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The Municipal Reform Movement in Montreal, 1886-1914.



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Abstract

This thesis will prove that the Montreal reform movement arose out of a desire of the richer wards to control municipal politics. The poorer wards received most of the public works because they were organized into a political machine. Calling for an end to dishonesty and extravagance, the reform movement took on a party form. However after the leader of the machine retired from municipal politics, the movement lost its momentum.

The reform movement eventually became identified as an anti-trust movement. The gas, electricity, and tramway utilities had usually obtained any contracts they wished, but the reformers put an end to this. After an inquiry charged that the monopoly practices of the gas company slowed down Montreal's growth, the Chambre de Commerce and subsequently the Board of Trade took control of the reform movement. Together they saw to it that the utilities would no longer receive long-term contracts.

The reformers then focussed on ward politics. They launched a Royal Commission in order to prove that Montreal was in the hands of a corrupt administration and that the only solution to this state of affairs was a Board of Control. After instituting the Board of Control, the reformers won a complete electoral victory. Once in power the reformers were unwilling to serve the interests of Montreal's majority working class population and accordingly they were defeated.

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Introduction

Canadian historiography has largely ignored the development of municipal reform movements. Yet Montreal's newspapers considered municipal reform a very topical subject. Progressivism, defined as an American historical term embracing assorted critical attitudes towards urbanization and industrialization, was topical to Montreal because the problems with which it dealt were those plaguing all North American cities. There was an informal reference service which recommended fashionable reforms. This is not to say that Montreal reformers depended on other cities for answers to urban problems, but simply that where warranted they profited from others' experience.

There were so many reform groups in Montreal that the very term reformer is not a descriptive name, but a convenient label. Reform groups were usually short-term efforts either because another more dynamic reform organization was formed, or because the participants simply lost interest in municipal politics.

Various individuals dropped in and dropped out of the reform movement. One such example was Hormisdas Laporte, alderman from 1897-1904 and mayor from 1904-1906. A self-made man, he developed his firm Laporte, Martin and Cie into one of the largest grocery wholesalers on the continent. He was one of the founders of the Chambre de Commerce (1887), director of the Crédit Foncier Franco Canadien, ¹⁴ Sauvegarde Life Assurance Company, and La Patrie (1903-1910). He was also vice-president of the Montreal Industrial Exhibition and at various times president of the Provincial Bank, the Société St. Jean Baptiste, the Alliance Nationale, the Saraguay Electric and Water Company, the Union of Canadian Municipalities, the Montreal Economic and Statistical Society and the

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Dominion Grocers Guild. Laporte first appeared in the Volunteer Electoral League, moved on to the Good Government Association, then to the Reform Party, next to the Committee of Citizens, and finally to the Association of Citizens.

The above reform organizations focused their attention on two areas: the public service utilities and the municipal political system. Electricity, gas, tramway, and water utility companies were political issues for two reasons. Utilities were privately owned; Richard Ely, an American political analyst and a noted commentator on the impact of the trusts, explained:

"The moment a town ... entrusts water supply or gas supply to a private corporation, that moment a dangerous political element is introduced. Cities which practice self-help rather than reliance on corporations will be found to be better served and purer in political life."²

A utility was inherently a natural monopoly because it dispensed a necessary service under minimum competitive conditions to a concentrated population. Even if there was more than one utility servicing the same city, the utilities would usually divide the city into spheres of jurisdiction.³

The political system itself was an issue to the reformers. Montreal's administration underwent a series of modifications during the 1890's. 1898

1. Henry James Morgan (ed), The Canadian Men and Women of the Time: A Handbook of Canadian Biography of Living Characters. second edition. W. Briggs: Toronto, 1912. 637.

2. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 20, 1897.

3. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 14, 1901

will be chosen as a constant and where the political system differed beforehand, the difference will be noted in parenthesis.

All cities and towns in the Province of Quebec were governed either by the Municipal Code and by their own individual City Charters. The larger municipalities usually had separate Charters because their more complex dealings could not be adequately regulated by the Municipal Code. Montreal was endowed with its own Charter. If the city wished a change in its powers, it had to petition the Legislature for an amendment to the Charter. If the city wished to undertake a capital project, it had to seek the Legislature's approval to borrow the necessary money. Even if the city had not requested an amendment, the Legislature had the power of amending the Charter any way it saw fit.

Montreal's Charter enfranchised male, widow, and spinster proprietors who were British citizens and whose names were inscribed on the property assessment role for \$300 or upwards. Every British male tenant living in a house valued on the property assessment role for \$300 or upwards was also enfranchised. In lieu of being assessed for real estate taxes, the tenant was required to pay his water tax (before 1887 the tenant was obliged to pay a statute of labor tax) or else forfeit his right to vote. This last provision resulted in the disenfranchisement of about one quarter of the total voters at each election.

The mayor, of whom was exacted a property qualification of \$10,000 and who received an annual salary not to exceed \$4,000 (before 1898 the salary was \$2,000), was elected at large every two years (before 1894 general elections

were held every year). The aldermen, of whom was required a property qualification of \$2,000 and whose salary was \$600 (before 1898 aldermen received no salaries) with an additional \$200 for committee chairmen, were elected every two years on the basis of the ward (before 1894 aldermen were elected every year). Each ward elected two aldermen (before 1894 each ward had three aldermen each of whom was elected every three years).

The aldermen made up the various permanent committees - roads, finance, lighting, fire, water, police, hygiene, markets, parks and special ad hoc committees of the City Council. These committees, whose chairmen were selected among and by the aldermen at the end of each election, prepared the legislation for presentation to the City Council where it was then voted upon. No subject could be discussed within the Council until it had been introduced by its appropriate committee.

The mayor was not a member of any of these committees. He presided over the Council and had a vote only in the instance of a tie. As of 1898, the mayor had a veto power, but this could be overruled by a majority of the entire City Council. The mayor also had the authority to call a special meeting of the City Council, but in the event that he refused to do so, this power could be exercised by five aldermen.⁴

This thesis will prove first of all that there was an urban reform movement in Montreal. In its early stages, this movement reacted against a political

4. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec. 1889 Chapter 79; 1898 Chapter 58.

machine. The goals set by this early movement were shrouded in statements on efficiency and honesty in government. There were definite objectives: the destruction of the machine, the elimination of ward politics, and the restoration of city rule to nobly-minded businessmen. When the reformers defeated the machine, it became apparent that ward politics did not depend on a formal organization, but was the consequence of the political system, the class structure, and the French-English rivalry. Although the reformers were conscious of these three elements, they did not understand that it was the mobilization of these three elements in combination that produced ward politics.

Gradually the public utility trusts became the crucial problem of Montreal politics. On the basis of this issue, the reform movement crystallized into a general movement of the city's commercial organizations. After a small victory, the movement drew back and emerged more powerful than ever. At this point the reform movement became identified with Montreal's business community. The advantage of this was the inexhaustible resources - newspapers, money, organizational ability - which were now at the disposal of the reformers. The drawback was that municipal reform could be viewed as a "business conspiracy". Through a saturation campaign, the reformers convinced the electorate to approve a partial transformation of Montreal's political system. After four years in power, the reformers could not overcome the obstacles presented by the remaining features of the old political system. Thus the reformers were defeated in 1914 and Montreal was again in the hands of a political machine.

CHAPTER I

The Politics of Morality and Economy:
City Council Reform 1886 - 1902

This chapter will describe the evolution of the early phase of the Montreal reform movement. At first an outside opposition to the dominant municipal regime, by 1902 the reformers had won control of the City Council. A leader of the reform movement outlined how the City Council had broken down into two opposing parties:

"Comme vous le savez bien, il y a deux parties, bien distincts l'un de l'autre, pour vous représenter à l'hôtel de ville. D'un côté, nous avons "la vieille clique" le parti qui est responsable pour toute la mauvaise administration et tout le gachis du passé. Quelque fois il y a encore une majorité, mais très faible et de plus en plus rare. D'un autre côté nous avons le parti du "nouveau régime municipal." ¹

Before proceeding with an explanation of the various reform movements, it is necessary to describe the municipal regime which became the target of the reformers' struggle.

The Machine as an Informal Political Alliance

When the municipal reformers denounced the political methods used in the City Council, they were postulating that Montreal was in the hands of a political machine. The methods employed by such organizations have been well documented for many American cities. ²

1. Herbert Ames Diary City Council Diary September 1899 - January 1900. 44.

2. see Alexander B. Callow, The Tweed Ring. Oxford University Press: New York, 1966.

This essay matters considerably by providing concepts which can be applied to Montreal.

Moisei Ostrogorski 1854-1919, a Russian political scientist and author of Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties,³ established a model of the machine in urban politics. Ostrogorski gave a balanced interpretation of the machine: it was both a benefactor and an exploiter. Among the first to analyze politics as something more than "formal political institutions",⁴ he wrote that an urban machine was an

"aggregation of individuals stretching out hierarchically from top to bottom, bound to one another by personal devotion, but mercenary, and bent solely on satisfying their appetites by exploiting the resources of a political party."⁵

The basis for the machine was the realization that competition for political office was a futile exercise, and that the organization of politics under a strong leader could be immensely profitable to its participants.

The leader was normally a ward politician or even a party organizer. His official authority did not exceed that of his colleagues, yet he possessed almost dictatorial powers. The leader's political capital were the many supply contracts, departmental appointments, and franchise grants which were dispensed

3. Moisei Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties. edited and abridged by Seymore Martin Lipset. 2 volumes. Anchor Books: Garden City, New York, 1962. volume 2. 179-201.

4. Ibid. volume 1. XI.

5. Ibid. volume 2. 183

by the City Council. Every public expenditure became a new supportive element for the machine. The prime ingredient of this process was the fostering of a dependency on the boss. In this fashion, other politicians, private entrepreneurs, and individual citizens were recruited into the machine. The aldermen had to be selected from as low a stratum of society as the property qualifications permitted because a man of independent means might result in an independent mind, a fatal factor for the machine.⁶

The machine marked the professionalization of politics. Many reformers thought of politics as a principle-motivated obligation. By contrast, the machine politician derived his livelihood from his political office. The modest salary paid an alderman meant that his income depended on cultivating the boss' favour. Thus, political power was geared not to the achievement of any objectives, in fact "the line of public policy to be adopted, in itself, is a matter of indifference".⁷ Power became useful only insofar as it procured further influence for the boss and as it augmented the income of his followers.

In sum, the machine was a network of informal political loyalties. Its power was based on the distribution of political sinecures. The source of the machine's vitality was the satisfaction it provided its clientel, whether this clientel was affluent as in the case of an enfranchised utility, or whether it

6. Ibid. 191.

7. Ibid. 207.

was poor as in the case of a public works appointee.

The Foundations of a Machine in Montreal

Montreal's political machine was a product of two processes: the restructuring of the civic administration and the drift towards a strong French majority in the Council.

From 1840-1873, Montreal politics were dominated by a political elite. An illustration of this was that out of eleven mayors, nine were industrialists - merchants.⁸ The city itself was officially called the Corporation of the City of Montreal, indicating a highly exclusive concept of citizenship. It was in 1874 that the city was to adopt the more democratic title of the City of Montreal.

From 1840-1873, 60% of the City Council was English, a percentage which more or less reflected the city's population breakdown. Here too there was a change. By the early 1870's French-Canadians numbered about 57,000 to the English-Canadian 48,000 and by 1901 the city was 63.9% French-speaking.⁹

In 1874 an amendment to the City Charter implemented the committee system of the City Council.¹⁰ Power was henceforth centred in the aldermen and consequently aldermanic politics became the key to the control of the city.

8. Guy Bourassa, "Les Elites Politiques de Montréal: de l'Aristocratie à la Democratie", Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science. February, 1965. volume 31 no. 1. pages 35-51. 36.

9. John Irwin Cooper, Montreal: A Brief History. McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal and London, 1969. 92. see appendix.

10. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec. 1874. chapter 51, section 24.

Wards were not proportioned to include an equal number of voters, but were meant to reflect old settlement patterns. Until 1882 there was always an English majority in the City Council because five of the nine wards had English voting majorities. In 1883 and 1886 respectively, Montreal annexed the villages of Hochelaga and St. Jean Baptiste. Both villages were majority French-speaking and both became separate wards, In 1887, there was for the first time a French majority in the City Council, a majority which continued to grow due to subsequent annexations.¹¹

Raymond Préfontaine

The birth of the machine which governed Montreal from 1887-1900 can be traced back to the election of Raymond Préfontaine to the 1884 City Council. Because of his previous experience as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Chambly, as a Liberal Party organizer, as an alderman and eventually mayor of Hochelaga, he already possessed what Ostrogorski termed the "small political capital...which will become, perhaps, the foundation of his success".¹² Although Liberal or Conservative affiliations were not decisive factors in municipal politics, Préfontaine's Liberalism provided him with a ready-made band of followers which he could use to expand his power base from Hochelaga. It was no accident that the nucleus of Préfontaine's majority in the City Council was composed of prominent Liberal Party organizers: Henri-Benjamin Rainville,

11. La Presse, February 10, 1894. see appendix.

12. Ostrogorski. op. cit. 179.

an alderman from 1882-1900, chairman of the Lighting Committee 1886-1895, and chairman of the Finance Committee 1896-1900; Cléophas Beausoleil, an alderman from 1882-1887 and 1893-1900; and Jimmy McShane, an alderman from 1875-1886 and mayor 1890, 1891.¹³

On top of this Liberal machine, Préfontaine constructed his personal machine by organizing four alliances. First of all, he served the tramway, gas, and electricity interests. This association provided him with a lucrative slush fund and strengthened his position in Hochelaga where the Montreal Street Railway Company's stables and yards were located.¹⁴ The reformers generally regarded such an alliance as evidence of political immorality, however Préfontaine's supporters were likely to admire their benefactor for squeezing money from the public utilities. An imaginary conversation published in the Montreal Herald condoned this practice:

"He is a good man. True he has made money, but (with a shrug) he gets it from the big corporations, and they can afford it. He does not ask for five dollars from the man who gets a job on the corporation, or a hundred dollars from the policeman."¹⁵

Préfontaine also set himself up as the spokesman of the French aldermen. A breakdown of the 1896 City Council reveals the success of this tactic: fourteen of the seventeen French aldermen were Préfontaine followers.¹⁶

A machine founded on the French aldermen had numerous advantages. If the

13. La Presse, February 10, 1894.

14. Cooper, op. cit. 99

15. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 19, 1898.

16. La Presse, February 2, 1896. At the time there were twenty-six alderman in all.

French-speaking electorate was properly organized, it could independently elect a working majority of the City Council. Préfontaine's central theme was that French-Canadians had never been justly treated when the English ruled the City Council. The Herald admitted as much:

" ... in the days of English ascendancy, the French majority were not always given their fair share of offices, and now, when they have come into their own, there is not much use in the other sections trying to maintain the old proportions."¹⁷

La Presse gave the following reasons for supporting Préfontaine in 1898:

"La Presse, n'a cessé de combattre contre les éléments divers qui, sous un prétexte quelconque, tentaient non pas de mettre les Canadiens en minorité au conseil - ce que est devenu impossible - mais d'affaiblir le rôle, l'influence de l'élément Canadien-français à l'hôtel de ville en cherchant à le diviser ou à lui enlever les postes importants qu'il occupe."¹⁸

La Presse went on to explain that despite a population of 71,795 Francophones to 62,705 Anglophones, the 1877 City Council was divided fifteen to twelve in favour of the English wards. The result was that French-Canadians did not receive their full share of patronage: out of twelve department superintendents only three were French and out of \$116,715 in paving contracts, a mere \$6,000 went to French companies. La Presse concluded this exposition in warning: "Quand nos hommes forts du conseil seront renversés, ceux qui les auront renversés nous ramèneront au régime de 1877."¹⁹

17. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 12, 1900.

18. La Presse, January 26, 1898

19. La Presse, January 29, 1898

Préfontaine also campaigned on correcting the public works imbalance which previously had favored the west wards. He contended that his domination of the Council was the only factor compelling the Harbor Commission to undertake a sizeable number of its works in eastern Montreal. At a mass meeting he decried:

"Whereas though the natural site of the port of Montreal is in the eastern part of the city ... the Harbor Commission has from all time favored the construction of works in the western part of the port ... when its duty was to have executed a great part of these works in the eastern part of the city ..." 20

Judiciously balancing self-interest with public service, one dry dock was to be constructed on a lot owned by a land syndicate to which Préfontaine was associated.²¹

As chairman of the Roads Committee, a position which involved control of approximately 10% of the city's current expenses and virtually all its capital expenses, Préfontaine possessed unlimited patronage possibilities. But he always proclaimed that his intentions were in furthering the growth of the eastern half of the city. From 1891-1901, eastern Montreal recorded a very high growth rate,²² thus justifying Préfontaine's assigning it a disproportionate share of road projects.

Another side of Préfontaine's machine was its populist image. The inter-

20. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 22, 1898.

21. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 10, 1897.

22. St. Jacques 25%
Ste. Marie 24%
St. Jean Baptiste 66%
Hochelaga 50%

section of urban populism with east end growth and French-Canadian ascendancy was appropriate because a common theme of all three alliances was a favoring of the dispossessed.²³

Although Préfontaine allied himself with the utility magnates, he sugar coated this relationship under a cloak of populism. Careful not to attack such fundamental inequalities as the property qualifications for mayor and alderman or the water tax, he concentrated on such issues as the abolition of the statute of labor tax (the corvée).²⁴ This tax was ultimately removed in 1886 primarily due to the efforts of the Knights of Labor.²⁵

Préfontaine assumed a populist appearance by publicizing that his road projects created jobs. James "the People's Jimmy" McShane, who as mayor cooperated with Préfontaine's patronage schemes on the condition that the Irish get their share, suggested that the roads department function as a winter works programme. The Montreal Herald reported McShane as having said that:

23. A good example of this was the following exchange. On the subject of the appointment of foremen to snow-clearing gangs one alderman asked "Why does not West Ward get any" whereupon one of Préfontaine's followers replied, "We don't know. I suppose they are too rich there to need appointments as foremen". The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1899.

24. Cooper, op. cit. 100.

25. La Presse, January 26, 1886.

"It was well known that a very large number of good, honest working men were out of employment and that a great deal of want existed this winter in our city. He hoped that in view of this regrettable state of affairs the Road Committee would immediately ask that the council should make a special grant for the purpose of affording employment to these people."²⁶

The function of the roads department as an employer rather than a builder was apart from all political motives a praiseworthy endeavor. Its application further amplified the paternalistic-protector complexion of Préfontaine's machine. The following editorial testified to the electoral impact of this strategy:

"It is certain that his popularity has had two chief sources, the fact that he is a "good fellow", the fact that he is a free spender from the public purse; and the fact that he has traded on the notion that he is taking money from the rich to help the working classes."²⁷

Therefore these four elements - utility politics, French-Canadianism, east end growth, and populism - combined to form the cardinal points of Préfontaine's machine. There were two additional factors. Préfontaine's sheer political genius was universally acknowledged. To build a machine and to keep functioning from 1887-1900 was proof that he was a talented manipulator. The most eloquent testimony to his ability was that as soon as he lost interest in municipal politics, his machine began to collapse.

26. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 13, 1901.

27. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 15, 1898.

Secondly, the Préfontaine machine was far more than a source of patronage. What distinguished Préfontaine from ordinary ward politicians and from the model Ostrogorski set up, was that he was also a builder. He executed many road projects which were of enormous value in furthering the growth of the city.

The Elections of 1886 and 1887

The 1886 election was important not because of the mayoralty candidates it featured - Clovis Decary against the incumbent Honoré Beaugrand - but because it marked the founding of Montreal's first municipal reform organization. Through its permanent municipal committee, the Board of Trade, the general association of businessmen,²⁸ was becoming increasingly conscious of a shift in City Council power from the old wards to the newer wards.²⁹ The Board of Trade's "favourite" ward was St. Antoine, the largest and richest ward³⁰ and the ward most committed to reducing the city's budget.

In order to carry the message of economy to the electorate, the Board of Trade founded the Municipal Reform Association, in essence a renaming of its

28. The Chambre de Commerce was to be founded in 1887.

29. The old wards were East, Centre, West, St. Ann's, St. Lawrence and St. Antoine. The new wards were St. Jacques, Ste. Marie, St. Louis, and Hochelaga.

30. The following figures give some idea of the comparative wealth of St. Antoine: in 1892 real estate in St. Antoine was valued \$41,842,370 whereas the total real estate value in St. Gabriel, St. Jean Baptiste, Hochelaga, East, Centre, St. Louis and Ste. Marie was \$39,842,370. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 11, 1892. In addition, see any issue of the Real Estate Record. (Published monthly by the J. Craddock Simpson Company, Montreal.)

municipal affairs committee. Calling for honest and economical government, the M.R.A. limited its involvement in the election to opposing two corrupt public officials, aldermen H.B. Rainville and John Sprott Archibald.³¹

The oddity was that in the rotating system of aldermanic elections, neither Rainville nor Archibald were currently up for election. The only reason that the Municipal Reform Association brandished the names of these two aldermen, was as a contrast to its own political values of economy and honesty. Thus the residual significance of the M.R.A. was not in any political victory measured along quantitative terms, but in the themes it enunciated and in the opposition it attracted.

The opposition to the M.R.A. was expressed by La Presse which under the editorship of Jules Helbronner was a consistent supporter of the Préfontaine machine. First of all La Presse felt that the 1886 election was a propitious occasion to challenge the statute of labor tax. Because it was required that this tax be paid before a tenant was permitted to vote, about 17,000 voters were disenfranchised.³² In cooperation with the Knights of Labor, Jules Helbronner challenged the tax before the Board of Revisors, a board of aldermen who prepared the electoral lists before each election. He argued that the tax was illogical in that the only reason for its retention was that it was a tax on those who did not pay any taxes i.e. the real estate tax.

31. La Presse, January 26, 1886.

32. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 9, 1886.

He pointed out that the water tax, which at present was not considered a tax but a direct payment for a municipal service, was in fact a tax and hence eliminated the need for a statute of labor tax.

The Board of Revisors confirmed the old arguments for the statute of labor tax.

" ... the commutation money (i.e. statute of labor tax) is payable only by male persons ... who do not contribute to the municipal funds ... (and) who are not liable to any of the assessments, personal taxes or annual taxes"³³

Préfontaine, a member of the Board of Revisors, voted against this decision and delivered a minority report echoing Helbronner's position.³⁴ Later in the year, the Revisors changed their mind and declared the water tax a tax. As a result, the statute of labor tax was dropped.³⁵ Its disappearance was a setback for the reformers because no longer would St. Antoine have such a large proportion of the enfranchised voters.

This election furnished the first confrontation between reform forces and the incipient Préfontaine machine. La Presse saw that as long as reformers stressed economy, they would never have much popular appeal.

33. Ibid.

34. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 25, 1886.

35. La Presse, March 2, 1899.

36. In 1886, the number of qualified voters per ward was:

St. Antoine	3,292	East	524
St. Ann's	1,645	St. Louis	1,550
St. Lawrence	1,369	St. Jacques	1,718
West	1,584	Ste. Marie	1,427
Centre	669	Hochelaga	250

"On est entré dans une veine de grande prédication d'honnêteté! Ce n'est pas mal, seulement on ne devrait pas oublier que les échevins ne sont pas nommés pour faire des économies, mais pour dépenser l'argent qui est mis à leur disposition par les contribuables. Il faut qu'il y ait des jobs, comme on appelle ces opérations plus ou moins louches; il paraît que c'est de l'essence du régime municipal; mais au moins, que les échevins ne gardent pas le tout, et qu'ils nous donnent pour une partie de notre argent." 37

The results of this election were significant because they illustrated the difference between mayoralty and aldermanic politics. In mayoralty politics, it was not the wards which determined the result, but the enfranchised population at large. Here the populous and more affluent wards of western Montreal had a clear advantage because they had a lower rate of disenfranchisement than the eastern wards. Whereas Hochelaga ward only recorded 119 votes in all, St. Antoine delivered a 1,516 majority to Beaugrand. Even though Decary won the wards of Ste. Marie, St. Jacques and Hochelaga, this amounted to a mere 907 majority. This did not even offset the immense majority Beaugrand amassed in St. Antoine which accounted for a large proportion of his overall 1,196 majority.³⁸

Although the mayoralty vote had by axiom nothing to do with the construction of a ward machine, it was significant that Decary managed to capture the wards which formed the basis of Préfontaine's power. An identical interplay was evident in the 1887 election. The Board of Trade nominated John Abbot, chief

37. La Presse, February 15, 1886.

38. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 3, 1886

legal advisor to the Canadian Pacific Railway and a future Prime Minister of Canada.³⁹ His opponant was H.B. Rainville who became the first politician to explicitly present himself as a candidate of the "east end".⁴⁰ Rainville argued that eastern Montreal was the object of discrimination and the C.P.R.'s delay in constructing its yards north of Hochelaga was a prime factor in this discrimination. He received majorities in the eastern wards of East, St. Jean Baptiste, Hochelaga, Ste. Marie, and St. Jacques. But these majorities were insufficient to offset Abbot's immense majorities in St. Antoine, St. Lawrence, and West. In the end, Abbott received a 1,785 majority.⁴¹

George Washington Stephens 1887-1893

This period was marked by a growing hostility to the "corruption" of the City Council. On September 20th, 1887, Hugh Graham, proprietor and editor of the Montreal Star, accused the City Council of accepting bribes from a gas company. There were demands for an independent inquiry, but the City Council chose to deal with the matter through a special committee. In this way, the Council was able to limit the inquiry.

While Graham's charges were being probed, Jules Helbronner added two more accusations. He charged that the Council had accepted kickbacks while awarding city scavenger (garbage removal) and road building contracts. Being far more

39. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 10, 1887.

40. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 16, 1887

41. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 2, 1887.

concerned with the more damaging issue of the gas franchise, the special committee glossed over the patronage accusations. It claimed that Helbronner's charges were too general to warrant a thorough inquiry. The committee concluded that there was no firm evidence to substantiate the accusations and accordingly they were dismissed.⁴²

In 1889 the election of George Washington Stephens to the City Council focussed the opposition to Préfontaine. Stephens had been an alderman from 1868-1885 and had earned the nickname "Watchdog" for his investigative diligence. Currently an M.L.A. for Huntingdon, he was to be a leading influence in the reform movement until his retirement from politics in 1900.

Stephens had all the characteristics of the patrician reformer.⁴³ As heir to a family fortune in the Canadian Rubber Company, he was independently wealthy.⁴⁴ He believed that Montreal's administration was wallowing in the grasp of crass profiteers and that an injection of middle-class values was required to remedy this sorry state.⁴⁵ The following exchange between Rainville and Stephens demonstrated the different social roots and the trenchant hostility between the patrician and the machine politician. The Montreal Herald reported that:

43. see Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform. Vintage Books: New York, 1965. 131-148.

44. Morgan. op. cit. first edition. W. Briggs: Toronto, 1898. 965-966.

45. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 16, 1889.

"He concluded his speech by accusing Rainville of financially profiting from his position in the Montreal administration to which the latter responded that if he had enriched himself it had been by the sweat of his brow which the Honorable Mr. Stephens could not say. That gentleman had got all his money from his father ..."⁴⁶

In his battle against Préfontaine, Stephens was the spokesman of the western wards. The Montreal Herald expressed the reformer's view of St. Antoine's plight:

"The one (Hochelaga) looks upon the city as sort of a milch cow, from which it is the duty of an alderman to extract all possible for the benefit of his ward. St. Antoine has larger views. Being assessed for nearly one third of the city's total valuation, St. Antoine is more interested in the economical management and efficient financial service of the city."⁴⁷

In 1892, Stephens requested the Legislature to freeze Montreal's debt at its present \$22,000,000. He reasoned that this was the only way to put a stop to the helter-skelter expenditures of the Préfontaine regime. He explained to his constituents that it was imperative to freeze the debt in order to bridle "a band of speculators, the last remnants of a nefarious regime ... who were building up their fortunes at the expense of the older wards."⁴⁸

In Stephens' view, there were two ways of funding expenditures. The honest method was current taxation because this accurately reflected current expenditures.

46. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 12, 1898.

47. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 4, 1892.

48. The Montreal Daily Herald, June 9, 1892.

On the other hand, indebtedness was the dishonest method because it allowed the City Council to avoid responsibility for current expenditures. Stephens was convinced that Préfontaine's expansion of the debt was another illustration of his deception of Montreal's population.

By 1894 the provincial government agreed to freeze Montreal's debt at \$24,000,000.⁴⁹ This was a compromise to Stephens' preference for a \$22,000,000 limit.⁵⁰ The net effect of the freeze was to compel Préfontaine to travel to the Legislature every year to seek approval of a "necessary improvement" and to explain why this project warranted an increase in the debt. Stephens hoped that he would be able to convince his fellow M.L.A.s to refuse all such entreaties.

In addition to Stephens' concern with the size of Montreal's debt, there was yet another area in which reformers worked. In 1893, the Municipal Reform Association, which had not been politically active since 1886, petitioned the provincial government to amend Montreal's Charter. The M.R.A. asked that henceforth aldermen be elected at large.⁵¹ Another organization, the Real Estate Owners Association, made a second request. La Minerve reported that

"L'Association immobilière demande que le nombre des échevins soit limité à deux par quartier; que la qualification foncière du maire et des échevins soit augmentée; que la moitié des échevins soient élus par les propriétaires, et que l'autre moitié par l'élection municipale générale."⁵²

49. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1894. chapter 56.

50. The Montreal Daily Herald, June 20, 1892.

51. La Minerve, January 7, 1893.

52. Ibid.

The Legislature rejected both requests, both of which would have abridged the political influence of Montreal's eastern wards. After 1886 about one quarter of Montreal's electorate was disenfranchised every year for not paying the water tax. If election at large had been instituted, the more affluent wards, those wards the least affected by disenfranchisements, would have had a greater influence in electing aldermen.⁵³ The M.R.A. and the R.E.O.A. were politically motivated: their objective was to prevent the election of such politicians as Préfontaine and Rainville whose political careers depended on ward patronage and playing off the eastern wards against the western wards.

The Volunteer Electoral League 1894

The 1894 election was a reform landmark because of the participation of two reform organizations: the Municipal Reform Association and the Volunteer Electoral League. This election also featured two reformers, Herbert Ames and Hormisdas Laporte, the former who was to be a leader in municipal reform until 1904 and the latter whose career in municipal reform was to last until 1912. Since the mayoralty election - Joseph-Octave Villeneuve, the eventual victor, against Jimmy McShane - consisted only of a disagreement in alternating between French and English mayors, it will not be examined.⁵⁴

In what was to be the last instance of its political life, the Municipal Reform Association campaigned for a further reduction of Montreal's borrowing

53. With almost 1/5 of the qualified voters, St. Antoine's influence would be much increased in elections "at large". Under the ward system, St. Antoine only had three aldermen of a City Council of thirty-six.

54. La Presse, January 26, 1894.

power and encouraged more businessmen to enter municipal politics.⁵⁵ One of the M.R.A.'s prospective candidates released this statement:

"In the first place there can be no doubt that municipal affairs in the commercial metropolis have reached a crisis, and that businessmen who have success in their respective callings in life rather than professional men, and politicians are urgently required at City Hall."⁵⁶

The M.R.A. nominated two candidates both of whom were elected: Richard Wilson-Smith, a journalist and investment broker,⁵⁷ and Geoff Penny, a director of the Intercolonial Coal Company and editor of the Montreal Herald.⁵⁸

The most striking aspect of the election was the participation of the Volunteer Electoral League. Originally a local political group operating exclusively in St. Lawrence ward, the V.E.L. had decided to expand its operations to St. Antoine, St. Gabriel, St. Ann's and West - all the English wards in the city.⁵⁹ The V.E.L.'s president, Herbert Ames, a director of the Ames-Holden Company, had decided that 1894, the year in which the City Charter was amended so that the entire City Council was up for election, was an opportune moment for a general attack against those aldermen from the western wards who had either cooperated with or had been lethargic in their opposition to the Préfontaine regime.

55. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 18, 1894.

56. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 15, 1894.

57. See the masthead of any issue of the Montreal Insurance and Financial Chronicle. Wilson-Smith was the latter's proprietor and editor.

58. Morgan, op.cit. second edition. 896.

59. The Gazette, January 22, 1894. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 15, 1894.

In preparation for this enhanced role it had assigned itself, the V.E.L. expanded its membership. Three different membership categories were announced: active, sustaining and associate. The total membership of the League was 150 members in St. Antoine, 40 in St. Ann's, 50 in St. Gabriel and 45 in St. Lawrence.⁶⁰ The only "active" members were probably the League's Board of Directors.⁶¹

The League clearly reflected the political values of its president. Independently wealthy - his election pamphlets designated his occupation as a gentleman-⁶² Herbert Ames possessed all the characteristics of the patrician reformer. Neither a professional nor a dilettantish politician, he viewed his duty as the restoring of enlightened businessmen to their rightful place in the municipal hierarchy.

Ames was an optimistic municipal reformer. The purity of municipal politics was to be restored not by a full-scale revision of the City Charter, but by the infusion of a middle-class morality into politics and more specifically by the holding of fair elections.

When Ames lectured on the morality of the ballot box, he was citing that sacred trust which had been abused by some voters and their elected officials.⁶³

60. The Gazette, January 22, 1894.

61. The Volunteer Electoral League's executive was: Herbert Ames, president; Hormisdas Laporte, G.W. Stephens, Frederick Hibbard, crown prosecutor for Montreal and eventually (1909) first president of the Quebec Public Utilities Commission. (Morgan op.cit. second edition. 531), Samuel Cottingham Stevenson, president of the Montreal Exposition Company, and a Mr. Dean.

62. Herbert Ames Diary. see pamphlet for the 1904 federal election.

63. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 16, 1894. In its invoking of religious values, the V.E.L. was similar to the Citizens' League, a municipal temperance reform group which had existed circa 1890. The latter's main objective was the establishment of earlier closing regulations for liquor outlets. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 24, 1890.

He was not being evangelical for effect, rather he was genuinely troubled that the corrupt aldermen would permanently scar the city's general morality. The municipal administration would further deteriorate if the reformer did not accept his responsibility of combatting the current City Council. Ames spelled out the gravity of the situation:

"I know of a man who in the last election cast 16 votes! Another man told me that he went out with three others in a sleigh and together they cast 32 votes. We must strangle this telegraphing or it will strangle us."⁶⁴

The V.E.L. assigned itself a double mission: the securing of fair elections and the election of its candidates.⁶⁵ Its first objective was to destroy the Préfontaine clique by attacking the "technical portion of the art" of maintaining a political machine.⁶⁶ In 1893 Stephens had requested the Legislature to enact a "Law to Prevent Civic and Municipal Corruption". The effect of this bill would have been to fine or to banish from municipal politics those in

64. The Montreal Herald, January 16, 1894.

65. More specifically the V.E.L.'s objectives were:

- " a) to revise and perfect the voters list.
- b) to encourage the nomination of candidates of known integrity for public office.
- c) to use all legitimate means to secure their returns.
- d) to prevent fraudulent and dishonest practices in elections.
- e) to cause to be followed up and prosecuted to the full extent of the law those in violation of the Election Act.
- f) to suggest and promote any legislation, approved by the League, having for its object the purity of elections." The Montreal Herald, January 10, 1894.

66. Ortrogorski, op. cit. 183.

violation of the Election Act.⁶⁷ Its defeat meant that it was up to a municipal reform organization to assure a strict application of the Election Act.

The V.E.L. took it upon itself to appear before the Board of Revisors to prevent further election irregularities and to "enable the citizen who casts an honest vote to have the benefit of it".⁶⁸ The League's lawyer presented a list of seven to eight hundred names which he claimed ought to be removed from the electoral lists. Some "registered voters" were dead, other names were repeated many times, minors had been included, and the city day workers had been registered.⁶⁹ In the first three instances disenfranchisement was simply a matter of presenting evidence whereupon individual cases could be quickly resolved. However the last category was more contentious. The City Charter clearly stated that city day workers were not allowed to vote, presumably because of the temporary and political nature of public works. Since day workers depended on Préfontaine's largesse and would be more than likely to vote for his candidate, this was a calculated political tactic on the part of the League. However, in attempting to disenfranchise day workers, the League was inviting accusations that it was anti-working class, accusations that were widely publicized by Jules Helbronner. The latter was pleading the day workers' cause before the Board of Revisors.⁷⁰ In the end, the president of the

67. La Minerve, February 14, 1893. Ultimately the provincial government did enact the following law in 1895. "An act to prevent bribery and corruption in municipal and civic corporations." Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1895. chapter 42.

68. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 16, 1894.

69. La Patrie, January 7, 1894.

70. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1894.

Board of Revisors, H.B. Rainville, ruled that the case of each day worker was to be decided individually and that there would be no wholesale disenfranchisement.

The League presented yet another problem to the Board of Revisors. Motivated by an egalitarian outlook, the League attempted to apply a one man-one vote principle. Rainville held that the individual had the right to vote as many times in the specific ward as he owned individual parcels of land. The issue was resolved with a partial victory for the League: the principle of confining the individual to one vote in each separate ward was conceded, however, the individual was permitted to cast a vote, both in the mayoralty and aldermanic elections, in each separate ward where he was a land proprietor.⁷¹

In its appearance before the Board of Revisors, the League demonstrated its mistrust both of workers and proprietors of large blocks of real estate. The ideal voter was one whose vote would not be guided by self-interest but by a desire to implement traditional values of economy and efficiency.

At the same time that it was challenging the electoral lists, the League prepared its municipal campaign. The League never had a systematic programme, its appeal being limited to a set of principles. Inspired by Stephen's overriding belief that Préfontaine could not be permitted to expand Montreal's debt indefinitely, the V.E.L. announced its support for the reduction of Montreal's borrowing power to 15% of the city's taxable property.⁷² However its 1894 annual report stressed that the moral strength of its members would be decisive factor in an upcoming victory.

71. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1894

72. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 12, 1894.

"The Volunteer Electoral League is on the eve of a great success. It has within it the germ of a powerful element to redeem this city from the sway of the "boodler" and the "heeler" and give management of civic affairs into the hands of honest citizens, where it belongs. All that is needed is work, constant work, on the part of the membership, with abundant enthusiasm."⁷³

One of the obvious shortcomings of the League was its failure to attract an adequate proportion of French-Canadian participants. La Presse asked, "Mais pourquoi ses membres ont-ils cru devoir éliminer l'élément canadien dans la formation du bureau et des comités des quartiers."⁷⁴ Ames replied that the unilingualism existed because the League only worked in English wards. He added that this did not mean that it imposed English candidates where such were not warranted. An example was St. Gabriel where the League allowed both the Irish and French communities to nominate their own candidates.⁷⁵

The V.E.L. left the selection of candidates up to its ward chapters. The central V.E.L. could, however, exercise significant control over its local chapters through its command of the treasury which amounted to \$6,982.15 in contributions.⁷⁶ Moreover, these candidates were to follow certain specifications laid down by the central V.E.L. : they were to be pledged to rid Montreal of machine politics,⁷⁷ they were to be aware of the moral nature of politics,⁷⁸

73. Ibid.

74. La Presse, January 2, 1894.

75. La Presse, January 10, 1894.

76. Herbert Ames Diary, untitled notebook.

77. The Gazette, January 16, 1894.

78. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 16, 1894.

and they were to be selected from a social standing identical to that of the directors of the League.

The approved nominees were Richard Wilson-Smith, Geoff Penny, Peter Lyall, president of the important construction firm Peter Lyall and Sons,⁷⁹ and Richard Costigan, a merchant and Lieutenant-Colonel.⁸⁰ With the exception of Geoff Penny who received a 655 majority, they were all elected by acclamation. Wilson-Smith and Penny were elected in St. Lawrence and Lyall and Costigan were elected in St. Antoine.⁸¹ The League's appeal was even too narrow to win St. Ann's and West wards. The latter wards elected four incumbants who were knownto occassionally side with Préfontaine. In St. Gabriel, the League's two candidates were victorious, however these two aldermen were later to join Préfontaine's machine.

The significance of the V.E.L. was that it established itself as the opposition party in the City Council by exploiting the resentment of the older wards to Préfontaine. This did not mean that Préfontaine's power was diminished. In the subsequent composition of the committees of the City Council, the Préfontaine "ticket" swept every one, with the exception of the insignificant Mount Royal Committee.⁸²

The League pioneered the concept of a solid block of reform aldermen in the

79. William Atherton, Montreal from 1534-1914. 3 volumes, S.J. Clarke Publishing Co.: Montreal, 1914. volume 3. 210-211.

80. Morgan, op. cit. second edition. 261.

81. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 2, 1894.

82. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 21, 1894.

City Council. It had deliberately avoided the French wards because St. Antoine and St. Lawrence were a natural foundation on which to build an opposition movement to Préfontaine.

The Good Government Association 1894-1896

Although the city's authority to borrow money had been limited in 1894, the civic administration was still accused of being extravagant. These accusations were directed at Préfontaine who as chairman of the Roads Committee was chiefly responsible for the city's expenditures. This committee had a significant impact on the growth of the city and it also furnished ample opportunities for patronage. Préfontaine's critics conveniently ignored his talents as a leader in promoting Montreal's growth and indiscriminately labelled his capital projects extravagant. Préfontaine's supporters acclaimed him as Montreal's Baron d'Haussman, the planner of modern Paris, but his detractors retorted that his major accomplishment was in the inflation of the city's debt. 83

In January 1895, Préfontaine appeared before the Legislative Assembly to seek permission to borrow money for two road improvements that his committee was about to undertake. These two improvements, the eastern extension of two main arteries, St. Antoine and Notre Dame Streets, were to be the subject of endless

83. In 1913 the Montreal Daily Herald acknowledge Préfontaine's contributions: "He was the first man to set about systematic modernizing and development of Montreal. When he talked about electric cars and electric lighting, he was laughed to scorn by the "Noble Minority" (i.e. the English minority) in the Council and the rest of the nobility outside the Council. He went in for street widening and permanent paving (no doubt at an expensive rate) and he added to the size of the debt as well as to the size of the city. He was in fact Montreal's Baron Haussman." quoted in Atherton, op.cit. volume 2. 185.

confrontations between Préfontaine and the reformers. The Roads chairman argued that the opposition to the improvements was a product of the antagonism of the western wards to the eastern wards. He admitted the latter would profit more directly from the street extensions. Bowing to Préfontaine's wish, the Assembly approved the improvements.⁸⁴ However, the Legislative Council viewed the debt increase as alarming because it was rumoured that Préfontaine would afterwards request an increase in the property tax to fund the city's increased debt. Consequently, the Legislative Council vetoed the improvements.

To prove the folly of Préfontaine's road-building schemes, the Herald, a consistent supporter of economy and a reliable spokesman of the municipal reform movement, published a report on August 15th 1895. The Herald declared that Montreal was fettered with the most extravagant municipal administration on the continent. The city had a debt of 15% of the assessed value of the real estate, a percentage that no American city matched. In fact only Baltimore, Cincinnati, and New Orleans reached 10%. Montreal's debt per capita exceeded \$109 whereas the highest in America were Cincinnati \$80, Baltimore \$70, and New York \$65.50.⁸⁵

Unfortunately, the Herald did not publicize the real reasons for this out-

84. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 5, 1894.

85. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 15, 1895.

sized debt: the magnitude of religiously exempted property⁸⁶ and the absence of a local improvement tax. If the latter were levied, the property owners living adjacent to a "local improvement" would pay its full cost.⁸⁷

Although Montreal property owners complained about the city's taxes, they were very light in comparison to Toronto's. Montreal's real estate tax was 1% as compared to Toronto's 17½ mills on the dollar.⁸⁸ A large part of Montreal's revenue was collected from a series of licences and from a very high water tax i.e. for a standard dwelling Montreal's water tax would amount to \$21.75 whereas in Toronto the rate would be \$12.40.⁸⁹ Unlike Montreal, Toronto taxed income \$600 and above.⁹⁰ The result was that although Montreal's population was 50% larger than Toronto's, its 1897 revenue was 14% smaller.⁹¹

86. The ratio of exempted property to taxable property was increasing:

	taxable property	exempted property
1880	\$64,625,359	\$13,762,400
1890	\$101,979,939	\$20,879,920
1900	\$148,095,202	\$37,133,275
1910	\$319,341,616	\$109,192,499

The Insurance and Financial Chronicle, May 19, 1911. The reason for the increase of exempted property was the high proportion of religious property in the municipalities annexed by Montreal.

87. A corollary to the local improvement tax was an "excess condemnation" plan, where land adjacent to the project corridor of a roadway was also expropriated, and afterwards sold at its increased value. American City. volume 6, no 4. 1914. 640-641.

88. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 6, 1895.

89. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 9, 1895.

90. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 5, 1895.

91. Ibid.

But the undemocratic nature of Montreal's taxation structure was not the issue that the reformers seized. They were more interested in sensationalizing political corruption. In February 1895, the City Council ignored allegations that the police force was corrupt. A private Citizen's Committee was organized to inquire into the force, however not possessing any legal power, the inquiry was ineffectual.⁹² This prompted the Herald to editorialize:

"In the United States corruption and fraud in civic affairs are frequently exposed, and while many of the offenders escape many end their career in prison. The exposures make the extent of the evil notorious, but they also serve to restrict it. It must be a matter of regret that in the whole history of Montreal, while aldermen have been known to live like lords and grow rich without visible means of doing so, there has never been one who has been convicted of any illegality."⁹³

October 7th 1895, G.W. Stephens and Herbert Ames founded the Good Government Association under the sponsorship of the Board of Trade.⁹⁴ Not intended as an election clearing house, the G.G.A. was to be a forum for the discussion and advancement of reform ideas. It replaced the Volunteer Electoral League which after the 1894 election had abandoned the leadership of reform politics. Although he was not on the executive, the G.G.A.'s most influential member was clearly
⁹⁵
G.W. Stephens.

92. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 20, 1895

93. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 8, 1895.

94. The president of the G.G.A. was John W. Marling, an insurance manager, and the directors were Hormisdas Laporte, Edgar Judge, a merchant, and Rowell Fisher, a "gentleman".

95. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 8, 1895.

At the founding meeting, Stephens warned that in view of the city's French-Canadian majority "... it was necessary to interest French-speaking citizens in the movement if anything was to be accomplished. Hormisdas Laporte, one of the G.G.A.'s founding members, replied that he hoped the Chambre de Commerce would found a parallel organization which would work in harmony with its English colleague.⁹⁶ October 27th Laporte chaired a meeting of the Chambre de Commerce. The latter organized the Association des Contribuables and endowed it with a constitution identical to the G.G.A.'s. This organization was an opportunity for the participation of more French-Canadians in the municipal reform movement, but it never progressed beyond its founding meeting.

Although the G.G.A. was organized by the same leaders as the V.E.L., it differed from its predecessor in that it emphasized economy of administration to a greater extent. This alone made the G.G.A. an advancement over the V.E.L. By stressing economy, the G.G.A. sought to recruit more businessmen into the reform movement.⁹⁷

The G.G.A. felt that Montreal had an excessive property evaluation rate⁹⁸

96. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 28, 1895.

97. The founding members of the G.G.A. were obviously all businessmen. More specifically their occupations were: two insurance managers, two bankers, five managers, five "gentlemen", four merchants, one real estate agent, one publisher and one advocate. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1897. chapter 86.

98. A property evaluation rate is a percentage of the commercial value of a property. The proprietor pays his real estate tax only on the evaluated sum, not on the commercial value. The Real Estate Owners Association had been instrumental in the founding of the G.G.A. The former would likely regard any property evaluation rate as excessive. Stephens was openly embarrassed by the class-tinged name of the R.E.O.A. and suggested that the association change its name to a more neutral Ratepayers Association. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 8, 1895. This suggestion was not acted upon. Stephens had a vested interest in camouflaging the class origins of the R.E.O.A. As one of the richest proprietors in Montreal, his real estate was valued at \$556,000. Herbert Ames Diary. untitled notebook.

and a dangerously high per capita debt. This alone was abundant proof of mismanagement.⁹⁹ The solution was that the City Charter must be amended in such a way that inefficiency would become structurally impossible.

The G.G.A. first undertook to sue Préfontaine who as chairman of the Roads Committee had exceeded his budget by \$150,000.¹⁰⁰ Over-spending was common procedure as committees regularly exceeded their annual appropriations in anticipation of the following year's revenue. However accepted overspending was, it was still illegal under the City Charter. Since the Charter stated that any member of the Council who sanctioned expenditures beyond amounts so appropriated would be held personally responsible for them, it was an ideal occasion for a lawsuit. Moreover, that Préfontaine, the very symbol of public works manipulation and of French-Canadian ascendancy should be singled out, was to the G.G.A. most appropriate. In the end, the issue was resolved by the City Council which simply refused Préfontaine the \$150,000.¹⁰¹ In its first confrontation with the Road chairman, the G.G.A. had forced its adversary to back down.

However the basic solution Stephens saw for Montreal was expressed during the annual presentation of amendment proposals to the Montreal Charter. Stephens delivered a brief of the Real Estate Owners Association. He declared that if Montreal was governed by three commissioners elected at large and endowed with

99. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 8, 1895.

100. This lawsuit was launched in cooperation with the Real Estate Owners Association.

101. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 25, 1898.

executive power, the city's administration would be much more efficient. In the present system, the mayor was largely a figurehead and power was diffused into a plethora of committees, each spending money without regard to the total revenue available. Under Stephens' plan, the Council and its committees would be the legislative body while the commissioners would be given the authority to draw up the budget. The result would be an executive capable of implementing a programme designed to serve the interests of the entire city, not just the parochial interests of the ward. Stephens emphasized that this proposal was a sine qua nom of municipal reform because it attacked the political basis of Préfontaine's machine.¹⁰² Even though the Legislature defeated the proposal, Stephens continued to publicize his plan.

The G.G.A. participated on a very limited basis in the 1896 election. As its mayoralty candidate, the G.G.A. endorsed Richard Wilson-Smith. His election by acclamation - because of the tradition of rotating French and English mayors - was interpreted as a reform victory. Yet if Stephens' analysis of the civic administration had been correct, then the substitution of one mayor for another would not make any difference. In order to defeat Préfontaine, the G.G.A. would have had to run a full slate of aldermen. The G.G.A. only supported one aldermanic candidate, Hormisdas Laporte, and he lost. In fact, there was even a decline in the number of reform aldermen. Of the four Volunteer Electoral League aldermen, only one, Richard Costigan, sought re-election and was elected by acclamation.

102. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 4, 1895.

The problem with the V.E.L. and the G.G.A., the latter which lasted for a number of years under its new 1896 name The Municipal Association of Montreal was that neither had a strong voice in the City Council. Moreover neither made an attempt to broaden their appeal from St. Antoine and St. Lawrence. The reformers were largely negative and simplistic. Their generalizations on municipal management were in stark contrast to the ward politician's precise programme. To command a following, the reformers would have to adopt a balanced programme including such items as lower gas and electricity bills, cheaper tramway tickets, a strict application of public health by-laws and a better upkeep of the city. More importantly they would have to adopt the following position vis-à-vis public works:

"Again it has been shown this time by the Boston Finance Commission, that efficiency of municipal administration is not to be sought primarily in the elimination of graft ... but merely in the getting of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay from a host of employees."¹⁰³

In sum, it was not by promulgating values deliberately calculated to appeal to a restricted audience that the reformers could ever acquire control of the City Council.¹⁰⁴

The Roots of City Council Reform 1896-1898

Throughout 1896 and 1897, the City Council was beset with financial problems brought upon by insufficient revenue. In November 1896, Préfontaine appeared before

103. American City, volume 1, no 2, 1909. 77

104. In 1896, the City Council requested the Legislature's permission to tax stock dividends. This request was opposed by a delegation of Mayor Wilson-Smith the Real Estate Owners Association, and the Good Government Association. Instead their spokesman, the Herald, suggested that the city economize by dismissing surplus employees. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 11, 1896.

the Legislative Assembly to request permission for the city to borrow additional funds to cover the cost of certain improvements, notably the extensions of St. Antoine and Notre Dame streets. Préfontaine also seconded Mayor Wilson-Smith's request that the city be empowered to float a temporary loan of \$1,500,000.¹⁰⁵ Wilson-Smith argued that a temporary loan was required to clean up the backlog of debts which Montreal had accumulated.¹⁰⁶ However, both requests were unsuccessful because in Préfontaine's case, the Legislature would not condone any projects which would expand the city's permanent debt and in Wilson-Smith's case the temporary loan entailed a temporary real estate tax of 1/4 %.

Thus at a stalemate, Wilson-Smith announced that a new Charter would be drawn up by a special committee of the City Council. The committee was to study new sources of revenue and explore the possibility of a redistribution of powers within the City Council.¹⁰⁷ The charter committee would be an ideal opportunity for the reformers to push for their ideas on charter reform.

There was yet another encouraging sign for the reformers. In late 1897, two instances of civic corruption were publicized. On September 15th 1897, it was revealed that the Police Committee had granted a series of contracts to the highest bidder.¹⁰⁸ This disclosure did not involve any of the central figures of

105. A temporary loan is to be distinguished from a permanent loan. A temporary loan is a short term debt assumed for short term obligations. A permanent loan is taken up in order to pay for a project of long term value and hence it is a permanent debt.

106. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 25, 1896.

107. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 16, 1897.

108. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 16, 1897.

the Préfontaine regime, but it did tarnish the machine's image. December 28th, it was revealed that the Police and Fire Committees had spent \$70,000 of unauthorized funds.¹⁰⁹ Coming a month before the general election of 1898, this disclosure laid the basis for a tougher reform campaign.

The 1898 Election: Ames, Laporte, and Préfontaine

It was surprising that Préfontaine announced his candidacy for the mayor's office, given the latter's powerlessness in comparison to the chairmanship of the Roads Committee. There were probably two advantages Préfontaine saw in the mayoralty. He would have a prestigious title, an important asset for an ambitious politician, and as mayor he would have an ex-officio seat on the Harbor Commission, a position that he coveted because of the long-projected eastern extension of the Montreal Harbor.¹¹⁰

In addition, Préfontaine could still lead his machine from the mayor's office. His ally H.B. Rainville would remain as Finance Chairman while Rodolphe Brunet, a Préfontaine alderman, would take up the chairmanship of the Roads Committee.¹¹¹

Since this was the French turn for mayor and since Préfontaine was acknowledged as unbeatable, Montreal's newspaper editors either enthusiastically supported him or resigned themselves to his victory by acclamation. The one exception to this was the Montreal Herald. The latter argued that "His elevation to that position,

109. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 29, 1897.

110. Joseph Israel Tarte, the federal minister of Public Works 1896-1902, was expanding the Montreal Harbor. The Harbor had reached its maximum development in western Montreal and it was only a matter of time that it be extended eastwards.

111. La Presse, January 29, 1898.

without even an objection being raised, would mean an encouragement to every exploiter of the public chest for private gain ..."¹¹²

The 1898 election had a pivotal effect on the fortunes of the reform movement. Ever since 1892 when G.W. Stephens had completed his term as alderman, the reformers had lacked a forceful spokesman in the City Council. Seeking to be these spokesmen, both Herbert Ames and Hormisdas Laporte declared themselves to be candidates to the City Council.

Ames announced that he was running in this election in order to participate in the refounding of the Charter.¹¹³ He was a veteran municipal reformer and widely admired as a philanthropist, especially for his work in housing reform.¹¹⁴ In fact his candidacy occasioned a rare instance of agreement between the Montreal Star and La P^resse. Both concurred that his election to the City Council was absolutely essential.¹¹⁵

Laporte's objective was to expose the inner workings of the Préfontaine regime and thus mobilize the electorate against the latter:

112. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 14, 1898. The Herald accused Préfontaine of profiting from the decisions of the Expropriation Commission, a permanent commission evaluating individual expropriation claims. The Expropriation Commission was composed of three members : one appointed by the Roads Committee, one by the claimant, and a third member agreeable to both parties. It was common procedure for a proprietor to hire a lawyer from Préfontaine's law firm, Préfontaine, St. Jean, Archer and Decary. Since the latter would likely on a commission basis, it was obvious interest to steer exaggerated claims through the Commission.

113. The Montreal Daily Star, January 16, 1898.

114. At his own expense, Ames had constructed Diamond Court, a model tenement development.

115. La Presse, January 14, 1898; The Montréal Daily Star, January 21, 1898. The only newspaper opposing Ames was La Patrie which accused him of religious bigotry against his Catholic opponent. La Patrie, January 29, 1898.

"What I cannot understand about Montreal municipal affairs is the apparent indifference of the people for what is done at City Hall . . . I confess it is disheartening to attempt to secure any measure when friends and opponents alike realize that this is the state of the public mind." 116

The acclamation of both Ames and Laporte and the election of six other reform aldermen supplied the movement with its best representation yet. 117 The reformers were still concentrated in St. Antoine and St. Lawrence, but they did manage to establish a foothold in the eastern wards of Centre, St. Denis, and St. Louis. 118

The reformers were even treated as a separate party by the Préfontaine majority. In recognition of Ames' co-leadership of the reformers and of the shortage of veteran English aldermen, the latter was granted the chairmanship of the Parks and Ferries Committee. Although this chairmanship was in the least important of committees, it was still a rare honor for a first-term alderman. Conversely, in view of the wealth of capable veteran French leaders, Laporte did not receive a chairmanship, yet he was accorded a senior position on the Water Committee. 119

116. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 8, 1898.

117. George Sadler, (St. Antoine), Paul Martin² (St. Denis), Arthur Gagnon (St. Louis), Joseph Clearihue (St. Lawrence), Henry Ekers (St. Lawrence) James McBride (West), Ames (St. Antoine), Laporte (Centre).

118. It would be too convenient to reduce the 1898 Council into definite Préfontaine followers and reformers, because there were always some aldermen, whose allegiance to either camp was irregular. A breakdown of the twenty-six aldermen would indicate eight reformers, three aldermen whose behaviour was irregular, and fifteen machine aldermen. Among the latter fifteen, eight formed the machine leadership and the other seven were reliable supporters.

119. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 12, 1898. Laporte had been elected in an 1897 by-election and he had been particularly effective on the Water Committee.

The Fall of the Machine

The City Council took up the task of a new Charter. The Charter Committee was a special committee of the Council and its function was to review Montreal's present Charter. The Committee would then submit its conclusions to a vote of the Council which would in turn present its conclusions to the Legislature.¹²⁰

The Committee was evenly divided between reformers and Préfontaine aldermen.¹²¹

It deliberated on such matters as a redistribution of wards (agreed),¹²² a city income tax (refused), a salary for the aldermen (agreed),¹²³ a tax on religious properties (refused),¹²⁴ and a local improvement tax (refused).

The most contentious proposal, formally presented by the Real Estate Owners Association and supported by Ames and Laporte, was for an executive board along the lines previously advocated by Stephens. To everybody's surprise, Préfontaine

120. The Charter Committee invited the following groups to present briefs on charter reform. The Board of Trade, the Chambre de Commerce, the Real Estate Owners Association, the Central Trades and Labor Council, the Federated Trades and Labor Council, the Bankers Association, the Municipal Association, the Provincial Board of Health, the Protestant Ministerial Association, and the Archbishop. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 20, 1898.

121. The Charter Committee was composed of Raymond Préfontaine, H.B. Rainville, Cléophas Beausoleil, James McBride, Herbert Ames, and Paul Martineau.

122. St. Antoine was divided into three wards and St. Marie and St. Jacques were each divided into two wards.

123. The salary was to be \$600. This decision ought to have pleased the reformers because it would give the aldermen a salary independent of the Préfontaine machine. However, no comment could be found.

124. Préfontaine demanded that the church authorities make some form of taxation concession or risk losing all their privileges. The specific compromise the Mayor had in mind was a tax exemption applying only to these properties directly occupied by the churches' educational or benevolent services. All other church holdings would be taxable. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 10, 1898. The Charter Committee defeated this plan.

agreed to the R.E.O.A.'s plan explaining that a modernization of Montreal's administration was required.¹²⁵ However, Préfontaine later opposed an executive board and ensured its defeat in the City Council.¹²⁶ When Stephens requested the Legislature to implement the R.E.O.A.'s plan, the Legislature again rejected it.¹²⁷

To an unanticipated extent, Ames and Laporte controlled the debates of the City Council. Préfontaine was more interested in being a Harbor Commissioner and consequently detached himself from the City Council. This was not yet an abdication, but the initial signs of a movement towards federal politics.

Deprived of the presence of their able leader, the machine aldermen were unable to defend themselves against Ames and Laporte. From March to September 1898, the reformers exposed numerous instances of corruption and inefficiency: March 31st, the Police Committee announced that it did not have enough money in current accounts to pay its expenses for the rest of the year;¹²⁸ a batch of unpaid accounts wallowed in the Finance Committee;¹²⁹ there was an embargo on funds from the Finance Committee to the Water Committee until the latter would clear up its affairs;¹³⁰ and because it simply did not have enough money, the Roads Committee suspended street cleaning and watering operations.¹³¹ There were scandals in the Council's granting of a coal contract,¹³² in the purchase of police uniforms,¹³³ and in the renting of

125. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 14, 1898.

126. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 2, 1898.

127. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 16, 1899. Rainville was M.L.A. for Montreal St. Louis and he led the defeat of Stephens' plan.

128. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 1, 1898.

129. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 7, 1898.

130. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 12, 1898.

131. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 12, 1898.

132. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 12, 1898.

133. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 27, 1898.

of stables for the city's horses.¹³⁴ Because of the vigilance of the reformers, the committees could no longer draw on the anticipated revenue from the following year. By October 1898, the machine was completely disorganized from the repeated exposures and dwindled into a minority of ten aldermen.¹³⁵

Under Ames' prodding, the Council voted to hold an inquiry into police appointments.¹³⁶ As chairman of the inquiry, Ames found that the Police Committee's accounts were totally disorganized - bills were paid twice or others were totally ignored.¹³⁷ The inquiry discovered that the police chief, the aldermen on the Police Committee and private contractors cooperated in joint raids on the city treasury.¹³⁸

On Laporte's request, the Council approved an inquiry into the Water Committee.¹³⁹ After examining Montreal's water facilities, Laporte was moved to comment : "If the people knew the truth about their drinking water, they would be moved to rebel."¹⁴⁰ The inquiry's disclosures were so damaging that by general agreement of the City Council the current chairman of the Water Committee was removed and replaced by Laporte.¹⁴¹

134. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 5, 1898.

135. The machine had lost five of its "reliable supporters".

136. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 3, 1898.

137. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 12, 1899.

138. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 24, 1899.

139. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 17, 1898.

140. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 7, 1898.

141. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 14, 1899.

There were other inquiries: the overdue accounts of the Claims Committee
were inspected; ¹⁴² the purchasing policy of the Health Committee was scrutinized; ¹⁴³
accusations that the aldermen were interfering with the building inspectors
were probed; ¹⁴⁴ and allegations that the Mount Royal superintendent was guilty of
improper conduct were reviewed. ¹⁴⁵

The 1900 Election: the Reform Party

The 1900 election was an ideal occasion for the reformers to capitalize on the rapidly diminishing strength of the machine. In anticipation of a victory, the reformers named themselves the Reform Party. This term was coined in order to give a collective identification to these aldermen who from 1898-1900 had powered the opposition to the Préfontaine regime. In other words, the Reform Party was synonymous with the caucus of the reform aldermen and even more specifically, with the leadership of Ames and Laporte.

The Reform Party's involvement in the mayoralty election was perfunctory because both Ames and Laporte realized that if Préfontaine desired another term,

142. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 25, 1898.

143. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 6, 1898.

144. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 6, 1899.

145. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 14, 1899. During all these inquiries, the old guard aldermen were not entirely on the defensive. Through delay tactics and injunctions, they were able to prevent the prosecution or dismissal of any municipal employees whom the inquiries called forward. Their most successful "counter-attack" was the jamming of a \$3,000,000 loan through the City Council. Under the direction of H.B. Rainville, the Finance Committee had issued private tenders and had contracted the Bank of Montreal for the loan at a very low price. Without consulting or informing the City Council, the Finance Committee finalized the terms of this agreement and then presented the City Council with a fait accompli. The City Council then approved the loan. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 21, 1899. October 14, 1899.

which he did, he was guaranteed a victory.¹⁴⁶ Despite this fatalism, the Reform Party did not hesitate to endorse William Doran as its mayoralty candidate. Its reason for doing so was twofold: that the Irish community, which had nominated Doran, ought to be furnished with the opportunity of electing its 'bwn' mayor.¹⁴⁷ The second reason was that Préfontaine ought not to be permitted to win another term unopposed. Doran's candidacy would, if nothing else, have the merit of forcing a debate on the disclosures of the preceding two years.

It was Doran's very valid contention that Préfontaine wished not so much to be mayor but only sought the ex officio position on the Harbor Commission.¹⁴⁸

Furthermore Doran held the Mayor responsible for the recent scandals:

"If the Mayor exercised proper vigilance, malfeasance in office could not go on, nor could a faithful officer be maligned, and the Mayor's position would be such that when he gave an assurance that all was right in a certain department, the Council and citizens could feel satisfied that he knew whereof he was speaking."¹⁴⁹

Préfontaine ignored Doran's challenge and seemed not at all concerned with the scandals of the past two years. The Mayor argued that the election was in effect a referendum on whether the public approved or disapproved of the civic improvements which he had conducted throughout his municipal career. He warned that Montreal's continued growth depended on his election, because only he convinced the other Harbor Commissioners to accelerate the execution of the long-awaited Harbor

146. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 28, 1899.

147. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 19, 1899. The last Irish mayor, James McShane, had been elected in 1892.

148. Ibid.

149. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 6, 1900.

150
works.

Although the challenger mounted a more aggressive campaign, he was not able to dent the Mayor's popularity in the French wards. Doran was victorious in every English ward, but Préfontaine's larger majorities in the French wards delivered him an overall majority of 3,034.¹⁵¹ The distribution of votes illustrated the continuing workability of the Préfontaine machine. If Préfontaine had been willing to guide his machine, it could have thrived.

In the aldermanic election, the objectives of the Reform Party were again twofold: to defeat the committee chairmen, especially H.B. Rainville and Rodolphe Brunet, and to accumulate enough victories to give the Reform Party a majority in the City Council. Operating a quiet campaign, Ames and Laporte stressed that they would continue the inquiries, legislate¹⁵² much required by-laws, and inaugurate an economy-wise administration. The Reform Party did not intend these generalizations as a platform, but as rough criteria for the recruiting of Reform aldermen.

La Presse supported the old guard aldermen. It argued that municipal reform was but a euphemism for English control of the City Council.

"Tout ce bruit, tout ce tapage n'est que du "bluff" ayant pour but principal de priver la représentation canadienne-française du Conseil de Ville de l'habile direction de l'échevin Rainville."¹⁵³

150. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 27, 1900. There were eleven Harbor Commissioners: six named by the federal government, one name by the Board of Trade, one named by the Chambre de Commerce, one named by the Corn Exchange, one named by the Montreal shipping interests, and the Mayor's ex-officio seat.

151. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 2, 1900.

152. The Montreal Daily Star, January 9, 1900.

153. La Presse, January 31, 1900.

The Reform Party did extremely well in the election. The co-leaders, Ames and Laporte, were both acclaimed. Seven of eight 1898 reformers were re-elected whereas only three of the ten old guard aldermen were returned. Moreover seven of the sixteen Reform aldermen were French, thus giving a reasonable balance to the Reform Party. For reasons that must be partly ascribed to local ward conditions five committee chairmen - Health, Fire, Police, Water (the alderman who held the post before Laporte) and Finance i.e. Rainville - were defeated.¹⁵⁴

Since the leaders of the Préfontaine machine had been defeated, the Reform Party was the only organized caucus in the City Council. The Reform Party distributed the committee memberships and selected the chairmen. All nine chairmanships went to Reform Party members, with Laporte taking charge of the Finance Committee, and Herbert Ames assuming control of the Health Committee. So complete was the exclusion of the old guard aldermen that Alderman Louis Jaçques, ex-chairman of the Markets Committee complained: "An injustice has been done. Old members, veterans, are overlooked. The new men may be good, but they should not rule everything."¹⁵⁵

The Reform Party's first duty was to bring to a close the various inquiries which remained from 1899. The Reformers had convinced themselves that anything less than an outright dismissal of guilty employees would be ineffective. Thus the water superintendent and the Mount Royal superintendent were dismissed and the

154. La Presse, February 26, 1900. Rainville had an alternative source of employment. He was M.L.A. for Montreal St. Louis and Speaker of the Assembly (1900-1904

155. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 10, 1900.

city surveyor was forced to resign. The resumption of the investigation into the Markets Committee was the closing note to this series of contraversies. Based on testimonies that kickbacks were routing in the Markets Committee, Laporte brought pressure on two old guard aldermen to resign.¹⁵⁶ This manouvre was unsuccessful and thereafter the Council, presumably because it had already profited politically, ceased the inquiries.

After the chairmanships had been distributed, Ames explained why he chose the Health Committee.

"Although the desire to obtain a seat upon this committee has appeared to be less keen than for certain others, in my humble opinion the Board of Health is really the most important of all the civic committees."¹⁵⁷

Ames approached municipal reform as a series of obligations and it was through the work of the Health Committee, that the Reform Party would be able to attack Montreal's most pressing problem, public health.¹⁵⁸

Ames saw his first duty as the enforcement of existing laws on milk and food inspection, drains, condemnation, quarantine and the removal of health nuisances. He fought for the construction of an isolation hospital which Montreal

156. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 22, 1900.

157. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 23, 1900.

158. Herbert Ames, The City Below the Hill. The Bishop Engraving and Printing Co. Montreal, 1897. 4 and 5.

urgently needed because of its high rate of contagious diseases.¹⁵⁹
He increased the number of smallpox vaccinations administered: i.e. in 1900
6,690, in 1901, 36,976, and in 1902, 15,459.¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, he prevailed
on the City Council to make outdoor privies illegal.¹⁶¹

The Reform Party had complained that Rainville never allowed public
opinion to express itself on the projects of the Finance Committee. Under
Laporte, the Finance Committee undertook to publicize its projects before
officially embarking on them.¹⁶² The result would be a community of
interest between the economy-minded Board of Trade, The Chambre de Commerce,
The Real Estate Owners Association and the City Council.

Laporte also wished to introduce a more efficient collection of the
water tax.¹⁶³ Montreal derived a large proportion of its revenue from the
water tax. The City Treasurer explained:

159. Montreal's health record was abysmal. Its 1901-1905 crude death rate
per 1,000 persons was 23.3. This was compared to Toronto's 16.3, London's
16.1, New York's 18.9, Chicago's 14.2 and Boston's 18.8. The insurance and
Financial Chronicle, August 5, 1910. The City Health Report gave the following
statistics for the reported deaths from certain contagious diseases:

	1900	1901
small pox	10	2
measles	69	60
scarlet fever	182	245
diphtheria	117	83
typhoid fever	123	130
dysentery	14	25
phthisis	692	647
cholera infantum	264	206

Montreal Board of Health Report 1913. 89. Despite these figures, Ames could
not convince the Board of Health to construct an isolation hospital.

160. Montreal Board of Health Report, 1900. 40. 1901, 43. 1902, 47.

161. Privy pits were outlawed by an 1887 municipal by-law. Ames's 1899
resolution that this by-law be strictly enforced was defeated. Finally in
1901, he was able to convince the Council to pass a resolution "certifying"
the 1887 by-law.

162. La Presse, February 26, 1900.

163. La Presse, October 1, 1901.

"In the great majority of cases the water rate merely represents the amount of cost of administration, while the interest of the capital cost and provisions for payment of the debt is merged in the real estate tax".¹⁶⁴

Since the water tax was applied to the resident rather than the property owner, it was easily escaped by moving away. Laporte's answer was that the water tax should be paid by the immobile property owner, who could then pass on the cost in the form of increased rent. However, he recognized the opposition of property owners to this plan and abandoned any hope of sharing with the proprietor the responsibility of collecting the water taxes.¹⁶⁵

Laporte's approach to capital improvements contrasted with Préfontaine's. Laporte announced that he would not request the Legislature's approval of a capital project without first submitting the project to a referendum of real estate owners.¹⁶⁶ But since the Legislature's approval or refusal of the capital project was independent of the verdict of the property owners, the "referendum" was but a plebiscite. Furthermore, since the use of the referendum was not compulsory nor was its result binding, its application depended on the good will of the chairman of the Finance Committee and ultimately on the Legislature. An occasion for the use of the referendum never arose, hence it is impossible to evaluate its practicality.

164. Montreal Annual Report 1896. 17

165. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 13; October 12, 1900.

166. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 20, 1900. This was an application of an 1898 Charter amendment which allowed referendums on money by-laws.

Predictably, Préfontaine was hostile to the referendum. He believed the process too cumbersome in comparison to the expeditious method of presenting a request to the Legislature. He warned that real estate proprietors would never approve a capital project because they feared heavier taxes.¹⁶⁷

Laporte had not wavered from his commitment to economy and was quite prepared to moderate the rate of expenditures. In this respect, he was not only at odds with the Mayor, but also with the chairman of the Roads Committee, Paul Martineau. The latter was a charter member of the Reform Party, yet he was becoming increasingly assimilated to the climate of the Roads Committee. Martineau believed that it was necessary to continue Préfontaine's road building programme and he also pushed for an increase in the real estate tax. Laporte, as yet incapable of distinguishing between road-building and extravagance, steadfastly reiterated his conviction to general economy, and in the end he was levelling his old accusations against the Roads Committee.¹⁶⁸

Because most aldermen supported public works, Martineau was able to command a majority of the City Council. The Martineau incidents pointed out the limits of a reform administration. At present the Reform Party had the largest caucus in the City Council, but it did not have a majority. At the last election, the Reform Party claimed sixteen aldermen from a grand total of thirty-four. The Reform Party's working majority was supplied by unaffiliated aldermen who would only support it as long as this did not conflict with their ward's interest.

167. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 1, 1901

168. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 26, 1901.

As long as the Reform Party was economy-minded, it would never be able to get full control of the City Council.

Laporte's reaction to Martineau indicated that the Reform Party had not yet matured beyond a position where economy was seen as the ultimate objective. A public works programme was simply not all corruption and extravagance. As has been outlined earlier, road building met a series of vital needs.

However the Reform Party did approve some progressive legislation. Ames' hygiene improvements were mostly beneficial to tenement dwellers. Laporte had improved the lot of the municipal worker by inaugurating a municipal pension fund.¹⁶⁹ In sum, the legislative achievements of the Reform Party were a minor improvement over the Good Government Association's and the Volunteer Electoral League's monolithic insistence on honesty and economy in government.

The 1902 Election: Préfontaine abandons Municipal Politics

Since there had been no English mayor since 1897, the 1902 mayoralty election was supposed to be honored as the English turn. However it appeared that Préfontaine was willing to run again. In an open letter published in all the newspapers, he pleaded that it was impossible to leave office before terminating the harbor works.¹⁷⁰

To prevent Préfontaine's re-election, a committee of reformers was founded.¹⁷¹

169. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 30, 1900

170. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 6, 1902

171. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1902. The members of this organization were: Hormisdas Laporte, Herbert Ames, Francis Hart, Henry Ekers, Farquhar Robertson, James Morgan of the Department Store family, Charles Phillips, W.M. McNally, William Dowe Lighthall, the Mayor of Westmount and founder of the Union of Canadian Municipalities. (1901) J.H. Joseph, and J.S. Briesley.

Although it was time for an English mayor, the committee nominated Dr. Emanuel Persillier Lachapelle. He was the founder and the first president of the provincial Board of Health, a former professor of medical jurisprudence and a past president of the American Public Health Association; he had been editor of l'Union Medical du Canada and president of the Société St. Jean Baptiste; he was presently a professor of hygiene at Laval University at Montreal, director of La Banque Provinciale, and president of the Crédit Foncier Franco-Canadien. 172

The committee of reformers organized a systematic and well-staffed campaign. Committees were placed in charge of finance, election, meetings, printing and advertising. Lachapelle's election committee stressed its candidate's experienced record: his health legislation was considered a model by other countries 173 and he had the business know-how necessary to efficiently manage a city. 174 Moreover Lachapelle had the additional virtue of being opposed by the Montreal Street Railway Company, 175 a company that was acknowledged to be a prime contributor to the mayor's slush fund.

Yet incredibly, Lachapelle withdrew from the race and accordingly his committee was dissolved. He maintained that because of the entrance of two additional candidates into the field, his candidacy was no longer required. The new candidates were Richard Wilson-Smith, the former mayor and still possessing a strong following as evidenced by his large nominating convention, and James Cochrane, a paving

172. Morgan, op.cit. first edition, 348. second edition. 624.

173. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1902.

174. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 17, 1902.

175. Ibid.

contractor and free lance candidate. The election of either would keep alive the tradition of alternating French and English mayors, a tradition that both Préfontaine and Lachapelle were adverse to breaking.

Ironically Lachapelle's shortlived candidacy was "successful". Préfontaine was in Europe throughout the campaign, but he left word with Senator Louis Joseph Forget, the chairman of his election committee, that he would be willing to withdraw, providing a strong English candidate appeared.¹⁷⁶ When Wilson-Smith announced his candidacy, Lachapelle reached an agreement with Préfontaine's election committee that they would both withdraw from the race.

This turn of events destroyed the united reform alliance which had centred on Lachapelle's opposition to Préfontaine. Laporte and Ames abstained from supporting either Wilson-Smith or Cochrane. While Lachapelle and the Board of Trade supported Wilson-Smith, the Herald suggested that Wilson-Smith's candidacy was every bit as threatening as Préfontaine's had been. Through his position as investment broker dealing in municipal debentures, Wilson-Smith had been instrumental in a shady \$3,000,000 loan to the city.¹⁷⁷ The Herald also feared that his holdings in the Lachine Rapids Hydraulic and Land Company, an electricity company, and the Montreal Water and Power Company, a private water firm, would conflict with the demands of his office.¹⁷⁸ In fact Stephens considered Wilson-Smith to be more

176. It can be speculated from Préfontaine's cavalier behavior that he never seriously intended to run for office. He was already a Member of Parliament for Maisonneuve and his political ambitions were now firmly anchored in federal politics. Préfontaine's objective was to find a personally acceptable successor to his office. With Wilson-Smith's entrance into the mayoralty election, Préfontaine confidently retired from municipal politics.

177. See footnote number 145.

178. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 25, 1902.

deceitful than the incumbent: "I would a thousand times prefer to vote for
Préfontaine than Wilson-Smith. I like Préfontaine's frankness. ¹⁷⁹

The French press was not concerned with the problems of Wilson-Smith's
business relations. Despite the latter's inability to speak French and
Cochrane's bilingualism, a fact which he stressed a great deal, Wilson-Smith
was awarded their unanimous support. Since Lachapelle had designated Wilson-
Smith as his substitute, it was necessary to follow Lachapelle's directive:
"Si par malheur, les Canadiens-français élisaient M. Cochrane, ils perdraient
tout le fruit du sacrifice qu'ils viennent de faire". ¹⁸⁰ When Cochrane did
win, La Presse concluded that his ability to speak French had been the decisive
factor. This was evidenced by the fact that Cochrane received a large majority
in the French wards whereas the English wards supported Wilson-Smith. The
Gazette, which had opted for Wilson-Smith, mournfully recorded: "Electors in
east end responsible for defeat of R. Wilson-Smith". ¹⁸¹

The campaign for the City Council was overshadowed by the unpredictable
mayoralty election. The Reform Party did not campaign on the basis of scandals
and inquiries as it had in 1900, but on the merit of its administrative record
and on the further services reform politics could bring to Montreal.

Laporte's announcement of a balanced programme was indicative of the Reform
Party's desire to expand beyond the limitations of balanced budget rhetoric and

179. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 25, 1902

180. La Presse, January 25, 1902

181. The Gazette, February 3, 1902.

182
to branch out into the popular anti-trust terrain. Since Préfontaine had retired from municipal politics, the defeat of his machine was no longer acceptable as the single Reform Party objective. Both for reasons of continued political success and internal unity - Laporte had not forgotten the Martineau incident of 1901 - it was imperative to outline a clear policy.

183

The Reform Party attempted to increase its support in the French wards by holding a series of public meetings. But the election results indicated that the

182. Laporte announced the following programme:

1. Civic debt to be kept within limits set by Charter.
2. Real estate tax increase to be only after referendum.
3. Strict collection of taxes.
4. All surplus revenue to be applied to street repairs.
5. Fair distribution of expenditures.
6. Efficient government
7. General application of merit principle.
8. All contracts to be furnished to lowest tenders.
9. Every civic loan to be floated on open market.
10. Present municipal services (i.e. water) not to pass into private hands; furthermore every effort to be made to regain those rights and privileges which the city has lost.
11. All companies using city streets to be equally treated.
12. Quebec's granting of excessive powers to utility companies to be opposed.
13. All civic properties not required for use to be sold.
14. Funds in capital account to be used for
 - a) construction of sewer mains
 - b) construction of fire stations
 - c) construction of an incinerator in north and east sectors of city
15. Administration free of politics.

The Montreal Daily Herald, December 11, 1901.

183. The new lieutenants in the Reform Party were Stanislas Vallières and Farquhar Robertson. Vallières was a modest real estate developer. As a more "reliable" advocate of economy, he was recruited as the new chairman of the Roads Committee. Robertson was a director of the Merchant Bank and a prominent member of the Board of Trade. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 24, 1900. He was recruited as chairman of the Fire Committee in order to improve the quality of Montreal's fire fighting force. The Montreal business community had suffered losses in the order of \$3,000,000 in a disastrous 1901 fire and was currently insisting on a better fire department. The Montreal Business Men's League. 1903-04 Annual Report. 6.

Reform Party would remain a movement of the western wards with a minority delegation from the eastern wards. Fifteen Reform Party aldermen were elected: 184 a mere five were from the French wards.

The English wards elected ten Reform Party aldermen, but the Reform Party was not as strong as it had been in 1900. The western wards had led the reform movement because they could focus all the city's problems on Préfontaine. With his departure from municipal politics, the western wards had lost their adversary.

For reasons that will be documented in the following chapter, the Montreal reform movement shifted from the politics of economy and efficiency to anti-trust politics. S.D. Vallières' reforms in the Roads Committee - a systematic plan for repair work and an investigation into the cost of permanent sidewalks - were largely ignored by the press in favor of trust issues.

This break in themes also marked a disintegration of the Reform Party. The central theme of the Reform Party had been an efficient and honest administration and even more, the villainy of Raymond Préfontaine. The latter retired permanently from municipal politics in 1902 and was brought into Sir Wilfrid Laurier's cabinet as Minister of Marine and Fisheries. After he left municipal politics, the reformers had lost the external cohesive factor of the municipal reform movement.

The reform movement had been steadily developing since the late 1880s. The reform movement was successful in its immediate objective to defeat Préfontaine, but due to its misunderstanding of the nature of the political system, it could

184. In the 1904 City Council, there were to be only eleven English aldermen of a total of thirty-six.

not eliminate the abuses of ward politics. Ward politics was a humane and manipulative function of government whereby jobs were exchanged for political support. Hence the place of the reformer was in trying to make the municipal worker more productive, in other words, in attempting to control ward politics. The reformers erred in trying to do the impossible : eliminate ward politics.

The reformers also erred in translating their repugnance to ward politics into an aversion to growth. The essential equation was that the Préfontaine machine was an intersection of capital projects and ward politics. Everything that Préfontaine did was stigmatized and hence reformers were generally hostile to public works. The reformers were a regressive movement in the growth of the city, albeit by 1902 they were more aware of the positive nature of public works.

In sum, the reformers had limited success because they had limited appeal . In New York urban reform was accompanied by a desire for housing reform, but with the exception of Herbert Ames, the Montreal reform movement had no such purpose.¹⁸⁵ The reformers were too esconced in their balance-sheet approach to Préfontaine to broaden their objectives.

185. Montreal's public health and housing record was abysmal, nevertheless the reformers chose to focus on "efficient and honest" government. In a time of depression for Montreal's working population, Préfontaine's padded work forces were one of the few sources of relief. For a brief description of living conditions in Montreal, see J.T. Copp, The Conditions of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1920. Paper delivered to the Canadian Historical Association meeting, 1972.

CHAPTER II

The Public Utilities and the City:
The Anti-Trust Movement 1892-1908

In the preceding chapter, we have seen that the achievement of economy and honesty were the primary aim of the Laporte and Ames reformers. Reformers continued to press for improvement in these matters, but from 1901 they came to stress the problem of regulating the giant utilities that provided the public services. In Montreal for practical purposes this applied to the Montreal Street Railway Company and the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company.

The Montreal Street Railway Company

In 1861, the Montreal Street Railway Company was chartered as Montreal's first tramway company.¹ By 1881, the M.S.R. had acquired a thirty year franchise from the city.² In 1892, the company fell under the dynamic leadership of Louis-Joseph Forget,³ the leading French-Canadian financier, and James Ross,⁴ an entrepreneur who acquired control of many tramway systems across Canada. Although

1. Omer Lavelée, "The Montreal City Passenger Company." The Canadian Railway Historical Association. April, 1961. 44-46. The M.S.R.'s original name was the City Passenger Railway Company. It was in 1886 that the company changed its name.

2. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 1, 1892.

3. Forget was the foremost French-Canadian financier of the time. The first French-Canadian ever to be admitted to the Montreal Stock Exchange (1873), he served as its president 1895-1896. He founded the financial house of L.J. Forget and Company, and was on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Dominion Coal Company, and the Dominion Iron and Steel Company. Atherton op.cit. volume 3. 112-119.

4. Ibid. 22-31. Forget was president of the M.S.R. 1892-1910, James Ross was general manager, and F.L. Wanklyn was vice-president; the Board of Directors was composed of Montagu Allan, F. Henshaw, and R.W. Blackwell.

there was still eighteen years remaining on its 1881 contract, Forget proposed that in exchange for the security of a thirty year contract, the M.S.R. would electrify the tramway services.⁵ Raymond Préfontaine, the chairman of the Roads Committee, strongly backed Forget's scheme. Préfontaine's support was reason enough for many aldermen to oppose electrification. These aldermen declared that because of the annual snowfall and the grade of the mountain, it was impossible to electrify the tramways.⁶ One historian recorded:

"The Noble Thirteen and their advisors like the coloured troops in the American Civil War fought nobly against Mr. Préfontaine's schemes and predicted unmerciful disaster if the City Passenger Railway were electrified. To the plea that electric railways were a success elsewhere the opposition replied triumphantly and without fear of contradiction 'but New York isn't Montreal! ...'"⁷

But Forget had taken over the M.S.R. precisely because of the anticipated profits from electrification and his plan was not to be blocked by spurious arguments. Préfontaine expected that electrification would mean expansion of the city's boundaries in such a manner that the number of French wards would be increased. Accordingly he pushed for the adoption of Forget's offer. On July 19th 1892, the Préfontaine majority voted Forget a thirty year contract.⁸

Just as it was associated with paving contractors, the Préfontaine machine

5. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 1, 1892.

6. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 24, 1892.

7. Atherton, op.cit. volume 2. 185

8. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 20, 1893.

was intimately allied with the streetcar company. The stables and yards of the M.S.R. were located in Hochelaga, Préfontaine's ward, and this provided him with a secure electoral base.⁹ Préfontaine's law firm represented the M.S.R. in its expropriation claims against the city.¹⁰ Needless to say this solicitude resulted in increased payments to the tramway company and consequently a larger commission to Préfontaine's law firm.

The M.S.R. received other favors: whereas the Toronto Street Railway paid the city a yearly fee of 8% on receipts up to \$1,000,000, the M.S.R. paid only 4%. In both cities, the fee rose 2% for every extra \$500,000 in receipts.¹¹ In 1905, Toronto received \$347,609 from its tramway company whereas Montreal received only \$207,292.¹² Unlike its Toronto counterpart, the M.S.R. paid no taxes on its wires and rails, the reason being that the city assessment board did not rule them immoveables.¹³

Electrification resulted in a dramatic rise in the M.S.R.'s net earnings: in 1892 they were a mere \$97,762, in 1897 \$605,939,¹⁴ and by 1905, \$693,169.¹⁵

9. Cooper, op.cit. 99.

10. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 15, 1898.

11. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 15, 1903.

12. The Canadian Municipal Journal. Official organ of the Union of Canadian Municipalities. volume 1 no 8. 1905. 258

13. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 21, 1898.

14. Street Railway Journal. Street Railway Publishing Company, New York, volume 13, 1897. 874.

15. Ibid. volume 26. 898.

In 1905 the company was paying an astounding 10% dividend to its shareholders, a rate which was not based on invested capital, but on the capitalization of the franchise. In terms of physical assets, the M.S.R. was of limited value, but because it supplied a necessary service to a concentrated population, the value of its franchise was enormous.

Préfontaine had expected that the tramway would contribute to Montreal's expansion by hastening the annexation of suburban municipalities. The streetcar did exactly that: in 1892 the area of the city was 5,826 acres and by 1912 it had grown through twenty-four separate annexations to 26,090.45 acres.¹⁶

An electric tramway encouraged real estate speculation. In his study of the streetcar's effect on Boston, Sam Warner has concluded: "To the real estate men the simple procedure of placing a coach on iron rails seemed a miraculous device for the promotion of out of town property."¹⁷ Robert Rumilly has written that this also applied to Montreal:

"Les tramways électriques, plus rapides et plus réguliers, permettent aux citoyens d'habiter plus loin de leur bureau, et favorisent l'expansion des villes ... Ils augmentent la valeur des terrains dans les quartiers déservis."¹⁸

Immediately after the announcement of electrification, commercials appeared

16. Atherton, op.cit. volume 2. 653.

17. Sam Warner, Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston 1870-1900. Harvard University Press and the M.I.T. Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1962. 23.

18. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Quebec volume 5-16. Editions Bernard Valiquette: Montreal, various years. volume 10, 205.

in Montreal newspapers announcing the development of Rosemount, that district immediately north of Hochelaga. An important participant in this project was the Montreal Land and Improvement Company. Two important investors in this company were William Van Horne, president of the Canadian Pacific Railway,¹⁹ and Raymond Préfontaine.

Seeking to maximize his investment, L.J. Forget proceeded to establish a tramway monopoly: In 1901, the M.S.R.'s annual report indicated the purchase of the Montreal Park and Island Railway Company a line serving the western sector of the city.²⁰ With its 1907 announcement that it had completed its drawn-out acquisition of the Montreal Terminal Railway Company, a carrier operating in eastern Montreal, the M.S.R. had rounded out its monopoly.²¹

The Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company

The Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company was chartered in 1901. It was basically a merger of two separate companies: the Montreal Gas Company and the Royal Electric Company.

The Montreal Gas Company was chartered in 1847. The gas industry did not require as much technological sophistication as other utilities, especially electricity, and so by 1887 it had already attained an advanced stage of maturity. Investors understood that a gas franchise was no longer a hazardous investment but was in fact a very profitable enterprise. Aware of this, Herbert Holt, an aggressive financier, and Louis-Joseph Forget purchased control of the Montreal

19. Rosemount was to be the location of the C.P.R.'s Angus Yards.

20. Street Railway Journal. volume 18, 1901. 723

21. Ibid. volume 30, 1907. 970

Gas Company.

On September 20th, 1887, Hugh Graham, proprietor and editor of the Montreal Star, charged that the Gas Company had bribed some aldermen into giving it a contract.

"Quand la question du contrat de l'éclairage au gaz était pendante devant le conseil de ville, et que la soumission de la compagnie de gaz de Montréal pour éclairer les rues de la ville et fournir le gaz aux citoyens était sous considération, les parties intéressées dans la dite compagnie du gaz ... en leur nom et de la part de la compagnie de gaz de Montréal, ont influencé d'une manière corruptive et illégalement des membres du conseil de ville pour qu'ils supportassent la dite soumission et fissent servir leur influence pour assurer l'adoption par le conseil de ville de la dite soumission."²²

There were demands for an independent inquiry, but the City Council chose to deal with the matter through a special committee. Both L.J. Forget, the president of the Gas Company and H.B. Rainville were accused of buying votes to assure the passage of the contract. Alderman Hormisdas Jeanotte swore that Rainville had personally offered him a hundred shares of Gas Company stock.²³

Despite the rabid campaign conducted by Jules Helbronner, the editor of La Presse, the case floundered. By refusing to present its record books, the

22. La Minerve, September 21, 1887. The most damaging accusation was that the City Council had voted the Montreal Gas Company a ten year monopoly at a price 50% higher than the tender of a competing Company. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 5, 1887.

23. La Minerve, September 22, 1887.

company prevented the inquiry from examining its expense funds.²⁴ Ignoring the facts that two aldermen were in possession of Gas Company shares while voting for the contract, the special committee dismissed the charges.

In 1893, a new company challenged the Montreal Gas Company's monopoly. John Coates, an itinerant British utility magnate who made a practice of acquiring utility contracts across various cities in Britain and North America, offered to supply Montreal gas at the rate of 95 cents/1000 cu. ft. This was a substantial reduction from the \$1.30 rate that the Gas Company was charging. The Gas Company was unwilling to submit a lower offer so that on September 25th, John Coates was awarded a thirty year contract.²⁵

Coate's company, the Consumer's Gas Company, thus undertook the enormous task of laying its own gas conduits, a task which it found to be beyond its capital resources. The Consumer's Company defaulted on its contract and in 1895 it was announced that the Gas Company had bought out its rival.²⁶ With the disappearance of its only competitor, the Gas Company ultimated a contract on its own terms. As a sop to the consumer, the contract included a reduction to \$1.20 gas. It was a ten year contract with a five year extension provided that the city did not exercise an option to purchase the company at the end of the

24. The officer of the company pleaded that the books were too heavy to be transported from the company vaults. When he was offered help to carry them to the committee room, he countered that in view of the enormous value of the records, it was company policy not to permit their removal from the vaults. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 5, 1887.

25. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 26, 1893.

26. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 8, 1895.

first ten years. The most important provision was that no other company was to begin laying gas conduits during these fifteen years.²⁷ This in effect meant that the Gas Company was accorded a fifteen year monopoly.

The cavalier manner in which the Gas Company permitted Coates to outbid it indicated that the former was absolutely certain that the newcomer's endeavor would fail. Moreover, that Préfontaine, the reliable supporter of all the Forget interests, should vote for the Coates' contract²⁸ proved that he recognized Coates for what he was - a speculator hoping for a fast fortune. It can be safely assumed that Coates earned a sizeable profit from the sale of his equipment to the Gas Company. Such an agreement would be the ideal dencuement to the Coates experience: for Coates would leave Montreal with an easy profit and the Gas Company would appear to be invulnerable to competition. The impact of the Coates experience was that Montreal newspaper editors, albeit genuinely hostile to the Gas Company's despotic behavior, were henceforth suspicious of new utility companies. It was feared that they would likewise create false illusions for the consumer and needlessly tear up the streets.²⁹

The Royal Electric Company was chartered in 1880. From its earliest stages it had an advantage over all other competitors as H.B. Rainville, chairman of the City Council Lighting Committee 1888-1895, was on the company's board of directors. Because of his influence, in 1888 the Royal Electric Company received a contract calling for rates considered to be 25% above the North American norm.³⁰

27. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1895.

28. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 26, 1893.

29. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 10, 1895.

30. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 24, 1888.

In 1895, the Royal Electric Company was brought into the Forget empire.³¹
In the same year, Herbert Holt and L.J. Forget merged the Montreal Gas Company,
the Royal Electric Company and another firm the St. Lawrence Electric Company.³²
The latter was a renaming of the Chambly Manufacturing Company, which retailed
its electricity in Montreal, and which had as an important shareholder Raymond
Préfontaine.³³

In 1901, the provincial government incorporated the Montreal Light, Heat
and Power Company.³⁴ Although the M.L.H.P. was officially chartered as a utility,
its board of directors intended it as a monopoly holding company. Articles eight
and nine of its charter read:

- " 8. The company may exercise the franchise and
charter rights of any company whose business
and undertaking it may acquire by lease or
purchase.
9. The company may amalgamate or consolidate
with any corporation, in the stock or bonds
of which it is authorized to invest, upon
such terms as may be agreed upon, between
the two companies ..."³⁵

31. La Presse, July 20, 1899. J.B. Thibodeau was president of the Royal Electric, 1880-1899, but he had lost control of the company in 1895.

32. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 16, 1912.

33. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1888. chapter 72.

34. La Presse, April 26, 1901. The following were the executives of the M.L.H.P.:
President: Herbert Holt; Vice-Presidents: James Ross and Rodolphe Forget; Secretary-
Treasurer: H.H. Henshaw; Directors: Montagu Allan, L.J. Forget, Rodolphe Forget,
F.C. Henshaw, Herbert Holt, Robert MacKay, C.E. Porteous, James Ross and H.B.
Rainville.

35. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1901. chapter 66, sections 8
and nine.

Holt and Forget's objective was to build a monopoly of power services in the Montreal area, a goal which they accomplished by absorbing any competitor at whatever price necessary.

There was a more immediate objective to the M.L.H.P. Both the Royal Electric and the Montreal Gas Companies were controlled by the directors of the M.L.H.P. The latter decreed that each share of Montreal Gas or Royal Electric stock would be exchanged for $2\frac{1}{2}$ shares of M.L.H.P. stock.³⁶ The result was an enormous profit to Royal and Gas shareholders and a watering of M.L.H.P. stock. The latter would ensure M.L.H.P. shareholders a real dividend rate in excess of what was publicly possible under the independent Royal and Gas companies. In other words, taking the pre 1901 dividend rates of the Royal and Gas Companies at a hypothetical 5%, if the Royal and Gas Companies were independent, this would be paid on x number of shares, however under the M.L.H.P. this same socially acceptable 5% could be paid on $2\frac{1}{2}$ x number of shares.

The M.L.H.P. absorbed many other companies - the Provincial Light, Heat and Power Company, the Citizens Light, Heat and Power Company, the Temple Electric Company, but the most important case occurred in 1903. The Lachine Land and Hydraulic Company was the only serious competitor remaining in the Montreal area. Its strength was in its hydraulic resources, the Lachine Rapids, and in its technical ability - far greater than that of the M.L.H.P. which was stymied by the problem of freezing water in its Chambly Rapids plant.³⁷

36. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 6, 1901.

37. John Dales, Hydroelectricity and Industrial Development Quebec 1898-1940. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1957. 105.

The M.L.H.P. attempted to break its competitor by acquiring the Imperial Electric Company, the Lachine Company's subsidiary for the retailing of lighting power.³⁸ In answer, the Lachine Company transferred its lighting network to the Standard Light, Heat and Power Company, formerly its subsidiary for motive power only.³⁹ Then the Lachine Company took the offensive: it entered into an agreement with the powerful Shawinigan Water and Power Company whereby it would channel the latter's power into the Montreal market at half the rates the M.L.H.P. was currently charging.

One month later, there were reports that the M.L.H.P. was willing to pay \$200 per share for the Lachine Company, about twice its listed value. March 17th 1909, the M.L.H.P. bought out the Lachine Company: the latter's shareholders received \$190 per share and the M.L.H.P., whose stock value had been decreasing ever since the announcement of the Shawinigan deal, now had an absolute monopoly.⁴⁰ Rodolphe Forget "reassured" the public:

"The absorption of the Lachine Co., while it will not mean an increase in cost to the general consumer, will mark the end of contracts cut down to a losing basis through the bitterness of competition that has existed between the two companies."⁴¹

In other words, Montreal would no longer benefit from competition; the prices would remain at the already high level set by the Royal Electric, now that

38. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 9, 1902.

39. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 14, 1903

40. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 18, 1903

41. Ibid.

the Lachine's Company's agreement with the Shawinigan Water and Power Company had been aborted.

The M.L.H.P. was powerful not only because of the monopoly it eventually established, but also because its charter reduced the amount of control the City Council could exercise over it. A proper understanding of this issue requires a lengthy explanation of the difference between a corporate charter and a municipal contract.

In a corporate charter, the provincial government authorized a utility to distribute its services to a specified area of the province. A key item of the charter was whether a utility could use the city's streets with or without the prior consent of the City Council. If the provincial government did not require prior consent, then the utility would unilaterally install all its capital equipment. Whether or not prior consent was required, the utility required a contract from the city before it could retail its services. The city had the power to contract as many companies as it wished; consequently it had the right to create a monopoly by granting an exclusive contract. The city and the utility would sign a terminal contract specifying the maximum price that consumers and industry would pay. Then the city, the household, and industry would sign their own contracts with the utility.

The M.L.H.P. was one utility that was granted the extraordinary privilege of entering a municipality without the prior consent of the City Council.

Article ten of its charter read:

"10. The company may, in the city of Montreal, or at any place in the province of Quebec within a radius of one hundred miles from the said city, enter upon and construct,

under, or over the streets and public highways, all such pipes, lines, conduits and other constructions as may be necessary for the purposes of its business, all such work to be performed with as much expedition as possible and under the directions of the municipality in which the works are situated, provided that the company be responsible for all the damages which it may occasion."⁴²

This meant that the city had lost control of its own streets and that its autonomy had been sacrificed to the M.L.H.P. Since the trust proceeded to absorb any competitor, it was impossible to refuse a contract to the M.L.H.P. A refusal would only deprive the city of a necessary service.

The Reform Party and the Trusts 1901-1904

Led by the Reform Party, the City Council made clear its opposition to article ten of the M.L.H.P. bill. As speaker of the Assembly and as a future executive in the M.L.H.P., H.B. Rainville fought back all attempts to insert a prior consent clause into the bill.⁴³ Laporte appeared before the Legislative Council in an attempt to have the bill amended to Montreal's satisfaction. He later even went to the lengths of trying to get the bill disallowed by the Lieutenant-Governor.⁴⁴

In June 1901 the Royal Electric Company⁴⁵ and the City Council tangled over

42. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1901. chapter 66. section 10

43. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 14, 1901.

44. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 26, 1901.

45. Although they had been absorbed by the M.L.H.P., both the Royal Electric Company and the Montreal Gas Company continued to operate under their old names for a number of years.

the issue of a street lighting contract. This contract was significant as the first demonstration of the political power of the M.L.H.P. If the Royal Electric Company managed to win the contract it would be a promising step forward in the erection of a complete power monopoly under the M.L.H.P.

The Reform Party was divided on the issue of a street lighting contract. Alderman Francis Hart, the chairman of Lighting Committee, held that the only function of the City Council was to accept the lowest price possible.⁴⁶ Laporte thought it feasible that the city build its own lighting plant:

"There are yet things to be decided - whether we should build our own plant and manufacture our own light, or whether we should continue the existing policy of purchasing our light."⁴⁷

However Laporte and Hart agreed that the City Council must stand up to Royal Electric Co.

Six companies forwarded tenders for a five year street lighting contract slated to begin in 1904. The Royal Electric Co. bid \$95 per street lamp; the St. Lawrence Power presented the lowest bid, \$54.50. All the bids were a considerable reduction from the existing contract at \$120 per lamp.

Laporte urged that the lowest bid be accepted, however, the Royal Electric's supporters argued that the latter had provided satisfactory service over the years and so it should be permitted to forward a second bid. Accordingly the Royal Electric offered to service the city at \$60 per lamp, a bid which its

46. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 1, 1901.

47. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 11, 1901.

supporters cited as additional proof of the company's good will. The City Council debated the issue. One alderman claimed that the Royal Electric had tried to bribe him. Laporte's motion that the franchise be automatically granted to the lowest bid was defeated. It was then decided to adjourn and reconsider the question in September.⁴⁸ After a summer adjournment and a prolonged battle in the press,⁴⁹ the City Council accepted the Royal Electric's bid.⁵⁰

Ever since the incorporation of the M.L.H.P., it was feared that its ultimate objective was the formation of a super trust: an amalgamation of the M.S.R. and the M.L.H.P. The point of such an amalgamation would not only be the creation of a utility monopoly, but the pyramiding of another holding company and a further watering of stock.⁵¹ Upon the rumour of such a merger in March 1903, the stock of both utilities rose, testifying to the profitability of a super trust. However before amalgamating with the M.L.H.P., the M.S.R. sought to ensure its long term financial stability. Although the M.S.R. was presently working on a thirty year contract dating from 1892, it declared its intention to apply for a twenty year extension of this contract.

48. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 11, 1901.

49. Both Le Journal - president of La Compagnie du Journal was Rodolphe Forget, nephew of L.J. Forget - and La Presse supported the Royal Electric's contract bid. La Presse argued: "La Royale est une institution canadienne-française, fondée avec des capitaux canadiens-français ...Voilà pourquoi on le combat avec cet acharnement ..." La Presse, July 18, 1901.

50. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 4, 1901.

51. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 9, 1903.

Before the City Council debated the M.S.R.'s proposal, the Legislature smoothed the way towards the approval of the contract. The Legislature replaced the article of Montreal's Charter requiring a 2/3 majority of the City Council with an article requiring a simple majority.⁵² The M.S.R.'s contract was then fiercely debated in the City Council. On November 16th and again on December 4th, Ames and Laporte led the defeat of the M.S.R.'s contract bid.⁵³

The 1904 Election

The trust issue became the dominant theme in the 1904 election. Hormisdas Laporte was the mayoralty nominee of the reformers. His opponent was Ucal H. Dandurand, a real estate developer who was widely believed to be associated with the M.S.R.

In October 1903, Laporte predicted that the upcoming election would revolve around three issues: the city's need to find new sources of revenue, the annexation of St. Henri, St. Cunegonde and Maisonneuve, and the nature of the contracts offered to the tramway and gas companies. He had emphasized the latter point; "Special attention must be given to this in order that the citizens may not suffer too much".⁵⁴

Laporte's platform included promises to improve the politics and fire departments, annex the three adjoining municipalities, reduce the water tax and improve municipal hygiene. But he stressed the importance of the trust issue,

52. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 9, 1903.

53. The Montreal Daily Herald, November 17; December 5, 1903.

54. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 16, 1903.

promising to negotiate a new gas contract which would reduce the per unit cost of gas from \$1.20 to 75 cents and committing his administration to preventing the signing of an unreasonable contract with the M.S.R.

In order to offset the liability of his relation to the M.S.R. Dandurand attempted to project a populist image. He proposed a reduction in the property qualifications for mayor and alderman as part of a general campaign to label Laporte as "anti worker". At a public meeting organized for Dandurand, one speaker warned, "If Mr. Dandurand were defeated ... the millionaires would have control at City Hall, and it would be no use for a workingman to go there seeking favors."⁵⁵

Dandurand also attempted to brand Laporte as anti labor by associating him with the actions of Mayor Cochrane. The Mayor had responded to the serious tramway and longshoremen strikes of 1903 by calling in the Militia and condemning foreign agitators.⁵⁶ Laporte had limited himself to a statement regretting the inconvenience resulting from the strikes but Dandurand did not hesitate to imply Laporte's guild by association.

Public attention focused on the utilities because the city's contract with the Montreal Gas Company was set to terminate in 1905. Never flamboyant, Laporte stood on his record as chairman of the Finance Committee and reiterated his stance that he would see to it that Montreal obtained a fair contract. Conversely his opponent proposed to municipalize all the tramway, gas, and electric services in the city.

55. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 27, 1904.

56. Le Canada, May 1, May 8, May 26, 1903.

57. Le Canada, January 21, 1904

La Presse, whose editorial policy strongly favored municipalization, warned the voters not to be deceived by Dandurand:

"Il faut que M. Dandurand prenne les électeurs de Montréal pour des innocents s'il suppose qu'ils croiront à des boniments de lumière à bon marché et de municipalisation de l'éclairage et des tramways, quand celui qui les fait est appuyé par les hommes les plus en vue, les plus intéressés aux combines de l'électricité."⁵⁸

Abandoning his customary rhetoric for economy and efficiency and gradually de-emphasizing the non-trust aspects of his programme, Laporte branded Dandurand as pro-trust:

"Mr. Dandurand is a man who has large business interests with some of the leading spirits of the Gas Company. Mr. Dandurand's requisition is signed by Mr. Holt and Mr. Henshaw, the principal directors of the Gas Co. Mr. Dandurand's requisition papers were some months ago, passed about among the employees of the M.L.H.P., who were obliged to sign."⁵⁹

Given the magnitude of Dandurand's real estate operations, it would be extremely unlikely that he was not in league with the utility magnates. Since Montreal's population was growing very fast,⁶⁰ collusion between politicians, real estate developers, and the utilities would be all the more frequent.

Robert Rumilly explains Dandurand's position:

58. La Presse, January 21, 1904.

59. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 22, 1904.

60. Montreal increased its population 70.3% from 1900-1910. Atherton, op.cit. volume 2, 665.

"Le Pacific Canadien vient d'installer à proximité du Port, ses usines Angus, qui provoquent le développement d'un nouveau quartier. L'agent d'immeuble U.H. Dandurand ... préside ce syndicat. Il lotit le quartier neuf et le baptiste Rosemont ... L'avenir des lotissements est lié à l'extension des lignes de tramways, comme à la fourniture du gaz et de l'électricité. Le tout dépend des concessions obtenues à l'Hôtel de Ville. U.H. Dandurand pose sa candidature à la mairie. L'ami Préfontaine signera son bulletin de présentation. L'agent d'immeubles, une fois maire, hâtera l'annexion de Rosemont à Montréal - et, partant, la plus value des terrains. D'autres creatures du trust présentent leur candidature à l'échevinage - en particulier L'Orateur de la Legislative, (sic) H.B. Rainville, dans le quartier Duvernay." 61

Laporte overwhelmed Dandurand 17,017 to 4,616 with the latter even losing his election deposit. Laporte had broken the prevailing pattern in mayoralty politics: he had scored equally well in the French and English wards. Even Hochelaga was drawn into the Laporte bandwagon. 62

61. Rumilly, op.cit. volume II, 104-105. Le Journal supported Dandurand and explained that it was impossible for its candidate to be a "trustard". "Or au Canada, la loi prohibe d'une façon formelle de telles organisations (i.e. trusts) et elle reclame le droit de contrôle sur toutes les associations d'intérêts ou d'individus. Les trusts n'existent donc aux Etats-Unis, et dans l'imagination de M. Laporte et de ses amis." Le Journal, January 28, 1904. This is to be contrasted to La Presse's strident anti-trustism: "La lutte est engagé entre le peuple et les boursiers, les exploiters du monopole; entre les citoyens et le combine des tramways, de la lumière, du chauffage et de l'électricité." La Presse, January 23, 1904.

62. Le Canada, February 2, 1904.

There was little of note in the results of the aldermanic elections.

Laporte never indicated which candidates were reformers. The Reform Party was destroyed, by the movement of its chief organizer, Herbert Ames, towards federal politics. Although the latter did retain his ward seat, he was clearly more interested in federal politics.

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The Provincial Government: 1904

The Union of Canadian Municipalities had discovered an essential fact: that the city in Canada was ruled by an administration, not by a government. It was a constitutional reality that the city did not and could not have absolute jurisdiction in any area. Whatever powers the respective provincial government had decided to delegate to the city, were at that moment all the powers of the city. By amending the Municipal Code or the individual City Charters, or by endowing a company with no consent clauses, the Legislature could enlarge or diminish the scope of the city's autonomy.

If the provincial government was the sovereign body, then urban reform ultimately depended on a cooperative Legislature. The role of the municipal reformer was to seek an increase in the city's powers and to pressure for a repeal of restraining legislation, especially no consent clauses.

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63. Elected to Parliament in the 1904 general election, Ames abandoned the reform movement. Although he did serve out his 1904-1906 term in the City Council, he was hardly noticeable.

64. The Municipal Government Association of New York state proposed home rule as the panacea to municipal problems. American City. volume 7 no. 1. 35.

In the 1890's, George Washington Stephens had pioneered the concept that municipal reform was a function of the City Charter, and he now applied this thesis to city-utility relations. In a speech to the Board of Trade, Stephen declared that Montreal was being swindled by the M.L.H.P. and that the provincial government was not only responsible for this state of affairs, but was the only possible source of relief. As suggested by Stephens the Board of Trade passed the following resolutions: that the Quebec Government be petitioned to amend the joint Stock Companies Act to prevent fictitious watering of capital stocks and that in view of the monopoly position of the M.L.H.P., and the obstacle this presented to fair bargaining, the government be petitioned to establish an inspector to determine fair rates.⁶⁵

The 1904 provincial election was the background for many attacks on the Prime Minister, S.N. Parent. Many critics asserted that his policies favored the construction of pulp and paper companies against the interests of the colon. Best illustrated in the writings of the nationalist, Olivar Asselin, this opinion was predicated not on an arcadian reverence⁶⁶ for Quebec's "providential mission", but on an awareness of the destructive powers of large companies.⁶⁷ The grievances of the Montreal consumer and the rural pioneer were rooted in an identical condition:

65. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 27, 1904.

66. For continental significance of arcadian theme, see Peter J. Schmitt, Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America. Oxford University Press: New York, 1969.

67. Le Nationaliste, June 5, 1904.

the unqualified concession of natural resources. The free use of Montreal's streets and hence access to its consumer and industrial market was for the M.L.H.P. as much a concession as railway lines and forest reserves were to a pulp and paper company.⁶⁸

The M.L.H.P. did not have a definite monopoly. It was possible for the city to expropriate the company's operations and it was feasible that competing companies be established. In the session immediately preceding the 1904 election, the Legislative Assembly reduced Montreal's chances of controlling the giant utility. The Assembly defeated a proposal presented by Mayor Laporte requesting the power to borrow \$2,000,000 to municipalize the gas works. Lomer Gouin, a former Montreal alderman (1900), argued for Laporte's bill. Leading the opposition was H.B. Rainville who throughout the debate acted more as a M.L.H.P. executive than Speaker of the Assembly.⁶⁹

68. Asselin wrote that two changes in government concession were needed: "La réforme du mode de concession de l'énergie hydraulique, afin que la plus grande richesse du pays ne tombe pas aux mains de syndicats, qui pressueront ensuite l'industrie nationale. 2. Réforme de la politique forestière et destruction de l'arrogante aristocratie financière qui régné déjà sur la forêt". *Le Nationaliste*, June 19, 1904.

69. Rumilly, op.cit. volume II, 140. The Journal of the Legislative Assembly contains affidavits alleging that Alderman Stanislas Vallières, chairman of the Finance Committee and member of the delegation dealing with the municipal loan, was in contempt of the Legislature. One M.L.A. swore that he overheard Vallières declaring that : "It is very unfortunate to have to say so, but the Province of Quebec is the only French Canadian legislature in the Dominion of Canada and it is the most corrupt. The members pass for boodlers. When a great company wants to get privileges and new rights and it does not need to bother about the merits of its application; it simply says to itself: when we want to have a bill passed we have only to take down the necessary money and we can get what we want passed." Vallières claimed that he had been misquoted that the whole matter was dropped. Quebec, Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Quebec, 1904. 203.

Parent's relation to the M.L.H.P. was indicated in a letter by Godfroy Langlois, the managing editor of the Montreal Liberal daily, Le Canada. The latter was writing to Sir Wilfrid Laurier asking him to ensure that Lomer Gouin succeeded Parent as Prime Minister. Unlike Parent, Gouin "a eu le courage, la force de caractère et la probité de se tenir en dehors de toutes les combinaisons véreuses".⁷⁰ If either Adelard Turgeon, the minister of agriculture, or Horace Archambault, the procuror-general and president of the Legislative Council, both of whom were leading contenders for the leadership of the Liberal Party, succeeded Parent, this would deliver the province to the Forget empire:

"Vous vous rappelez, sans doute, je me rapelle et tout le monde se rappelle le rôle joué par M. Archambault, par M. Turgeon, par M. Rainville dans la scandaleuse session our la M.L.H.P. faisait la pluie et le beau temps au parlement provincial."⁷¹

Langlois' message was that Montreal's control over its utilities depended on the provincial government.

If one priority for municipal reform was the removal of S.N. Parent from the Prime Minister's office,⁷² the amputation of Rainville from the Legislative Assembly was of equal importance. Because the provincial election was called on a mere twenty-one day notice, the Conservative opposition was effectively neutralized. Since the Conservatives had only ten of seventy-four seats at dissolution, they had trouble finding sixty-four new candidates. Thirty-one Liberals were elected by

70. Papers of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Public Archives of Canada, 84025.

71. *ibid.* 84024

72. Lomer Gouin replaced Parent as Prime Minister in 1905.

acclamation and in the Montreal area, the opposition to the Liberals came from a dissident Liberal and three Labor Party candidates.⁷³

The three Labor Party candidates campaigned on a class interpretation of the trust. La Presse reported that

" La lutte électorale actuelle, absolument démiée de tout caractere politique, offrait aux travailleurs une occasion rare, unique, de présenter des candidats et de les faire élire s'ils le veulent. La lutte se fait exclusivement sur le terrain économique: pour ou contre les trusts. Or les salariés sont les victimes les plus intéressantes de ces exploitations des consommateurs".⁷⁴

Godfroy Langlois ran under the anti-trust banner against H.B. Rainville.

Parent had designated Rainville as the official Liberal candidate in Montreal

St. Louis, however a local convention decided otherwise and nominated Langlois.⁷⁵

The renegade Liberals who supported Le Canada's editor included Senators Cloran, Béique, and Dandurand. Cloran outline the contrasting images which Langlois'

backers set up: "C'est une lutte de la pauvreté contre la richesse, de l'honnêteté contre l'accaparement, de l'homme indépendant contre le champion du trust."⁷⁶

73. The Labor Party was founded in 1899. Although it was officially organized by the Central Trades and Labor Council of Quebec, the central figure at its founding convention was La Presse and more particularly this newspaper's labor editor, J.A. Rodier. La Presse March 18, 22, 1899. Not wishing to oppose Lomer Gouin (M.L.A. for St. Jacques) the Labor candidate for St. Jacques withdrew, the candidate in St. Louis finished a dismal third, and in Hochelaga Alphonse Verville drew a very respectable 4,109 votes against the Liberal victor's 5,449. La Presse, November 26, 1904.

74. La Presse, November 14, 1904.

75. La Presse, November 19, 1904.

The main point of Langlois' campaign was that the city needed to rid itself of a M.L.A. who abandoned his constituency in favor of the M.L.H.P.⁷⁷ Montreal was already under-represented in the Legislative Assembly: of seventy-four seats it had a mere six. Under these conditions Rainville's defection to the M.L.H.P. was all the more serious. Senator Dandurand summed up the essential objection to Rainville:

"La ville de Montréal que fournit les deux tiers du budget provinciale ne doit pas être représenté au Parlement par un "trust", un trust qui pour ne citer qu'un fait, s'est emparé de tous les pouvoirs d'eaux aux environs de Montréal, non pour les utiliser, mais simplement pour s'en accaper, simplement pour empêcher les industriels concurrents de prendre leur place au soleil."⁷⁸

The intensity of the attacks on the Speaker of the Assembly and the fact that he was blamed for the faults of the Parent regime, suggest that in large part Rainville was an allegorical victim. Olivar Asselin, editor of *Le Nationaliste*, asked:

"Ignore-t-il que trois des ministres provinciaux ont été complices de M. Rainville dans l'affaire de la "Montreal Light, Heat and Power Co." et que un de ces ministres était Parent."⁷⁹

Although the two Liberal dailies of Montreal, *Le Canada* and the *Herald*, were not prepared to admit it, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the M.L.H.P. issue

77. *Le Canada*, November 14, 1904.

78. *Le Canada*, November 9, 1904.

79. *Le Nationaliste*, November 13, 1904.

weakened Parent's authority. One could not be a loyal Parentiste while being resolutely anti-Rainville because they were equally responsible for the government's legislation.

The Quebec Legislature had given Montreal the M.L.H.P. The trust issue was re-introduced into the Legislature and ultimately it became a source of division within the ranks of the Liberal Party. Langlois' victory by a slight 226 majority enshrined the position of the anti-M.L.H.P. forces within the Assembly and supplied the city with a municipal reform M.L.A.

The Administration of Hormisdas Laporte 1905

Laporte presided over an administration whose primary objective was the securing of a favorable gas contract. January 15th 1905 Laporte reiterated the city's request to borrow \$2,000,000 to expropriate the gas works.⁸⁰ The purpose of this request was to frighten the Montreal Gas Company into a more satisfactory contract. Both Sherbrooke and Westmount were negotiating the purchase of their local power plants so that it was not inconceivable that Montreal might follow suit.⁸¹ However, since the value of the Gas Co. as a going concern was estimated

80. Laporte also requested other powers the most important of which was the power to build underground conduits. Municipally owned conduits were necessary for aesthetic and competitive purposes. The burial of unsightly electrical and telephone wires would improve the city's appearance. Municipally owned conduits would ensure competition because the conduits would be open to any company at moderate rental prices. If conduits were privately owned, competition in electrical services would become even less probable because a new company would have to pay exorbitant rents or assume the expenses of constructing its own conduits.

81. For Sherbrooke expropriation, see Le Canada, October 7, 1904; for Westmount expropriation, see Le Canada, December 6, 1904.

at \$8,000,000 it was clear that a \$2,000,000 loan would be inadequate to undertake expropriation proceedings.⁸² The cost of municipalization would cripple the city's financial position. Montreal's finances were already shaky:

"with only a small percentage of its revenue - compared with other cities on the continent - derived from real estate taxation and with also a much smaller total revenue in comparison."⁸³

Hence one must conclude that Laporte was well aware that the city could not municipalize the Gas Co. The Mayor confessed:

"I stated then (referring to 1904), that the city has the right, on giving six months notice to the company, to purchase all the property, plant and equipment used by it in its operations. The council should take advantage of these conditions to obtain in the interests of the city and the citizens, a considerable reduction in the cost of light, and with this object in view, they should immediately communicate with the company to ascertain on what conditions it is prepared to furnish light."⁸⁴

Laporte attempted to negotiate lower gas rates. The city's residents paid gas at the rate of \$1.20 per 1000 cu.ft. while the more fortunate Torontonians paid 80 cents. In a series of investigative reports, Le Canada demonstrated that Montreal's prices were among the highest on the continent.⁸⁵ There was a report carried

82. Le Canada, March 10, 1904. "As a going concern" meant the total purchase of the company. This included not only the physical assets, but also the franchise capitalized on the basis of anticipated profits.

83. Castell Hopkins, The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs. The Annual Review Publishing Co. Ltd: Toronto, 1916. 586.

84. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 16, 1905.

85. Le Canada, series of investigative reports January and February 1905.

in the Herald of a study commissioned by the City Council concluding that
 65 cents was the maximum price Montrealers should pay.⁸⁶ The Mayor thought
 that 80 cents was an acceptable price, however the Montreal Gas Company would
 have never agreed to this unless it was given the long-term stability of a
 perpetual contract.⁸⁷ As a businessman, Laporte realized that the power of
 designating the length of the contract was the only control factor Montreal held
 over the utilities. When the City Council offered a sliding scale contract⁸⁸
 to the Gas Co., Rodolphe Forget rejected it not because of an overly-rapid decline
 of prices, but because it was a mere extension of fifteen years.⁸⁹

The Council had followed Laporte's lead on the municipalization resolutions,
 but to hold to the Mayor's unyielding stance meant that the consumers would be
 bound to an extra five years at \$1.20 gas.⁹⁰ After the May 1st deadline passed,
 the Council decided to compromise along the lines of a sub-committee's recommendation
 that \$1.00 gas be accepted. Accordingly the Council passed a resolution that the
 city sign a twenty year contract for \$1.00 gas. To show its continuing loyalty
 to Laporte, the Council added that a provision of this contract be that the city

86. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 9, 1905.

87. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 2, 1905

88. A sliding scale was an agreement linking the company's dividend rate to the level of its prices. A standard was set: e.g. \$1.00 gas and a 5% dividend. Every time the dividend rate increased 1%, there would be a 5 cent reduction in the price of gas.

89. Le Canada, October 11, 1895.

90. It will be recalled that the Gas Company received an 1895-1905 monopoly gas contract. The contract was to be extended by five years if by May 1st 1905 the city had not exercised an option to expropriate the company.

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be free to municipalize the company at any point within the twenty years.

Adamant that nothing less than 80 cents ought to be accepted, Laporte vetoed the resolution. The Council over-rode the Mayor's veto and formally presented

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the contract to the Gas Company.

The Montreal Gas Co. refused the contract because the expropriation provision was too risky. Living under the constant threat of municipalization negated the

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stability of a twenty year contract.

Being at a dead end, the Mayor recommended that an outside expert be appointed to determine a fair price. The appointment of an expert would hopefully end the rash of contradictory findings as to what was a fair price. The City Council was at first reluctant to accept any expert, but the following outburst by Herbert Holt convinced it to adopt the Mayor's recommendation.

"They talk about appointing an expert ... to inform them as to cost. No expert they can appoint knows the conditions as we know them. We have been here fifty years. It is immaterial to us what the experts say. If the city were to decide to establish a plant of its own and embark on a municipalization policy, we would go on just the same. We are here under a perpetual contract and cannot be put out."⁹⁴

Edward O. Bemis, professor of political science and the manager of the Cleveland water department, was recommended to Montreal by the city of Boston.

91. Le Canada, May 9, 1905

92. Le Canada, May 16, 1905

93. Le Canada, June 13, 1905

94. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 12, 1905

The latter credited him with a major influence in their acquiring gas at 90 cents. Laporte hoped both the public and the company would follow Bemis' "professional advice". However citing the professor's belief that municipalization was the only means of assuring a fair price, Holt labelled him a hostile witness, and consequently not only refused him permission to inspect the company's records, but also denied him access to the physical plant.⁹⁵

Bemis concluded that the Montreal Gas Co. management was incompetent. Its physical plant was antiquated and undersized, a consequence of an extremely low priority on capital improvement. It was clear that Montreal had an immediate right to 87 cent gas with a gradual reduction to 80 cents. Bemis admitted that 80 cents was still a high price, but under the decrepit conditions of the Gas Company's equipment, it was the best that could be expected. The Gas Company was a model of inefficiency whose shortsighted policies were clearly harmful to Montreal's growth and prosperity. Bemis observed:

"The fact that Toronto, which is much smaller than Montreal uses 200,000,000 feet more gas must be attributed to the fact that the price there is only 80 cents ..."⁹⁶

An additional observation that Bemis could have made, was that ostensibly gas and electricity were mutually competitive, but that competition was ruled out when a holding company controlled the electricity and gas services.

95. Le Canada, December 20, 1905

96. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 20, 1905

The Chambre de Commerce

Both the Chambre de Commerce and the Board of Trade had attentively followed the gas controversy. In 1904, the Chambre de Commerce had urged the city to municipalize the gas works.⁹⁷ The Board of Trade did not go as far, but it did condemn the proposed 1905 contract as totally unsatisfactory.⁹⁸ The gas issue was the background for an accelerated participation of the commercial organizations in municipal reform.

Since the Bemis Report was released on December 19th 1905, the Laporte administration did not have an opportunity to follow its recommendation of 87 cent gas. Thus the Chambre de Commerce decided to intervene in the 1906 election to ensure that the following administration would not sign an unfair contract.

January 8th 1906, H.A. Breault, the president of the Chambre de Commerce, summoned a meeting of "civic patriots". The new organization named itself the Comité des Citoyens. In the words of one participant, its mission was to lead the citizens against the M.L.H.P. There were attempts to orientate the meeting towards other problems - alcoholism, a Board of Control, and restrictions on the franchise concessions of the suburbs - but these topics were shunted aside. The gas contract was the crucial issue. The following motions were adopted:

97. Le Canada, March 8, 1904.

98. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 12, 1905.

"Qu'un comité général soit nommé pour arrêter un programme à être soumis aux candidats municipaux et à exiger des ces candidats les engagements nécessaires à la sauvegarde des intérêts de la ville de Montreal ..."⁹⁹

The general policy committee of the Comité des Citoyens unanimously adopted the following five points. The aldermanic candidates were to pledge their support to any or all the items.

1. Any franchise extending beyond five years must be ratified by 2/3 of the City Council, and in order to prevent the "jamming" of a contract, the three readings of the by-law must take at least fifteen days.

2. The Council must begin immediately to conclude a contract with the Gas Co. at a price not to exceed 87 cents nor to extend beyond ten years. The city must reserve the right to terminate the contract every five years by expropriating the company.

3. If no agreement can be reached, then the Council must petition the Legislature for permission to borrow sufficient funds to municipalize the company.

4. The Council must request permission to undertake a loan to construct underground conduits, and the electricity companies must be compelled to pay rental fees in sufficient amount to cover the sinking fund and interest on the loan.

5. If there is an indication that the M.S.R. and the M.L.H.P. ¹⁰⁰ will amalgamate, the Legislature must be petitioned to prevent this.

99. The following individuals were to be members of the general committee: Senator Raoul Dandurand, Senator F.L. Beique, Louis Joseph Tarte, owner and editor of La Patrie, Charles Chaput, a grocery wholesaler, Eugène Lafontaine, a judge, J.O. Beauchemin, Alphonse Racine, H.A. Breault, Henry Miles, president of the Montreal Business Men's League, L.P. Bedard, Godfroy Langlois, Olivar Asselin, Euclide Mathieu, Gustave Lamothe, a lawyer and Conservative organizer, Jérôme Decarie, former M.L.A. for Hochelaga, Camille Piché, P. Bonhomme, Charles Duquette, Dr. Lachapelle, Louis Cressé, a lawyer, Arthur Boyer a minister without portfolio in the Honoré Mercier cabinet, Charles Catelli, one of the founders of the Chambre de Commerce and president of a macaroni firm, Louis-Elie Geoffrion, and A. Leclair. Le Canada, January 9, 1906.

100. Le Canada, January 11, 1906.

Despite the Comité des Citoyen's efforts, the election was void of any issues. The mayoralty campaign boiled down to a battle between the Irish-Catholic William Doran and the Protestant Harold Ekers, president of Canadian Breweries. La Patrie, whose proprietor and editor, Louis Joseph Tarte, was a member of the Comité des Citoyens, considered both mayoralty candidates of equal value - and concluded the only outcome of this election was the emergence of a potentially strong reform organization.¹⁰¹

It is difficult to determine the amount of influence exerted by the Comité des Citoyens. In 1908, it was revealed that sixteen aldermen had pledged their allegiance to the five provisions, but there was no mention of this made in 1906. There was no loss or victory ascribed to the influence of the Comité des Citoyens nor did it have an influence on Ekers' victory. The significance of the Comité des Citoyens was that the Chambre de Commerce had politicized itself to a point where it could take up a position of leadership in the reform movement.

The Referendum

In October 1906, the Chambre de Commerce formed a committee to study the viability of municipalizing the M.L.H.P.¹⁰² The parameters of this investigation were identical to those of the Bemis Report. The study was to show whether the

101. La Patrie, February 2, 1906.

102. In the interval, the Legislative Assembly had granted and the Legislative Council had refused Montreal permission to tax utilities on the basis of receipts. The city had also been refused the power to build conduits and the power to appropriate the gas company. Le Canada, March 9, 1906.

M.L.H.P. was a hinderance or an asset to Montreal's growth.¹⁰³

In his study of the relationship of Quebec's electrical resources to the growth of primary and secondary industry, John Dale is hesitant in deciding whether the M.L.H.P. was a positive or negative force in the city's industrialization. He does conclude that the M.L.H.P. did not actively promote the location of industries in the city and that it relied excessively on its inelastic consumer market.¹⁰⁴

With the exception of the Chambly Rapids, the M.L.H.P. did not develop any hydro-electric resources because it was content to rely on its monopoly. Due to the financial strength of the M.L.H.P., Montreal did not fully profit from one of its comparative advantages: an abundance of water power. In a motion to the M.L.H.P., Olivar Asselin condemned the M.L.H.P. Le Canada reported that:

103. Le Canada, October 11, 1906. The report was never published.

104. John Dales compared the M.L.H.P. to the Shawinigan Water and Power Company. "Whereas Shawinigan was founded as a productive enterprise the Montreal company was promoted by Mr. (later Sir) Herbert Holt as a consolidation of the existing gas and electric utilities in the city ... Shawinigan was technologically precocious and built up its own power plant. The Montreal company was technologically undistinguished and bought most of its power stations. The Shawinigan has been mainly a wholesaler of power; the Montreal company has been primarily concerned with the retail markets for domestic and commercial lighting and industrial power. Shawinigan has to develop much of its market for power; the Montreal company in order to prosper had only to defend its monopoly position in Montreal. The Shawinigan company was quite profitable, the Montreal company enormously so". Dales, op. cit. 101

"M. Asselin fait observer que l'on paye aujourd'hui à Montréal, \$85 l'énergie électrique qui se vend \$11 à Niagra. Il cite le cas d'une industrie que les exigences de la M.L.H.P. forcent à émigrer à Niagra."¹⁰⁵

In December 1906, Sir Wilfrid Laurier offered to lease Montreal the power rights to the Beauharnois Canal. The city was given the opportunity to break the M.L.H.P. monopoly. However, the City Council refused the offer, claiming that the upkeep on the Canal necessary to maintain a steady water level for navigation purposes would be a permanent drain on the city's budget. Laurier promised that, regardless of the City Council, the federal government would see to it that a company leasing the canal would compete with the M.L.H.P. A leasing company was to agree to the following conditions: the leasing company would have to sell the electricity at a "fair price"; the leasing company would be forbidden to amalgamate with the M.L.H.P., and Montreal would have a permanent expropriation option, the price to be determined by a government arbitrator.¹⁰⁶

Edmond Arthur Robert, the president of the Canadian Light and Power Company, concluded a leasing arrangement of the Canal.¹⁰⁷ He announced that the Canadian Light and Power would be prepared to feed power to the city by 1910. In addition, he made the following pledge to Laurier:

105. Le Canada, November 8, 1906.

106. Le Canada, December 18, 1906.

107. As early as October 1903, Robert had applied for the power rights to the canal. Laurier Papers, Public Archives of Canada, 77669.

"Notre but est de soustraire les habitants de Montreal au monopole de la Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company et leur assurer la distribution du pouvoir électrique, pour fins d'éclairage et pour fins industrielles, dans les conditions aussi favorables qu'à Toronto."¹⁰⁸

Immediately after refusing Laurier's offer, Alderman Louis Payette proposed a new contract with the M.L.H.P. There were in fact two contracts, both lasting until 1930: the Montreal Gas Company's contract was extended on its present terms and the Royal Electric Company was granted an exclusive franchise, a privilege which it had never possessed.

The Payette proposal, as the contracts became known, provoked a new militance in the commercial organizations. Le Canada summarized the reaction of the Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce:

"Le résultat c'est que toute les industries de Montréal qui se servent de l'électricité vont être ruinées par la concurrence de Toronto et qu'elles n'auront que deux alternatives: fermer boutique ou déménager à Toronto."¹⁰⁹

The French and English Committees of Citizens¹¹⁰ met to discuss the contracts: their combined position was that the contracts froze the rates at artificially high levels and the lower rates available in other cities gave them a competitive edge over Montreal.¹¹¹ In a separate statement, the English Committee of Citizens

108. Ibid. 116763

109. Le Canada, December 19, 1906.

110. At some point in 1906, the Board of Trade had organized an English Committee of Citizens. The latter's president was James Morgan, heir to a Department Store family fortune and president of the Colonial Real Estate Company.

111. Le Canada, December 27, 1906.

advocated municipalization of the gas works and the construction of publicly
owned conduits.¹¹²

The City Council ignored these reactions, ratified the contracts and
submitted them to the M.L.H.P.¹¹³ When to nobody's surprise the M.L.H.P.
announced its acceptance of the contracts, Le Canada and the Herald editorialized
that the Legislature ought to block the contracts. Senator Béique suggested that
a Royal Commission investigate the City Council's refusal of the Beauharnois
power rights, and then its immediate offer of a monopoly contract, obviously
intended to thwart E.A. Robert's plan to service the city.¹¹⁴ Mayor Ekers'
answer was that Quebec City ought to allow Montreal to run its own affairs.¹¹⁵

February 15th a delegation of aldermen and M.L.A.'s probed Lomer Gouin's
opinion on the contracts.¹¹⁶ They requested that a referendum be required for
any utility contracts beyond ten years. This delegation was an advance envoy
from a common front of the Committee of Citizens, the Chambre de Commerce, the
Board of Trade, and the Association of Retail Merchants.¹¹⁷ February 26th, Godfroy

112. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 7, 1907.

113. Le Canada, February 5, 1907.

114. Le Canada, February 6, 1907.

115. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 26, 1907.

116. The delegation was composed of M.L.A.'s Michael Walsh (Liberal St. Ann's),
Louis-Joseph Gauthier (Liberal L'Assomption) and Godfroy Langlois; and Aldermen
Joseph Ward, Joseph-Pierre Gadbois, Laurent Audet Lapointe, John Bumbray, Joseph
Levy, Victor Levesque, and Louis-Arsène Lavallée.

117. Le Canada, February 8, 1907.

Langlois led the principal delegation to the Premier's office,¹¹⁸ The delegation stressed that it spoke for 20,000 citizens and that its representivity was more valid than that of the aldermen supporting the Payette proposal. Mr. McDougall of the Canadian Manufacturers Association summed up the essential reason for a protest of this magnitude: the proposed contracts would be tragic for Montreal industry.¹¹⁹

The Prime Minister's answer was to sponsor a bill through the Legislature which required a referendum for all utility contracts over ten years. All enfranchised electors would be permitted to vote. Furthermore he piloted an amendment to the City Charter allowing a 2% tax on the receipts of electricity companies. In addition, property owners were to determine by means of a referendum whether the city could borrow sufficient funds to build conduits or municipalize the gas works.¹²⁰

Le Canada praised the referendum:

"L'usage de l'appel à l'opinion publique, comme moyen de contrôle ... se répond avec une rapidité que nous pouvons constater avec plaisir. C'est par la publicité que M. Roosevelt prétend indiquer les empiètements des trusts sur l'individu et sur ceux de la société ... Le Référendum procède du même principe et servira à corriger des abus d'autorité en les différant à la sanction publique."¹²¹

118. The delegation was composed of two hundred representatives of the Chambre de Commerce, the Board of Trade, The Canadian Manufacturers Association and the Committee of Citizens, along with their petition of 5,300 signatures; plus nineteen "honest" aldermen.

119. Le Canada, February 27, 1907.

120. Le Canada, March 15, 1907.

121. Le Canada, March 20, 1907.

Not swayed by partisan zeal, Olivar Asselin's analysis was more incisive: he criticized the referendum as ineffective because it could be easily circumvented by a series of extortionate ten year contracts. The only effective measure, he continued, would be the restoring of the provision that a utility contract must be approved by 2/3 of the Council.¹²²

The referendum applied retroactively to the Payette contracts, and such was the public opinion on these contracts that they were never submitted to a vote. Despite Asselin's valid misgivings, the referendum did accomplish its immediate objective. Yet, this did not amount to a solution of the city's hassles with its utilities. A contract heavily weighted in favor of the M.L.H.P. was but the most visible symptom of the city's incapacity to assert its sovereignty over its utilities. Ultimately a solution depended on a greater government control of all utilities.

The anti-trust movement spanned many years. At first it was based on a belief that the Forget interests must be prevented from further plundering the city. After the Bemis Report, the anti-trust leadership was taken up by the Chambre de Commerce. On the proposition that the M.L.H.P. was slowing down Montreal's growth, the Chambre de Commerce and subsequently the Board of Trade united Montreal's business community against the company. The M.L.H.P. had become the new unifier of the municipal reform movement.

122. Le Nationaliste, January 14, 1907.

CHAPTER III

Efficiency vs. Ward Politics

The Climax of the Reform Movement 1909-1914

In 1909 the Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce took control of the municipal reform movement. They oversaw the legislation of a Board of Control. In 1910 an entirely new civic administration was elected with a public mandate to execute a policy which embraced the basic goals of municipal reformers since the late 1880's.

The Years before the Crisis 1907-1909

January 9th 1908, the English section of the Committee of Citizens convened to discuss its strategy in the upcoming municipal election.¹ In order to stem the return of ward politics to City Hall, the Committee of Citizens decided to nominate its own candidates to the City Council. In a renewal of the English insularity which had been the bane of earlier reform movements, all eight candidates were in English wards.²

One Committee member declined a nomination because he felt that a Board of

1. Those present at the Committee of Citizens' meeting were: Senator Dandurand, Jean D. Rolland, of Rolland Paper Company, Mayor Galbraith of Westmount, Richard Wilson-Smith, mayor 1896-1897, Edgar Judge, previously president of the Good Government Association, Geoffrey Penny, S.H. Ewing, Jasper Briesley, W.T. Leitch, Markland Molson of the Molson family, A.D. Gall, Fred Hamilton, Fitz James Browne, John Hyde and George E. Drummond, director of the Canada Cement Company, the Canada Car Company, and Molson's Bank. Morgan, op.cit. second edition. 365. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1908.

2. The Committee's nominees were: West: F.C. Smith (withdrew) and Stewart Carter (acclamation). St. Lawrence: Ald. Joseph Clearihue (victorious) and Ald. James Robinson (acclamation). St. George: Thomas Gilday (withdrew) and Ald. I.H. Stearns (acclamation). St. Andrew: Ald. George Sadler (victorious) and Ald. Joseph Ward (acclamation).

Control was the only solution to Montreal's administrative problems. He told the Committee that it should lead the business community in a movement for a Board of Control. This suggestion won the Committee's unanimous support. However noting the disappointing turnout at the meeting, another member warned his colleagues that the legislation of a Board of Control would require a sustained and well-organized campaign.³

The Committee of Citizens did not field any organization for its candidates. Its discussion of a Board of Control did not affect the debate between the two mayoralty candidates, Philippe-Honoré Roy, Member of the Legislative Assembly for St. Jean, and Louis Payette, a construction entrepreneur and author of the infamous 1907 contract offers to the M.L.H.P. The trust issue was neutralized because both candidates accused each other of being pro-M.L.H.P.⁴ In the end Asselin aptly described the difference between the two candidates as "la pelle et fourgon ... le public a beau chercher, il ne voit pas le principe en jeu, ni la supériorité de ni l'un ou l'autre candidat".⁵ Louis Payette's triumph by the margin of 14,710 to 11,914 was tersely analyzed by Le Canada: "On a dit, et ça semble vraisemblable, qu'il n'y a pas d'opinion publique à Montréal."⁶

Public interest in this election was very slight. Twenty-five out of forty

3. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1908.

4. Roy had been chairman of the committee on the bill to incorporate the M.L.H.P. Quebec, Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Quebec, 1901. 157. see La Presse, January 25, 1908.

5. Le Nationaliste, February 2, 1908

6. Le Canada, February 3, 1908.

aldermen were elected by acclamation. The most ominous note was the prospect of a new machine under the combined direction of Aldermen Wilfrid Proulx, Napoleon Giroux, Emery Larivière, and Mayor Louis Payette.⁷ A machine was an ever present possibility in Montreal because it was an amplification of the ingrained practice of ward politics. The one factor preventing the organization of a machine was that a strong leader had not yet appeared. The four above politicians were at best interim directors waiting for a new Préfontaine.

A Definition of the Board of Control

The Board of Control was composed of four controllers each of whom were elected at large by the entire city for a period of four years. The Board of Control became the most publicized municipal reform because reformist businessmen saw in it the only method of ensuring an efficient civic administration.

A landmark application of the Board of Control was in Galveston, Texas. After a tidal wave had demolished the town, Galveston needed a fast-moving and qualified administration. The town felt that the ward system prevented cooperation between the various wards. Consequently Galveston dropped its City Council in favor of a Board of Control.⁸

Woodrow Wilson wrote that the Board of Control corrected the popular confusion between elections and democracy. The supremacy of the people was not assured by diminutive electoral units, wards, nor by an excessive number of elected positions. These only resulted in a scattering of public authority. Ward

7. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 30, 1908.

8. James Weinstein, The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State 1900-1918. Beacon Press: Boston, 1969. 92-116.

politics were so fragmented he continued, that a machine, an organization that was the essence of tyranny because it was not responsible to the electorate, was the inevitable consequence. If there was to be popular control of municipal politics, the system would have to be simplified to present a clear choice to the voters. This was why a campaign for a Board of Control was often accompanied by a movement for the reduction in the size of or the total abolition of the City Council. Such a change would make voting "easier".⁹

If the ward system automatically bred low calibre representatives, conversely the Board of Control would attract qualified politicians. In his study of the Board of Control movement, Samuel Hays has written that the ward system inevitably produced lower middle-class politicians speaking for the local interests of their wards.¹⁰ In like fashion, the Controllers, elected at large, would represent the interests of the whole city and consequently be products of the dominant business values of society.

Commercial organizations were committed to municipal reform because they wished to re-fashion the municipal administration in the image of their own Companies. The Board of Control would execute and plan and ideally the City Council would handle mundane administrative tasks. One commentator elaborated:

9. "Woodrow Wilson on Commission Government, 1911" in The American City. A Documentary History. Charles Glaab ed. The Dorsey Press, Inc: Homewood, Illinois 1963. 413-417.

10. Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era", in American Urban History. Alexander B. Callow ed. Oxford University Press: Toronto, 1969, 421-439.

"The basic principle that lies at the root of municipal reform is the divorce of administration from legislation. It is the fundamental principle that governs the conduct of every great business organization ... One set of men to plan, to survey, to exercise vision for the future; another set of men to make a life-work of administration."¹¹

The allusions between the city and the corporation were even more direct.

Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University, stated: "Municipal politics is pure business and nothing else - absolutely nothing else."¹² John Patterson of the National Cash Register Company noted that "a municipality is largely a business corporation".¹³ The Insurance and Financial Chronicle, whose proprietor and editor was Richard Wilson-Smith, observed that the Controller had all the powers of a corporation manager.¹⁴

If the Controllers were granted the powers of a corporation manager, logically they would act as corporation managers. By eliminating wastefulness and corruption, the Controllers could overhaul the city's budget. Mayor Payette admitted: "If the city were properly administered like, say, a private business, there would be a saving of at least twenty per cent".¹⁵ The argument was that the Controllers would invest these savings in public works and thereby assist Montreal's development. E.S. Surtcliffe of the Montreal Publicity Association explained:

12. Raymond E. Callahan, Education and the Cult of Efficiency. Phoenix Books. The University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 1964. 6.

13. American City volume 2. no 2.

14. The Insurance and Financial Chronicle, September 24, 1909.

15. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 15, 1909.

"... for the man who looks over a city with the idea of making it his home wants his children to have good schooling, play-grounds, parks, and shaded streets - he wants good and cheap houses, good water, pure milk, safe sewage and good government. The city that owns itself and takes care of itself in the way of good appearance and good government for itself will have a great asset in selling its manufacturing advantages."¹⁶

Business Assails the City Council: 1909

The city's relations with the M.L.H.P. provided the background for the Board of Trade's offensive on the City Council. In 1908, the City Council had ended the M.L.H.P.'s monopoly by granting the Canadian Light and Power Company a ten year contract slated to begin in 1910.¹⁷ The City Council could look forward to a general decline in electricity rates. However there still remained one year in which the M.L.H.P. would attempt to exploit its monopoly position.

Throughout 1908, the City Council and the M.L.H.P. were unable to agree on the terms of an extension of the city street lighting contract. Such was the degree of the impasse that the contract was allowed to legally expire December 31st 1908. McLea Walbank, the vice-president and general manager of the M.L.H.P. announced that the company would provide free electricity to the city until January 15th, whereupon, if the Council did not offer satisfactory terms, the lights would be turned off.¹⁸ Mayor Payette's first response was to ask the company to continue its lighting services without a contract and simply bill the

16. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 1, 1911

17. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 7, 1908

18. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 8, 1909.

city on a day-to-day basis. Taking a more aggressive stance, the Mayor then suggested that the city construct a municipal lighting plant. The City Council defeated this suggestion and at the same time ratified the Mayor's earlier proposal. Two days later the company accepted this offer.

In addition to the contract difficulties with the M.L.H.P., the City Council was shaken by a scandal in the Police Committee. A special committee of the City Council determined that Police Chairman Wilfrid Proulx had accepted kickbacks in the construction of a police station and that in denying this under oath, he had perjured himself. In response, the Board of Trade, the Chambre de Commerce, and the Retail Merchants Association issued a statement condemning the Council.¹⁹ At the same time, the Board of Trade, spurred by its new activist president Farquhar Robertson, offered to arbitrate the city's contract squabble with the M.L.H.P. In both these cases, the Board of Trade had concluded that the City Council was too clumsy and too corrupt - in other words, too non-business-like - to properly administrate the city.

In order to mobilize popular opinion against the City Council, earlier the Board of Trade had circulated the following petition, proposing that henceforth wards be represented by a single alderman:

"1. That the petitioners consider that the City of Montreal is not conducted as economically and efficiently as it should be.

19. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 15, 1909.

2. That the City Council is composed of forty-three members including the Mayor, two aldermen being elected to represent each of the twenty-one wards, and for this reason the City Council as at present constituted is too unweildy a body to properly and expeditiously discharge the work of governing the city.

3. That in the opinion of your petitioners the administration of the city would be greatly improved and the interests of the citizens better served, were each ward represented by but one alderman."²⁰

Anxious to place the responsibility for the lighting contract deadlock squarely on the shoulders of the aldermen, Walbank seconded the Board of Trade's efficiency campaign:

"I shall be only too glad to second the Board of Trade in every way I can in their efforts to secure a reduction of the number of aldermen and any further efforts they may make towards the centralization of the executive power. For any company or person that wants to do business with the city on a fair and honest basis, I believe that such a centralized authority would be far better than the present council."²¹

Another petition sponsored initially by the Herald and supported by Le Canada, La Patrie, The Star, The Witness and the Board of Trade, the Chambre de Commerce and the Retail Merchants Association went one step further and proposed a Board of Control:

20. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 7, 1909.

21. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 2, 1909.

"Whereas your petitioners ... consider that the administration of the municipal affairs ... is not carried on keeping with the best interests of the City; and whereas they are convinced ... that the fault lies largely in the organization of the City Council into numerous committees all of which exercise executive functions; therefore your petitioners humbly pray that administration of Montreal's affairs may be placed in the hands of a small executive body, chosen independently of the City Council, but responsible for the introduction of proposed legislation into the Council and for the carrying of it into effect when passed."²²

23

The Municipal Reform Association drew up yet another petition, this one expressly intended to solicit the support of Montreal's business community. Along with the other petitions, this was to be delivered to Lomer Gouin:

"... we ask that ... you order that the administration of affairs of the city of Montreal shall be vested in a Board of Committee (sic) of practical scientific men, of not less than three nor more than five, to be appointed or elected as may be hereafter determined, upon a basis as satisfactory as possible to all interests concerned."²⁴

A striking development was that the M.L.H.P., which previously had been ostracized by the Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce as an industrial renegade and as the prime cause of civic corruption, was now a resolute supporter

22. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 15, 1909.

23. This was not the Municipal Reform Association of 1886, but simply the re-using of an obvious name.

24. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 18, 1909.

of municipal reform. Senator L.J. Forget indicated his backing for the Herald's petition in a letter to this newspaper.²⁵ Herbert Holt released one of his rare public declarations endorsing a Board of Control:

"I would be very glad to see a Board of Control instituted in this city ... I think that if we had the number of aldermen cut down by half, elected by the city as a whole, and paid good salaries for their services, we should be within reach of sound business-like civic government. The existing conditions cannot last much longer. They are inimical, to the best interests of the city, as a whole. A Board of Control would alter all that."²⁶

This is not to convey the impression that the M.L.H.P. led the battle for the Board of Control, but simply that the company recognized the innate conservatism of municipal reform. There was a certain public relations value in being considered a participant in the reform movement.

A reform alderman carried the Board of Trade's arguments into the City Council. He presented a resolution that Montreal petition the provincial government to insert a Board of Control into its Charter. This was defeated in the City Council Committee on Legislation, the committee which oversaw proposed amendments to the City Charter. The Committee on Legislation also defeated a resolution for a Royal Commission into Montreal's affairs. This last resolution was presented not by a reform alderman, but by Mayor Payette.²⁷

25. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 22, 1909.

26. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 25, 1909

27. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 18, 1909.

After this expected setback, the Board of Trade, the Chambre de Commerce, the Montreal Businessmen's League, and the Real Estate Owners Association fielded a united reform organization under the name of the Committee of Citizens.²⁸ Headed by the veteran reformers Hormisdas Laporte, Farquhar Robertson, and Stanislas Vallières,²⁹ the Committee of Citizens presented a brief to the Committee on Legislation. Laporte asked the Committee on Legislation to see that a Board of Control and a reduction in the number of aldermen to a single representative per ward be included in Montreal's own bill of amendments to the City Charter. He also requested that the City Council petition the Prime Minister for a Royal Commission of enquiry into Montreal's affairs. He warned that unless the Committee on Legislation followed these recommendations, the Committee of Citizens would draw up its own bill and present it to the Legislature. Concluding his speech Laporte emphasized:

"We must follow the example set by the great cities of other provinces, who have made the necessary changes in their civic administration as their gradual development necessitated these changes."³⁰

The City Council was divided on the issue of reform. Louis Audet Lapointe, the Finance chairman, was pitted against Napoleon Giroux, the Roads chairman.

28. The Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce had each founded their own Committee of Citizens in 1906-1907. It is irrelevant whether the 1909 Committee of Citizens was a continuation or a merging and refounding of the previous Committees. All three Committees proceeded from the commercial organizations' ambition to lead the municipal reform movement.

29. In the 1902 City Council, Hormisdas Laporte was chairman of the Finance Committee, Stanislas Vallières was chairman of the Roads Committee, and Farquhar Robertson was chairman of the Fire Committee.

30. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 3, 1909.

The former sought a compromise with the Committee of Citizens by presenting a resolution for a Board of Public Works, an executive board selected from and by the aldermen. Lapointe argued that the city's administration was already centralized under the committee chairmen. The problem was that the committee chairmen did not cooperate with each other. A Board of Public Works would foster cooperation between the committee chairmen and at the same time not emasculate the City Council.³¹

Lapointe also recommended that the city petition the Prime Minister for a Royal Commission of inquiry into its affairs. There was an underlying reason for Lapointe's recommendation. If it was the city who requested and received the Royal Commission, it would be able to define the limits of the inquiry.

After the City Council defeated Lapointe's strategy, the Committee of Citizens adopted a more aggressive posture. Laporte reiterated the Committee of Citizens' determination to appeal over the Montreal Council's head. The Council then reversed its earlier stance and unanimously passed a resolution requesting a Royal Commission. The Council announced that a 5,000 signature petition organized by the Committee of Citizens and a strong resolution from the Montreal Trades and Labor Council would "accompany" the City Council's petition to the government.³² At a later date, the City Council refused to approve a reduction in the

31. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 8, 1909.

32. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 9, 1909. The City Council did not ask the Committee of Citizen's permission for the use of the petition.

number of aldermen.³³ At an even later date, the City Council adopted Lapointe's compromise plan for a Board of Public Works.³⁴

The Committee of Citizens ignored the Council's approval of a Royal Commission. It decided to submit a private request to the government to ensure that the Royal Commission be set up along its own terms. The Committee of Citizens dispatched "a representative body of the commercial-financial-industrial interests of Montreal" to the Provincial Court of Appeals.³⁵ After discussion with the Committee, Lomer Gouin, in his capacity as Procuror-General, appointed the 'Commission Royale pour faire enquête générale et complète sur l'administration des affaires de la Cité de Montréal par son conseil de ville."³⁶

In consultation with the Committee of Citizens, Godfroy Langlois, Le Canada's managing editor and M.L.A. for Montreal St. Louis, tabled a private member's bill in the Legislative Assembly. His bill amended Montreal's Charter to include a Board of Control and a redirection of aldermen to a single representative per ward. The Langlois bill was sent to the Private Bills Committee of the Legislative Assembly where a series of representatives from the Committee of

33. Le Canada, February 26, 1909. In opposing a reduction of aldermen, one alderman even argued that the recent reform offensive was a M.L.H.P. conspiracy.

34. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 2, 1909.

35. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 3, 1909. The "representative body" was composed of L.J. Tarte, J.M. Wilson, George E. Drummond, E.B. Greenshields, an entrepreneur, S.J. Phillips, J.M. Duff, and E.W. Villeneuve.

36. Henceforth abbreviated to the Cannon Commission after the presiding judge Lawrence Cannon.

Citizens testified for it.³⁷ While the Langlois bill was being deliberated a delegation from the City Council was arguing for its own bill, a Board of Public Works. This resulted in a series of opposing briefs.

Two labor leaders accompanied the City Council's delegation. Charlemagne Rodier, the Trades and Labor Council's envoy to the Legislature, spoke against a Board of Control. He contended that the maladministration of Montreal was due to the property qualifications required of municipal candidates.³⁸ The M.L.H.P. was more responsible for civic corruption than any alderman. He concluded that the M.L.H.P.'s control of the Council would be strengthened by a reduction of aldermen. Another labor leader, Gustave Francq, was equally critical:

"They (the workers) had faith in the present aldermen whom the workingmen knew, and who gave the workingmen justice. The Board of Control was not wanted by the workingman, who feared he would not get so well treated at the City Hall then. The Board of Control would create a monopoly administration."³⁹

In view of the conflicting testimonies, the Private Bills Committees of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council decided to submit the question of municipal reform to a referendum. The voters would decide between the Board of

37. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 14, 1909. The Committee of Citizen's delegation was composed of Farquhar Robertson, J.C. Walsh, editor of the Herald, U.H. Dandurand, S.D. Vallières, Louis Loranger, Louis-Elie Geoffrion, and a Mr. Morin.

38. The property qualifications for mayor and alderman had been removed by the Legislative Assembly April 15th but restored by the Legislative Council May 12th. The removal of property qualifications was a long time labor cause. see L'Ouvrier, January 19, 1908.

39. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 12, 1909.

Control and the Board of Public Works and whether they desired a reduction in the number of aldermen. The voters' decision would hinge on the findings of the Royal Commission. The latter would prove whether Montreal required a radical change in its civic administration.

The Public Utilities Commission

While the Private Bills Committees were debating the reform proposals, Montreal's relations to its utilities were being transformed. The Canadian Light and Power Company had announced that it would be ready to retail its electricity in 1910. Godfroy Langlois was the C.L.P.'s spokesman in the Legislature. He sponsored two amendments to the company's charter that would strengthen the C.L.P. and guarantee its independence from the M.L.H.P.⁴⁰ More importantly the C.L.P. was granted the right to enter Montreal without the consent of the City Council. In Langlois' terms, this deprived Montreal of the right to maintain a monopoly by refusing to admit a competitor to the M.L.H.P.⁴¹

40. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 17, 1909. The first two amendments to the Canadian Light and Power's charter concerned its relationship to other companies and especially to the M.L.H.P. "The company shall not sell, lease or alienate any of the rights or franchises which are conferred by its charter and amendments thereto, to the M.L.H.P. Co. or any of the companies affiliated thereto, nor amalgamate directly or indirectly with any of the said companies... The Company may exercise the franchise and charter rights of any company other than the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company or the companies affiliated thereto ..." Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1909. chapter 107, section 1 no 8a; section 2 no 9.

41. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 17, 1909. The situation described was hypothetical for the C.L.P. already did have the consent of the City Council to use the streets from 1910-1920. Yet it was conceivable that at the expiration of this contract, the City Council might choose not to sign another contract and hence restore a monopoly position.

In 1901, Gouin had declared that if non-consent rights were granted to the M.L.H.P., all other power companies should be identically treated. In keeping with this professed air, the Saraguay Electric and Water Company, the Dominion Light, Heat and Power Company, and the Merchants Light, Heat and Power Company - all of them newly chartered electricity companies - were endowed with non-consent rights.⁴² Gouin intended this new approach to utility charters to be part of a package deal which would neutralize utility politics.

The government granted the city the right to build a municipal lighting plant, the right to expropriate the minor Montreal Water and Power Company,⁴³ a private water firm, and the right to construct conduits and require the electricity companies to place their wires therein.⁴⁴ But the most significant reform was a Public Utilities Commission.

The P.U.C. had managed to earn an unwarranted radical reputation across North America. Because of their entrenched legal rights, often utilities were beyond the control of a City Council. North American municipal reformers saw the P.U.C. as the solution to this situation. P.U.C.s were authorized to determine the terms of a contract and hence could regulate the utilities.

A type of Public Utilities Commission already existed in Montreal. By reason

42. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1909. Saraguay Electric and Water Company chapter 110; The Dominion Light, Heat and Power Company chapter 111; The Merchants Light, Heat and Power Company chapter 112.

43. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1909. chapter 81, section 29. The city was authorized to borrow \$1,020,000 to expropriate the Montreal Water and Power Company. The exercise of this right was not subject to a referendum of property owners. The city was somewhat delinquent in exercising this power, for it was only in 1926 that the Montreal Water and Power was finally expropriated.

44. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Quebec, 1909. chapter 81, section 39.

of its leasing of the Beauharnois Canal, the Canadian Light and Power Company was already subject to a government commission:

"The company shall, when required to do so by the City of Montreal supply electrical energy for municipal lighting and for lighting, heating power and industrial purposes for the city, at a fair price and upon reasonable conditions, and in the event of the City of Montreal and the parties failing to come to an agreement with respect thereof, such prices and conditions shall be fixed and determined by the Board of Railway Commissioners of the Privy Council ... relating to the leasing of the Beauharnois Canal."⁴⁵

The bill for the P.U.C. was introduced by Lomer Gouin. He was responding not to a specific request by Montreal reformers, but to the fashionable popularity the P.U.C. enjoyed. The Commission had occasionally been the subject of editorials in Montreal newspapers, but its main sources of publicity were the other P.U.C.s across North America. Thus Quebec's legislation was said to be modelled after Wisconsin's, a state which had pioneered the P.U.C.⁴⁶

Quebec's Public Utilities Commission had complete regulatory powers "to prescribe the terms and conditions ... of contracts".⁴⁷ The P.U.C. was empowered to ignore the decision of any City Council and to separately negotiate a utility contract. In theory, the P.U.C. seemed to have been an emancipation of the cities. Yet if this was so, the utilities ought to have strenuously campaigned against a P.U.C.

45. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 7, 1908.

46. Le Canada, April 20, 1909.

47. Quebec, Statutes of the Province of Québec, chapter 16, section e & f. 1909.

Even before Gouin had committed his government to a P.U.C., McLea Walbank the vice-president and general manager of the M.L.H.P. had advocated such a regulatory commission. In January of this year, the City Council and the M.L.H.P. had agreed to a temporary settlement of a street lighting contract. Walbank had told the press that the agreement could be even more beneficial.

"if advantages were taken of the postponement of the settlement, to apply to the Quebec Legislature for the appointment of a Public Utilities Commission which would have the power to regulate the prices and conditions of the supply of light in every part of the Province."⁴⁸

He added that the P.U.C. would approach the price of lighting in a proper business-like way and consequently it would be a more "effective" negotiator than the City Council.

The M.L.H.P. regarded the P.U.C. as a partner in its continued stable growth and as a protector against "farcical competition":

" A necessary condition to the effective working of such a body is that the principle should be recognized, that existing public service corporations should not be subjected to factious competition. In the past time and time, companies in opposition to existing ones have been organized for the simple purpose of forcing the older companies to buy them out at a fancy price. Once a company is brought under the regulations of a Utilities Commission, its powers are limited, its dividends are restricted- and it is operated in a way that practically constitutes the public as a partner in the enterprise. This being the case, the company should be protected against opposition that is farcical."⁴⁹

48. The Montréal Daily Herald, January 11, 1909

49. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 24, 1909

The M.L.H.P. looked upon the Commission as a harmless method of soothing public opinion's hostility against trusts. Holt stated:

"If the Quebec Government creates a commission on such lines as the Dominion Railway Commission, the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company would welcome it. While our profits would be lowered, we would be free from continued threats of competition, the permanency of our investments would be assured, and the friction that arises every little while in our relations with the City Council would disappear, and it would relieve the Government of the cry from the public of its having given an uncontrolled monopoly in our public streets."⁵⁰

The Royal Commission

The Cannon Commission was set up in such a manner that the Committee of Citizens comprised the prosecution. The Committee of Citizens' lawyers were N.K. Laflamme and Joseph Leonide Perron, formerly Raymond Préfontaine's law partner and a corporation lawyer for the Montreal Street Railway Company.

From the beginning, it was obvious that there were built-in limitations to the inquiry. The inquiry was structured in such a way that the Committee of Citizens would have full control over its proceedings. The Committee of Citizens had the right to summon witnesses and hence it could direct the inquiry to any end it saw fit.⁵¹ Moreover the constitution of the inquiry stipulated that if the testimony of a witness was not substantiated, he would be held responsible for a share of the court costs.

50. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 24, 1909

51. Commission Canon, Conclusion de la Commission Royale Re Administration de Montreal 1909: Rapport de M. le juge L.J. Cannon, Commissaire Royale. Présenté au Conseil, le 20 décembre, 1909. 2.

" Si dans le cours de l'enquête, il est établi, qu'il y a eu mauvaise administration ou malvération, de la part de quelque employé, d'un échevin, ou d'un conseillée de la cité, ville, village ou municipalité, ou de quelque autre personne, ou s'il est établi que l'accusation, qui a donné lieu à l'enquête, n'est pas fondée, les commissaires peuvent condamner la ou les personnes incriminées, ou celle qui a porté l'accusation fausse à rembourser à la municipalité pour la totalité, ou telle partie qu'ils croient juste, les frais d'enquête."⁵²

The result of this would be to deter potential witnesses from appearing and hence an even more thorough control of the inquiry would accrue to the Committee of Citizens. Mayor Payette stated:

"There is no doubt that the way in which this Royal Commission matter has been arranged will scare witnesses from giving evidence. There is no guarantee from having to pay a share of court costs - none at all."⁵³

The inquiry concentrated mainly on the fire, police, and roads department and only took a perfunctory look at finance, water, lighting, and health and statistics departments. S.J. Phillips of the Committee of Citizens explained this imbalance:

"We thought we could finish the police and fire departments in a week. But look how long we have taken (i.e. June 1st - July 12th). We have not yet finished with them yet. We did not submit half the evidence we could have given to show that the two departments were very badly managed."⁵⁴

The main disclosure of the inquiry was that graft was a permanent factor in municipal appointments and contracts. It was demonstrated that an inordinate number of firemen came from the town of St. Eloi, near Rivière-du-Loup, because of

52. *ibid.* 143

53. The Montreal Daily Herald, April 7, 1909.

54. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 9, 1909.

inbreeding which developed in the department. One witness testified:

"As regards patronage ... regarding it in the light of making appointments, I consider that it is the dry rot that permeates the whole establishment and makes efficiency and discipline almost impossible."⁵⁵

The result was anarchy: "Il n'y a pas des maitres en réalité. Les employés ne craignent personne ..."⁵⁶

Aldermen valued public works as political drawing cards. Mayor Payette, who was most cooperative throughout the inquiry, testified:

"il se fait du patronage partout à l'hotel-de-ville; il s'en fait d'une manière inévitable, surtout les échevins professionnels, qui veulent se faire réélire. à la prochaine élection, il leur faut une popularité, surtout dans certains quartiers ..."⁵⁷

Alderman Lapointe confirmed that this indictment applied to all aldermen: "... que les échevins, même les bons, resprésentent d'abord leurs quartiers avant les intérêts de la ville."⁵⁸ A ward system forced an alderman to act as a source of patronage. Hence Payette observed, "Les échevins sont parfois un peu forcés à se rendre à la demande de ces gens-là."⁵⁹

Another witness outlined how public works were assigned:

55. Cannon Commission, op.cit. 114

56. ibid. 136

57. ibid. 138

58. Le Canada, September 9, 1909.

59. Cannon Commission, op. cit. 135.

"Monsieur Barlow, l'ingénieur en chef, prépare un sommaire de tous les travaux à exécuter; ce sommaire s'élève à plusieurs millions; on soumet ce sommaire à la commission des finances, qui met un dixième ou un vingtième de la somme demandée à la disposition de la commission de voirie. Alors la commission commence à diviser ou repartir cette somme; les échevins font valoir les demandes de leurs quartiers respectifs, et suivant l'expression vulgaire, dit monsieur Larivière, c'était au plus fort la poche."⁶⁰

The inquiry emphasized that the lax collection of city taxes was not only due to patronage, but also to inefficiency. City Treasurer William Robb pointed out that there was a considerable loss of tax revenue because of sloppy collection. The loss was in the order of \$75,000 on the water tax and \$20,000 on the business tax. The basic error was in the attachment of the water tax not to the property owner, but to the tenant, whose only punishment for not paying was to be temporarily deprived of the municipal franchise. "Were the tax chargeable to proprietors, and made collectable with the real estate tax, it would be better for the tenants and city."⁶¹ Robb hastened to assure property owners that they could easily pass on the water tax to their tenants in the form of a rent increase.

The City Treasurer went on to add that because properties were assessed at low levels, the city probably lost about \$1,000,000 in yearly property taxes. Moreover, the lack of a systematic expropriation plan was chiefly responsible for the \$30,000,000 debt. He did not blame any specific aldermen for inefficiency,

60. Ibid. 70.

61. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 3, 1909.

rather it was the fault of a system which was not governed by an "independent executive of experts." The city desperately needed an application of the practical form of management prevailing in private companies.⁶²

With the completion of this phase of the inquiry, Perwon and Laflamme had adroitly manoeuvred the inquiry to one conclusion: the only solution to the city's problems was a Board of Control. The most significant disclosure was not that graft was prevalent at City Hall, but that graft was the natural consequence of the ward system.

The concluding segment of the inquiry was to be an examination of city-utility relations. McLea Walbank, the first vice-president and managing director of the M.L.H.P. held the aldermen responsible for the interminable complications between the city and his utility. If Montreal presently had no street lighting contract with his company, it was simply because the City Council had refused to sign one. In answer to an objection that perhaps the intransigence was mutual, Walbank replied, " We are willing to let the question be settled by any fair-minded man".⁶³ The M.L.H.P. could not be expected to seriously negotiate with a City Council that made decisions on the basis of kickbacks. The Herald reported Walbank to have said:

62. Ibid. 70.

63. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 10, 1909

"Previous to the last aldermanic election ... he was visited by no less a personage than Alderman Larivière, ex-chairman of the Roads Committee, who presented a list of ten candidates in the election and made a request for ten thousand dollars. Mr. Walbank declined to entertain the proposal. It was against his principles to subscribe to election funds."⁶⁴

Since he had immediately torn up the list, Walbank could not recall the other names. Representatives from the Canadian General Electric Company and the Dominion Coal Company corroborated Walbank's testimony; they too, had been approached by aldermen, whom they did not identify, demanding fees for their services.

The Herald's analysis of these statements was that "the M.L.H.P. has gone out of the business of owning the City Council, in which it was a good many years engaged."⁶⁵ Walbank sought to create the impression that even if the M.L.H.P. had at some time in the past been guilty of collusion with the City Council, and he did not even admit this, currently the aldermen were responsible for all corruption.

It was to the credit of both Laflamme and Perron that they reacted with considerable suspicion to Walbank's outright denial that the M.L.H.P. had ever engaged in kickbacks. The prosecutors did succeed in extracting the admission that the company had employed lobbyists to convince aldermen to vote for company measures, however Walbank would not concede that their persuasive latitude extended beyond "button-holing" recalcitrant aldermen and the administration

64. Ibid.

65. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 11, 1909.

of a severe "tongue-lashing" to those who did not vote as they had promised.⁶⁶

The only available means of probing further into this matter was to present the books of the M.L.H.P., which Walbank promised to do forthwith, but never proceeded upon. All that was presented as evidence on this subject was Walbank's testimony and the obvious denial of Alderman Larivière. Judge Cannon summarized this dilemma in his conclusion "C'est toute la preuve qui a été faite à ce sujet, et je ne puis décider entre ces deux témoignages contradictoires qui, pour les fins de cette enquête, se valent et s'annulent."⁶⁷

The Cannon Commission was scheduled to terminate its proceedings September 15th and deliver its report November 15th. This terminal date was followed despite the fact that only five days had been allocated to a supremely important question like M.L.H.P. - City Council relations. Even before its final report was delivered, the Cannon Commission was controversial. Running in a provincial by-election in Montreal St. Jacques, Laflamme accused Gouin of limiting the Commission both in time and scope for fear of the disclosures it might make concerning the provincial government's relations with the M.L.H.P.⁶⁸

After the report was released, Olivar Asselin wrote:

66. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 14, 1909

67. Cannon Commission, op. cit. 130.

68. Le Canada, November 6, 1909.

"They caught the \$33.33 man and had him pilloried at street corners that the just might spit in his face, but the impression prevails among those who assisted in the catch, and shamed the Petty Thief, a closer search would have disclosed five and ten-thousand dollar thieves by the patrol-wagon load."⁶⁹

Asselin even suggested that Perron was selected as a prosecutor in order to

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watch over Holt and Forget interests.

The Royal Commission's casual treatment of the M.L.H.P. was, to say the least, suspicious. Even Godfroy Langlois' *Le Canada* criticized the Royal Commission for neglecting the utilities' role in civic corruption.

"Malheureusement il s'est amusé à laisser dépenser des semaines et des semaines, pour ne pas dire des mois, sur le trafic des places au département des pompiers et il a semblé s'intéresser cent fois plus qu'aux manoeuvres des gens de St. Eloi, pour entrer au service de la ville, qu'aux manoeuvres de certaines corporations, qu'aux grosses affaires dont tout le monde parlait et sur lesquelles tous les citoyens de Montréal attendaient voir dirigés quelques rayons de soleil."⁷¹

The Board of Control campaign was a movement against the ward politician and not against the utility magnate. This was the line of attack Perron and Laflamme followed and Judge Cannon came to the appropriate conclusions:

69. Olivar Asselin, *The Montreal Graft Inquiry. Its Funny Side and its Serious Side.* Montreal: 1909. 13

70. *Ibid.* 14. Later events confirmed Asselin's opinion. By 1911 Perron was the political representative of the M.S.R. *The Montreal Daily Herald*, March 9, 1911.

71. *Le Canada*, December 18, 1909.

- "1. The administration of the affairs of Montreal has since 1892, been saturated with corruption arising especially from the patronage plague.
2. The majority of the aldermen have administered the committees and the council in such a manner as to favor the private interests of their relatives and friends, to whom contracts and positions were distributed to the detriment of the general interests of the city and of the taxpayers.
3. As a result of this administration, the annual revenue of \$5,000,000 has been spent as follows: 25 per cent in bribes and malversions of all kinds; as for the balance, the greater part has been employed in works of which the permanence has very often been ephemeral.
4. As for the division and the representation of the city by wards, all agree in condemning this system, which gave rise to patronage and its abuses."⁷²

The Royal Commission had not found a boss or any evidence of a centralized control of patronage. It had confirmed that ward politics thrived as a decentralized distribution of appointments and contracts. However the most incongruous fact was that from a series of specific disclosures, Cannon was somehow able to conclude that 25% of Montreal's budget was used for "bribes and malversions of all kinds" and that generally public works were of questionable quality. It is a mystery how he arrived at these conclusion. It would seem that Cannon's conclusions were based not on the proceedings of the Commission, but on a general attitude, which he shared with the Committee of Citizens, that the aldermen were

72. Atherton, op.cit. volume 2. 186. Cannon singled out eight guilty aldermen: Wilfrid Proulx, Jean Jacques L'Espérance, Joseph Gadbois, Hormisdas Nault, Joseph Duquette, Elie Major, Doris Couture, and Médéric Martin. Cannon assessed them each a portion of the court costs, however the aldermen simply never paid.

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completely corrupt.

The Association of Citizens and the Referendum

Simultaneous with the progress and findings of the Royal Commission, the campaign for the referendum on a Board of Control continued. The campaign was to feed on the disclosure of the inquiry. The arguments for a Board of Control were identical to those used in other North American cities: that without a Board of Control patronage would be a permanent scourge at City Hall,⁷⁴ that public money would continue to be used for rakeoffs instead of for public projects,⁷⁵ that the city would remain in the thrall of an extravagant administration,⁷⁶ that Montreal would isolate itself from the prevailing patterns of urban administration,⁷⁷ and that Montreal's international image would never be revived. When the convention of American Municipalities assembled in Montreal a local delegate went to the length of suggesting this city as an ideal example of how a city ought not to be governed.⁷⁸

In order to more effectively carry these arguments to the voters, the Committee of Citizens decided to re-organize on a sounder basis. The Committee of

73. The Cannon Commission was literally obsessed with the fire department. From reading the inquiry, one would think the only conclusion the Cannon Commission could definitely make was that the fire department was saturated with St. Floi citizens.

74. Le Canada, June 13, 1909.

75. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 17, 1909.

76. Le Canada, August 21, 1909.

77. Le Canada, June 4, 1909.

78. Le Canada, August 25, 1909.

Citizens, a compact group only open to executives of commercial organizations was dissolved in favor of a more inclusive Association of Citizens.⁷⁹

No decisions were made as to the executive or charter of the new organization. This was to be decided at a mass meeting August 25th at the Monument National. So as not to lose vital time, the Committee of Citizens' last decision was to form the ad hoc Board of Control Committee to administer the referendum campaign. Since the ad hoc committee and the Committee of Citizens had near-identical membership, the latter group had managed to conserve its elitist control of the reform movement.⁸⁰

The Association of Citizens was officially founded with 500 paid memberships. In its internal organization, the Association reflected the business character of its leaders. The Association was incorporated as a joint stock company with capital authorized at \$20,000. Shares were sold at \$10 each and only one share would be available to each member.⁸¹

The objectives of the Association were outlined by its president, Hormisdas Laporte. It was to be a mass organization with enrolment expected at 20,000 and it was to be representative of all classes, a particular effort being directed at the recruitment of "workers". The Association would channel more businessmen

79. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 9, 1909.

80. Ibid. Henry Miles was the president of the ad hoc committee and personnel was: Farquhar Robertson, S.D. Vallières, Peter Lyall, S.J. Phillips, J.B. Treisidder, Joseph Lamoureux and Joseph Vaillancourt.

81. The president of the Association of Citizens was Hormisdas Laporte, the two vice-presidents were Senator Raoul Dandurand and Jeffrey Burland, an insurance executive and "philanthropist", and the co-treasurers were James Morgan and J.D. Rolland.

into politics, a task which would be facilitated by the businessman's natural affinity to the Board of Control. The organization would wean the Board of Control through its initial adjustment stage and then suggest appropriate amendments to increase the latter's efficiency. In general, the Association would be a forum for the discussion and promotion of various reform initiatives. Presently its plans centred around independent police and health boards, which it was hoped would free these departments from political interference. ⁸²

Laporte added that the Association did not think of itself as the only genuine spokesman for municipal reform. The Association would select its candidates for the 1910 election only after consultation with the press. This last provision would hardly be difficult since the membership of the Association included three newspaper editors: J.C. Walsh of the Herald, Godfroy Langlois of Le Canada and Louis Joseph Tarte of La Patrie.

The Association was not to be active until the selection of candidates for the 1910 election. It was to be the ad hoc committee which led the reform movement until September 20th, the date of the referendum. The latter's basic dilemma was in trying to publicize the business advantages of the Board of Control and the reduction of aldermen, while at the same time not appearing to be the expression of the business class. Laporte's suggestion that the Montreal Business Men's League amalgamate with the Association was vetoed by Henry Miles, president of both the League and the ad hoc committee. He felt that such a merger would attract accusations that the Board of Control campaign was a business movement.

82. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 9, 1909.

On another occasion, Miles had stated:

"We are not publishing the names of the subscribers (to the referendum fund), as in the first place fully two thirds of them ask to have their names suppressed. Then the publication of a few of the names, especially those of the men who have contributed larger sums to the movement, would be prejudicial to the success of the cause. It is not the votes of these men we are afraid of, but those of the poorer working classes in the East End, who are only too ready to listen to tirades against capital, and the rich, by unscrupulous orators. The impression disseminated by the opponents of the Board of Control that the city is to be run by the rich men in the West End, which they will try to confirm by showing lists of subscriptions, will be one of the hardest things we will have to fight against."⁸³

Miles' apprehension was justified. If the following names had been revealed before the referendum, there would have been some very tangible evidence of a business "conspiracy". To a total fund of \$33,243, the most important contributions came from Hugh Graham \$2,000; William Macdonald of Macdonald Tobacco \$1,000; Henry Morgan and Company \$1,000; Herbert Holt \$1,000; Dr. Lorne McGibbon, an industrialist \$1,000; Peter Lyall and Sons \$1,000; George E. Drummond \$1,000; T.J. Drummond \$1,000; Richard Bladworth Angus, one of the founders of the Canadian Pacific Railway and president of the Bank of Montreal 1910-1913, \$500; Henry Birks and Sons, \$500.⁸⁴

At a meeting convened in the halls of the Canadian Rubber Company, its president George Washington Stephens junior explained that the Board of Control was not intended to drive French-Canadians and workers from the civic administration, but to

83. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 18, 1909

84. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 3, 1910

assist them in the management of the city. He then issued the following suggestion to his workers: "The Canadian Rubber expects that every man in his employ will do his duty on the 20th of this month, and vote for the reduction in the number of aldermen and for a Board of Control."⁸⁵ Similar instances of pressure were recorded at Macdonald Tobacco Company, Ames-Holden Company, Chaput Fils, a wholesale grocery firm belonging to Charles Chaput, a prominent member of the Association, and Morgan's Department Store.⁸⁶

The most effective argument used by the opponents of the Board of Control was that of jobs. July 24th, the Roads Committee announced a planned expenditure of \$1,320,000 on sidewalks.⁸⁷ The expenditures were non-specific, that is, the streets upon which the work was to be done, were not indicated.

The sidewalk contracts confirmed the Cannon Commission thesis that public works were assigned for patronage reasons. The Committee of Citizens recognized the danger of non-specified expenditures and therefore petitioned the Mayor to veto their passage. A letter from E.W. Villeneuve, a lawyer and one of the original organizers of the Committee was read to the Council, even before the July 24th announcement. He alleged that the single criterion for the expenditures was the

85. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 9, 1909.

86. *ibid*

87. Le Canada, July 25, 1909.

highest price possible for an inferior product.⁸⁸

By July 25th, the sidewalk contracts had deflated to \$640,000. Then the Committee acquired an injunction to halt the Council's discussion of the expenditures. In response, Napoleon Giroux, chairman of the Roads Committee, organized a mass meeting of "potential public employees". Alderman Harior complained of the Committee's obstructionist tactics:

"One day its next meeting, next it's clause 177, next it's 123 majority. Why if these people are trying to pose as comedians, their place is in the National Theatre - at any rate people wouldn't be left starving as a result of their foolish antics."⁸⁹

The appeal was unmistakeable and the division between the forces became clearer. At the same time that Rodolphe Lemieux, federal Postmaster General, Senator Dandurand, Henri Bourassa, and Hormisdas Laporte convened a meeting to support the Board of Control, Gustave Francq, the president of the Montreal Trades and Labor Council, organized an opposition meeting. The latter derided the Board of Control as a plot of capitalists and corporations.⁹⁰

The Board of Control's opponents campaigned in glorious solitude. Except

88. The Montreal Daily Herald, July 24, 1909. The sidewalk contract dispute was also the occasion for a battle between the Roads and Finance Committees. The two chairmen, Napoleon Giroux and L.A. Lapointe, occupied opposite positions. Originally Lapointe had opted for a Board of Public Works and held a middle position between the reformers and the stalwarts. With the refusal of Giroux and his allies to agree to this compromise, Lapointe's middle stance had become untenable and he was forced to accept the whole reform platform. Hence Lapointe obstructed Giroux's plans at every occasion.

89. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 9, 1909.

90. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 10, 1909.

for Le Bulletin, a Montreal weekly,⁹¹ no press support was forthcoming and even organized religion, at least on the Protestant side, intervened to lend this referendum the form of a crusade for purity.⁹² One may have awaited an anti Board of Control editorial from La Presse, however this paper's initial opposition to the Board had long since vanished:

"Ouvriers, en particulier, n'écoutez pas la voix de ceux qui vous fillent et vous trompent. Comprenez bien que chaque commission soutirée du trésor municipal par les entremetteurs est de pain de moins pour vous et vos familles".⁹³

Even the federal government had endorsed the Board of Control. Rodolphe Lemieux explained the collective position of the Quebec wing of the federal cabinet:

"Although I live in Ottawa, I have the right to vote in Montreal, and this right I will use to vote in favor of a Board of Control. In saying this, I have the views of Sir Wilfrid Laurier and of the Honorable L.P. Brodeur, and of the Honorable Sydney Fisher, who all represent the interests of the Province and the City. It is necessary that all English and French-Canadians unite to grant Montreal an administration that will give her what she merits."⁹⁴

In view of the City Council's arguments, one would expect a lower percentage

91. Le Bulletin was owned by Rodolphe Brunet, chairman of the Roads Committee 1898-1900 and currently president of a paving company which had figured prominently in Cannon Commission disclosures.

92. The Montreal Daily Herald, September 18, 1909.

93. La Presse, September 20, 1909. La Presse's original position was that the Board of Control was an attempt by the English minority to capture control of Montreal's administration. La Presse, April 12, 1909.

94. The Montreal Daily Herald, August 2, 1909.

of affirmatives for the Board of Control in the French wards, however this was not the case. The best showing for the Board of Control opposition was in Ste. Marie where it managed 276 votes as opposed to 622 votes approving a Board of Control. Beyond this particular case, there was an even more overwhelming verdict for the Board of Control and the reduction of aldermen.

	Affirmative	Negative	Difference
Board of Control	18,441	2,644	15,797
Reduction	19,409	1,762	17,647
Board of Public Works	3,192	13,450	10,258 ⁹⁵

The 1910 Election

After winning the referendum, the Association of Citizens was faced with the problem of converting its majority into an electoral victory. The selection

95. Le Canada, September 21, 1909. The Board of Control was invested with the following powers.

- " 1. To prepare the annual budget and submit it to the council;
2. To recommend every expense, no expense or matter referring to city finances being able to be adopted unless recommended by the controllers;
3. The council on the report of the controllers to be charged with the granting of franchises and privileges by regulation, resolutions, contracts, by the issue of debentures and contraction of loans;
4. The controllers were further to prepare contracts and plans to ask for tenders, to decide all formalities relating to the latter, to receive and to open such;
5. To inspect or oversee public works;
6. To employ the money voted by the council for the purposes designated;
7. To nominate and suspend all employees, except those nominated by the council, whose nomination, suspension, and dismissal should be made by the council on the recommendation of the controllers.
8. No report or recommendation made by the controllers to be executed without the acceptance of the majority of the council;
9. No amendment to a report or recommendation of the controllers to be made without the approbation of two-thirds of the members of the council present at the meeting ". Atherton, op.cit. volume 2, 187-188.

of candidates would have to be measured to represent every interest group. The promotion of a balanced ticket of expertly qualified candidates would reinforce the Association's image as a neutral citizens' coalition.

There was a measure of resistance against the Association nominating official reform candidates. The Herald hoped that the Association would recommend already declared candidates instead of nominating its own candidate. While it was true that the Association recommended aldermen, this was not an accurate index of the Association's behaviour. The Association considered the office of alderman unimportant and, it was hoped, an increasingly insignificant position in the civic administration. A second reason why the Association recommended aldermen was that as part of the general uplift of municipal politics, many more candidates than usual challenged the incumbants. In the 1908 election twenty-five of forty aldermen were acclaimed and thirty-four were incumbants from 1906. In 1910 a mere two of twenty-two aldermen were acclaimed and only seven aldermen were 1908 incumbants.⁹⁶

The Association presented a full slate for the four positions on the Board of Control. It avoided any opposition from organized labor by co-opting a Labor Party official, Joseph Ainey. He was a veteran labor activist and was presently the American Federation of Labor organized for Quebec.⁹⁷ The Association's second nominee was Frederick Lumb Lanklyn, a civil engineer and a former manager of the Montreal Street Railway Company; the third was Louis

96. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 2, 1910.

97. Ainey was considered a conservative labor activist. Olivar Asselin said in support of Ainey that Archbishop Bruchesi, who had sat with the latter on a labor arbitration board, admired his political integrity and sagacity. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 3, 1909.

N. Dupuis, founder of Dupuis Frères (1876) and especially prominent in real estate;⁹⁸ the fourth was E.P. Lachapelle;⁹⁹ and the nominee for mayor was Dr. James Guerin, professor of clinical medicine at Laval University at Montreal and a former minister without portfolio in the Marchand and Parent cabinets.¹⁰⁰

Every possible interest was represented in the Association's slate: French, English, east, west, industry, commerce, labor, education, and especially medicine. Henri Bourassa commented:

"They attack the Association on the ground that it has permitted other than French candidates on its slate. Well, if I have one thing to reproach, the Association with, it is that it has been too scrupulous in measuring out its portions of the different elements in our city's make-up."¹⁰¹

Senator Dandurand claimed that the nominees were so outstanding that it was unnecessary to exact pledges of them:

"I do not believe in imposing unnecessary pledges upon men who are worthy of the people's confidence . . . Those are the kind of men we want on the Board, and when we get them there they can be relied (sic) to waste no time."¹⁰²

The slate was a team. Thus Guerin refused to grant an interview.

"No, I cannot give you an interview for the simple reason that I am not running this campaign by myself, for myself, like an ordinary campaign. I am one of a group of candidates put forward by the Citizens' Association, and I take it that a group of candidates must stand or fall together for one and the same set of principles."¹⁰³

98. Atherton, op. cit. volume 3. 88-91

99. Dr. Lachapelle had run for mayor in 1902.

100. Atherton, op. cit. volume 3. 130-131

101. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 25, 1910.

102. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 28, 1909

103. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 8, 1910

The slate's overall campaign stance was the promise of a better administration. The Association's candidates hinted at many reforms - a fair street lighting contract, more parks, better paving, and a development plan for the city. 104

The only explicit promise was a filtration plant for the city's water supply. Currently Montreal was suffering a serious typhoid epidemic, a fact which was a vivid illustration of the present administration's disregard of health hazards. A resolution condemning the city's water supply was signed by Montreal's most prominent doctors. Featuring the signatures of Dr. Lachapelle and Dr. Guerin, both of whom were leaders in the fields of preventive medicine and public hygiene, the resolution was dispatched to the city's newspapers. 105

The City Council attempted to allay the damaging publicity from the Cannon Commission by organizing a referendum on whether Montreal could borrow \$2,000,000 to construct and operate its own electricity plant. The electricity produced would be for public lighting only, which represented approximately 1/15 of the M.L.H.P.'s sales. The Council argued that the city could only acquire inexpensive lighting by building its own plant.

104. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 10, 1910.

105. The number of reported typhoid deaths were:

1908: 126	1909: 212
1910: 192	1911: 124

Montreal Board of Health Report, 1913. 89. Lord Strathcona thought the situation serious enough to donate \$25,000 to an emergency typhoid hospital. After a public subscription campaign had been opened, he donated an extra \$100,000. Le Canada, January 7, 1910. Commenting on Montreal's general public health record, the Canadian Engineer headlined: "Montreal a hygienic disgrace to civilization". It went on to add: "Dr. Lachapelle, president of the Provincial Board of Health .. and in fact, every man in Montreal and in the Province who has even the most elementary knowledge of hygiene knows that Montreal's abnormal death rate is due to causes which are preventable, and are simply the result of neglect." Canadian Engineer, April 16, 1909. In 1907, Dr. Laberge, chief bacteriologist of Montreal, examined forty random milk

The Association's reaction was that \$2,000,000 was an exorbitant sum. It argued that the Board of Control should be given the opportunity to negotiate a contract with the M.L.H.P.¹⁰⁶ One of the original themes of the 1909 municipal reform movement was the ability of a Board of Control to bargain with the M.L.H.P. in a business-like dialogue and conclude a mutually beneficial contract. That the Association and its candidates had no intention of implementing the non-binding referendum, was signalled by their total silence at its ¹⁰⁷ December 21st.

In its opposition to the Association's candidates, Le Bulletin was calling itself the official spokesman of labor. However, the Labor Party was firmly opposed to Le Bulletin's campaign. By integrating itself into the municipal reform movement, the Labor Party was about to achieve its most significant political

105. cont'd. samples and found that only four were safe. Le Canada, July 10, 1907. The Montreal Water Commissioner understated the facts when he admitted "... mais enfin j'avoue franchement qu'à certaines époques de l'année .. elle (the water supply) ne peut être aussi recommandable. Cela c'est certain; il n'y a pas bésion de faire d'analyse, ni d'être bactériologiste pour cela". Cannon Commission, op. cit. 120. In late 1906, the Provincial Board of Health had declared the Montreal Water and Power Company, a private firm that supplied water to those wards annexed after 1894, to be a nuisance to public health. The company did not improve its water supply. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 16, 1907. With this record, it was no surprise that Montreal had an incredible child mortality rate. Deaths of children under five as a function of total number of deaths:

Lowell	39.03%	Philadelphia	28.13%	Liverpool	43.01%	Chicago	41.86%
Paris	37.22%	London	36.02%	Boston	31.27%	St. Louis	26.05%
New York	36.15%	Montreal	65.61%				

Le Canada, March 26, 1908.

106. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 14, 1909.

107. La Presse argued that an affirmative vote would partly restore French Canada's national honor. The latter had been severely tarnished by the findings of the Royal Commission. La Presse, December 22, 1909.

victory. An official release stated:

"For years the workers have been trying to secure direct representation at the City Hall, and up to the present we have experienced opposition from all quarters, and have accomplished nothing or next to nothing. Now a short time ago, Mr. Ainey was nominated for the Board of Control, and without any solicitation on our part the Citizens Association came forward and endorsed our candidate without even asking him to pledge himself to their programme ... Naturally we were glad to have that endorsement, not only because it increased our candidate's chances of election, but because it indicated the growth of a new spirit of toleration and co-operation among the professional and commercial classes ..."¹⁰⁸

The opposition to the slate had no respected leader nor did it have important newspaper backing. All the Montreal dailies - Le Canada, La Presse, La Patrie, Le Devoir, The Herald, The Witness, The Star, The Gazette, - campaigned for the Association's candidate. The opposition was mostly negative, seeking to point out defects in the Association rather than pronounce itself on the merits of its own candidates.¹⁰⁹ An example was Le Pays, a weekly newspaper founded by Godfroy Langlois.¹¹⁰ This paper campaigned for Guerin's opponent, Senator J.P. Casgrain by protesting "contre la dictature de M. Laporte et M. Raoul Dandurand dans les affaires municipales ..."¹¹¹

108. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 12, 1910

109. Covering the election for both Le Devoir and Le Nationaliste, Olivar Asselin concluded that the Association of Citizens' enemies were a combination of Freemasons, corrupt aldermen and Lomer Gouin's Liberal henchmen. Le Nationaliste, January 23, 1910; Le Devoir, January 21, 26, 27, 1910.

110. Godfroy Langlois left Le Canada January 7, 1910, and took up the editorship of Le Pays, a newspaper dedicated to the defence of "Rouge" principles. see first issue, January 15, 1910.

111. Le Pays, January 15, 1910.

The victory for the Association's slate was total. Guerin overwhelmed Casgrain 29,212 to 16,258; all four Board of Control candidates were elected: Ainey 30,942, Dupuis 22,444, Wanklyn 22,276, Lachapelle 21,578. The magnitude of these vote totals can be gauged from the next largest vote given a Board of Control candidate: 8,957. As well nineteen of twenty-two aldermen the Association had recommended were elected.¹¹²

A virtual monopoly over the press and every opinion leader had handed the Association a complete victory. The Association had given the reformers the organizational apparatus of a political party. The Association had made municipal politics executive oriented by subordinating the aldermen to the Board of Control. In sum, the Association had succeeded in injecting the values of the Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce into the civic administration.

It would be entirely unrealistic to end this thesis at this point. The victory of the municipal reform movement was so overwhelming that a brief resumé of its impact and its eventual downfall must be included.

112. Le Canada, February 2, 1910.

Postscript

Lomer Gouin and the Association of Citizens expected the Public Utilities Commission and the Board of Control respectively to solve the city's major administration problems. However, both reforms blended into the pattern of pre 1910 politics.

The Public Utilities Commission

The P.U.C.'s initial objective was the settling of a public lighting contract between Montreal and the M.L.H.P. However the Board of Control was confident that it could bargain with the company and did not refer the case to the P.U.C. September 12th, 1910, a contract was signed without the P.U.C. having ever intervencd.

With the chartering of the Montreal Tramways Company, an official consolidation of all the tramway lines in the city, the Commission was furnished with an opportunity to exercise its regulatory powers. But Montreal's relations with Montreal Tramways Company resembled those that had prevailed with the M.L.H.P. before 1909. In the end the Herald lamented:

"Public Utilities Commissions have not shown themselves, during the brief period of their existence as an institution on this continent, to be the iconoclastic destroyers of vested interests their enemies prophecized."¹¹³

In March 1911, the M.T.C. requested and received over the head of the city a vast collection of powers.¹¹⁴ The city dispatched delegates to the Legislature to

113. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 20, 1911

114. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 9, 1911.

protest against the erosion of its autonomy - which was supposed to be guaranteed by the Commission. After repeated setbacks, the chairman of the P.U.C. Lieutenant Colonel Hibbard, admitted: "The Commission is without authority even to order an adequate remedy."¹¹⁵

Despite the P.U.C. the old pattern of utility politics persisted. This was because the Montreal Tramways Company was under a management that refused to honor the existing order. The M.T.C. per se was a legal consolidation of the Montreal Street Railway, the Montreal Terminal Railway, and the Montreal Park and Island Railway. Its new owners E.A. Robert and J.W. McConnell had new plans for the tramway company: the M.T.C. was to be a wedge for the entrance of the Canadian Light and Power Company into the Montreal market.¹¹⁶ Thus, the M.T.C. adopted the same intransigent and arrogant position which had served the M.L.H.P. so well in its early years.

The Board of Control

The Association of Citizens had expected that the Board of Control would dominate the city's administration. In reality this could only be so, if control was wrested away from the aldermen. The Board of Control was supposed to simplify politics by rescuing the city from the empire-building of the aldermen and the confusion of the City Council committees. However since the Board of Control was to rule in conjunction with the City Council, the result was more confusion than ever.

115. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 27, 1913

116. Dales, op.cit. 111-113

Both the Board of Control and the City Council had their own concepts of what the city's priorities ought to be. The Herald editorialized:

"One of two things must be brought to pass: Either the Controllers must be given a free hand in spending the money voted by the Council, and full control over their officials or the ward aldermen themselves must go. Which will you choose? The appropriation of \$500,000 for sidewalks has been continually delayed and not discussed by the Council. This is because there is a duplication of authority, the Council having the power by a majority vote of rejecting anything of the Board." 117

The 1912 election was highlighted by the re-election to the Council of Napoleon Giroux, Napoleon Séguin, and Médéric Martin, all of whom had been condemned by the Cannon Commission. Their re-election signalled an intensification of the Board of Control - City Council rivalry. They had campaigned on a promise to destroy the Board of Control which they labelled as a "conspiracy" of the west end.¹¹⁸ Furthermore they mimiced the methods of the Association by calling for a referendum on whether to retain the Board of Control. They also demanded a Royal Commission to investigate the city's administration over the past two years.¹¹⁹

Martin immediately assumed the leadership of the anti Board of Control force in the City Council. Martin's objective was to identify the Board of Trade with

117. The Montreal Daily Herald, June 17, 20, 1911. An aditorial in the Real Estate Record flatly declared: "The present arrangement with two bodies continually in conflict, does not make for Good Government. Such an arrangement would not be tolerated in any business organization in the country." Real Estate Record, July 1913. 105.

118. The Montreal Daily Herald, January 23, 1912

119. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 12, 1912

the business class and to create the impression that the working class had to depend on the City Council.¹²⁰ Martin continually brought up the question of a higher minimum wage for municipal workers.¹²¹ In 1911, the Board of Control had voted to raise the minimum wage from \$2.00 per day to \$2.10 per day. Martin felt that \$2.25 ought to be the minimum wage. However the Board of Control rejected Martin's arguments saying that \$2.10 was the maximum the city could afford.

This decision placed Joseph Ainey in a very uncomfortable position. The latter felt he had an obligation to bridge the gap between the lower middle class City Council and business class Board of Control. He argued that the Board of Control represented no class:

"But what I object to most of all in all these discussions is the bringing in of the working class. What have the working class or any other class got to do with the way we administer the affairs of the city? We are not administering the city for any particular class. We could never administer the city in that way." 122

When Martin presented his motion for the abolition of the Board of Control, it was defeated. In response a parallel motion to abolish the Council was presented in the Board of Control and it passed. Taking note of this, the Board of Trade convened a meeting of the Real Estate Owners Association, the Canadian Manufacturers Association and the Chambre de Commerce. They decided to field an organization to Quebec City, to seek an increase in the powers of the Board of Control. If in 1909 these same commercial organizations

120. The Montreal Daily Herald, February 22, 1912. Ainey and Martin had first tangled in a 1906 federal by-election in Ste. Marie. Martin won the election on a Liberal-labor ticket.

121. The Montreal Daily Herald, May 28, 1912.

122. Ibid

had concluded that Montreal's inefficient administration was a consequence of not having a Board of Control, now the identical problems were blamed on the friction between the Board of Control and the Council.¹²³ The Association of Citizens formally presented the requests to the Legislature, the most contentious of which was that the Board of Control would have exclusive jurisdiction in making appointments. Ainey commented:

"Give the Board of Control greater authority and a wider extension of powers. Give us the control of the various departments at City Hall and the power to avoid conflicts after moneys have been voted by the Council, and we shall give Montreal such a good government as will make the Council useless."¹²⁴

This brief was unsuccessful. This was the final attempt to re-proportion the power of the Board of Control and the City Council into a workable arrangement. After 1912, the Association was no longer powerful enough to mobilize a campaign for the Board of Control. The Association's "stock" fell as the Board of Control was not the solution it had predicted. Laporte's retirement from politics in 1912 and the absence of the crisis atmosphere which had reigned in 1909, caused the Association to dwindle into a private reform club which suffered the same fate as its 1890 predecessors.¹²⁵

The Board of Control's legislative record was limited. It claimed to have legislated a codification and revision of the health and building by-laws and a

123. The Montreal Daily Herald, October 14, 1912.

124. The Montreal Daily Herald, December 12, 1912

125. La Patrie, January 7, 1914. In March 1914 the commercial reform leadership passed from the Association of Citizens to the Committee of 150. With L.J. Tarte and Huntly Drummond as co-presidents, it voiced the same principles and in fact had many of the same members as the old 1910 Association of Citizens.

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total reform of the city's civil service. It decided to expropriate the Montreal Water and Power Company¹²⁷ and it began construction of a filtration plant for the city's water supply. A great deal of the Board of Control's time was spent in the discussion of boulevards and garden cities.¹²⁸ The more "imaginative" the projects were, the more the Board of Control alienated itself from the City Council and the type of populism the latter represented.

126. For health and building by-laws, see The Montreal Daily Herald, June 1 November 13, 25, 1911. For civil service, see The Montreal Daily Herald, June 19, 1912.

127. In 1910, the Controllers had proposed to expropriate the water company, however the company had refused to allow city attorneys to inspect its account books. The Board of Control then offered to expropriate the company's operations only in those areas which had been or would be annexed to the city. The company's attorneys argued that piecemeal expropriation would destroy the balance of its operations and accordingly rejected the city's offer. The Board of Control then announced it would seek court authorization to expropriate the water company's St. Henri operations. The court authorization never arrived and the water company was not to be municipalized until 1926.

128. The Board of Control's projects were conceived by "modern" planners and real estate developers who were advocates of the "City Beautiful" concept. The Montreal Daily Herald, March 12, 21, 1910. The Board of Control's two favourite projects were Strathcona and Aquaduct Boulevards. The former would be a fountain and monument laden boulevard through the centre of the city, and the latter would be an expressway dotted with a series of garden cities. The City Council retorted that the projects would be of no benefit to the majority of Montreal's population and the Board of Control could never effectively argue that they would. Mayor Guerin stated: "It must be understood that these new Garden City dwellings are not intended to replace the slums and disease infected districts which the new east and west boulevards will wipe out ... The idea of the Garden City is more to provide a comfortable and pretty home for the mechanic and the clerk than to make things easy for those who choose to disregard all the natural and physical laws in existence, maintaining a hand to mouth existence by day, and retiring to their dark, noisome rooms at night huddled together, six, eight, and ten in a room." The Montreal Daily Herald, December 23, 1911.

There was no evidence that the civil service was radically altered. A codification of health and building by-laws meant that they were presented in a clear and concise format. It did not mean that health and building by-laws were improved nor that they were applied more strictly. Whether this and other reforms made government more efficient cannot be said, but this was not an issue in the 1914 election.

Because of faulty plans and engineering errors the filtration plant was a total fiasco. The City Council exploited this issue to represent the Board of Control to be no better than its 1910 predecessors. With the 1914 collapse of the filtration plant, the Controllers were ironically branded as paradigms of inefficiency.

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In the 1914 mayoralty election, Médéric Martin became the first candidate to proudly exploit his working class beginnings as a political asset. In an election which was considered the "English turn", Martin defeated his opponent George Washington Stephen junior 40,753 to 35,109. The latter's standing as a respected ex-president of the Harbor Commission, his winning the support of all the Montreal dailies, and his programme to draw up a homologated plan for Montreal, did not stand up to Martin's promise to return the administration to the average citizen.

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Martin's victory was on the basis of Préfontaine's

129. La Presse, January 8, 1914.

130. Le Devoir, March 23, 1914. Henri Bourassa supported municipal reform for two major reasons. The municipal reform movement was the ideal opportunity for the cooperation of Montreal's French and English communities; and reformers were recruited from the social stratum which moulded society's ideal rulers. Bourassa wrote of Mederic Martin : "Mais franchement quel est l'homme intelligent, ou simplement convenable qui ne se sentirait pas humilié à la pensée d'être représenté par ce grotesque personnage .. rien ne prouve qu'il ait jamais pu s'élever au-dessus du rôle de politicien de quartier ..." Le Devoir, March 23, 1914.

four alliances - populism, east end growth, French Canadianism and utility politics. His victory marked the beginning of another urban machine.

Under the guise of efficiency, the reformers tried to hand businessmen control of the city's affairs. The reform movement was exclusionist and elitist. Although the Board of Control's supporters appeared to be egalitarian crusaders, they were distrustful of the lower classes. In his study of the Board of Control movement, Samuel Hays has concluded:

"Reformers, therefore wished not simply to replace bad men with good; they proposed to change the occupational and class origins of decision-making. Towards this end they sought innovations in the formal machinery of government which would concentrate political power by sharply centralizing the processes of decision-making rather than distribute it through more popular participation in public affairs." 131

131. Hays, op.cit. Montreal's Board of Control was dropped in 1921.

Conclusion

Montreal is a classic illustration of the thesis of revisionist historians of the Progressive era. Samuel Hays, Gabriel Kolko, James Weinstein and Robert Wiebe have all postulated that reform groups were led by and composed of businessmen.

Weinstein distinguishes between enlightened and traditional businessmen. The latter, bastions of laissez-faire practices, regarded government as at best insignificant and more probably injurious to business interests. The enlightened businessman, whom Weinstein considers as more perceptive of their own self-interest, held that government was a significant force within society and as such it ought to be propelled by business values. Accordingly what passed for reform measures was the transplanting of modern business practices into government. Kolko terms the process a triumph of "political capitalism" because it was an assimilation of government into the management trends of business life.

The revisionist schools stands in opposition to earlier interpretations of the Progressive era. One of the foremost of these historians Richard Hofstadter, holds that municipal reform was the product of a reawakening of the middle class. The city was previously ruled by a combination of immigrants, political bosses and big business. Hofstadter defined the middle class' crusading indignation as a status revolt: a realization that the city had fallen into the grasp of nouveaux riches, crass profiteers and their minions. Hence Progressivism was the resumption of middle class supremacy which had happily reigned before the influx of immigrants.

Herbert Ames and George Washington Stephens are evidence that Hofstadter's

thesis applies to the early phase of Montreal municipal reform. This early phase may have been exclusionist, English dominated and too moral in tone, but it was the germ from which other reform groups developed.

The revisionist thesis applies in its entirety to post 1905 Montreal reform. A reading of the publication American City, which Weinstein extensively used as a primary source, clearly demonstrates that Montreal matched the evolution of American municipal reform. The Montreal business organization, primarily the Board of Trade and the Chambre de Commerce advanced from a passive endorsement of municipal reform in the 1890s to a position of leadership by 1906. The Association of Citizens, an expression of Montreal's business community, ranked as one of the most successful groups of its type in North America.

The Association of Citizens' error was that it was not daring enough to try to implement a full reform of the political system. The evidence indicates that it wished to gradually relocate power from the City Council to the Board of Control. This strategy was faulty because by its nature a reform impulse is ephemeral; it depends on collective enthusiasm and dedication both of which dissipate quickly.

Montreal also had businessmen who preferred to deal with the city in a underhand method. Utilities and real estate developers were the chief offenders in this respect. Only after the M.L.H.P. and the M.S.R. had profited from ward politics did they change from being opponents to proponents of reform. This is not to say that L.J. Forget's and Herbert Holt's support of the 1909 reforms

was contingent on a few favors. These two financiers realized that it was good public relations not to be continually suspected of buying aldermen and in any event bidding for aldermen's votes was a precarious base on which to conduct a business.

Once clearly established as both trusts were, it was only a matter of time that they begin to favor "political capitalism". The one utility company that troubled Montreal from 1910-1914 was the Montreal Tramway Company. This was because the company was not established and hence had to resort to the 1901-1907 tactics of the M.L.H.P.

An assessment has to be passed on the provincial government. In his brief sojourn as an alderman, Lomer Gouin was considered to be a Préfontaine supporter. As Prime Minister, he dispelled this notion by cultivating the favor of the reformers. Although the 1907 referendum was not in itself a satisfactory piece of legislation, it signalled a growing bond between the Premier's office and the reformers, by then dominated by the commercial organizations. The Public Utilities Commission and the Board of Control culminated Gouin's commitment to the reform movement.

Reform politics failed because the reformers were too inflexible to admit the advantages of ward politics. Balanced budgets and efficient government were of no assistance to the majority of Montreal's population. The ward politician was pragmatic and dealt with the miseries of his constituents. Of course, the politician ignored housing reform and public hygiene, but so did the reformers.

Yet even though the reform movement was ultimately not successful, its

existence was significant. Its meaning was that Montreal functioned as a typically North American city. French Canadian businessmen were identical to their English counterparts, in funneling business values into society. The existence of two separate ethnic communities in Montreal presented only slight variations on reform positions. The vocabulary was different but from Raymond Préfontaine to Hormisdas Laporte the themes were identical to those seen in other North American cities.

Distinctive features did start to appear after 1910. The rejection of the Board of Control in 1914 marked the re-establishment of an urban machine. More importantly the rejection was predicated on a growing ethnocentrism in French Canada. This ethnocentrism coupled with a rapidly declining participation of the English in Montreal's political life would make future reform very difficult.

Appendix

Population of Montreal

1881

Ward	French	English	Others	Total
West	170	584	88	742
Centre	559	234	33	826
East	2,369	494	135	2,998
St. Ann's	5,849	14,239	355	20,443
St. Antoine	11,847	20,560	1,418	33,825
St. Lawrence	3,888	9,528	811	14,227
St. Louis	13,147	5,555	637	19,339
St. Jacques	22,365	2,660	373	25,498
Ste. Marie	18,490	4,909	262	23,661

1891

Ward	Total	
West	1,007	
Centre	675	
East	3,437	
St. Ann's	23,003	
St. Antoine	44,626	
St. Lawrence	17,884	no ethnic breakdown available
St. Louis	24,924	
St. Jacques	32,393	
Ste Marie	34,746	
Hochelaga	8,540	
St. Jean Baptiste	15,423	
St. Gabriel	9,986	

1901

Ward	French	English	Others	Total
West	116	312	11	439
Centre	842	208	48	1,098
East	1,966	222	389	2,577
St. Ann's	6,481	14,494	860	22,055
St. Antoine	14,597	30,044	2,195	46,836

In 1899, St. Antoine was divided into three wards.

St. Lawrence	5,401	13,136	3,322	21,859
St. Louis	16,837	5,949	4,123	26,909
St. Jacques	35,115	3,842	1,084	40,041

In 1899, St. Jacques was divided into two wards.

Ste Marie	32,850	7,177	707	40,724
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In 1899, Ste. Marie was divided into two wards

Hochelaga	10,960	1,700	654	13,314
St. Jean Baptiste	22,373	3,736	363	26,472
St. Gabriel	7,780	7,829	340	15,949
St. Denis	7,658	1,733	99	9,490

Because of the number of wholesale and partial annexations of neighbouring towns in 1910, census districts were not coordinated with the wards. Suffice it to say that by the 1912 election there were thirty-one wards, only seven of which had English majorities.

Source: Census of Canada 1881, 1891, 1901.

Total Population of City

	total	French	English	Others
1861	90,330	48.1%		51.9%
1871	107,226	60.3%	38.1%	1.6%
1881	140,747	62.1%	35.7%	2.7%
1891	211,302			
1901	267,730	63.9%	33.7%	2.4%
1911	467,197	62.7%	26.2%	10.1%

Source: City Hall population folder.

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