marc Lafrance, David-Thierry Ruddel, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

78. AVQ, Procès-Verbaux: Conseil, Registre 6, 26 fevrier, 1847.

79. AVQ, Correspondance de la ville, t. 2, April 19, 1849 (e.g.). See also Fernand Ouellet, *Histoire de la Chambre de Québec, 1809-1959*, Laval, 1959, p. 105.

80. For a fuller discussion see Michael McCulloch, "Wood Blocks and Water Pipes".

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83. T. W. Acheson, *St. John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community*, University of Toronto Press, 1985, p. 197.

84. AVQ, Correspondance de la ville, t. 2, 27 December, 1848.

85. Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 8, 28 March 1851.

86. Procès-verbaux: Conseil, registre 9, 15 March, 1853.

87. *Le Canadien*, 16 janvier, 1854.

88. AVQ, Procès-verbaux: Conseil: Registre 5, June 28, 1844.

89. Michael M<sup>c</sup>Culloch, " 'Most Assuredly Perpetual Motion,' " pp. 105-7.

90. Fernand Ouellet, *Histoire Économique et Sociale du Québec*, Fides, 1966, p. 445.

91. G. Poulett Scrope, *Memoir of the Life of the Right Honourable Charles Lord Sydenham*, London, John Murray, 1843, pp. 58-9.

92. Stanley H. Palmer, *Police and Protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 8.

93. See note 3.

94. In Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan*. For the author's assessment of their work, see his review in *Histoire Sociale – Social History* vol. XXV (n°. 50) Novembre-November 1992, pp. 414-6.

95. Michael M<sup>c</sup>Culloch, "The Death of Whiggery," p.206; "English-speaking Liberals," pp. 141-154.

96. Guy Bourassa, " Les élites politiques de Montréal: de l'aristocratie à la democratie," in Vincent Lemieux, ed., *Personnel et partis politiques au Québec*, Boréal Express, 1982, pp. 258-60.