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"CITIZENS IN ACTION": LOCAL ACTIVISM AND NATIONAL HOUSING PROGRAMS, VANCOUVER, 1919 - 1950

by

Catherine Jill Wade

B. A., University of Manitoba, 1963
B. L. S., University of British Columbia, 1967
M. A. (Art History), University of British Columbia, 1967
M. A. (History), University of British Columbia, 1984

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in the Department of History

(C) Catherine Jill Wade
Simion Fraser University
April 1991

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NAME: CATHERINE JILL WADE

DEGREE: Ph.D. (History)

TITLE OF THESIS: Citizens in Action: Local Activism and National Housing Programs, Vancouver, 1919-1950.

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: J.I. LITTLE

ROBIN FISHER
PROFESSOR AND SENIOR SUPERVISOR
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

VERONICA STRONG-BOAG
PROFESSOR
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis uses evidence from within and without government to show that in Vancouver between 1919 and 1950 both the federal government and local activists participated in the evolution of national housing programs. A housing problem developed in Vancouver between 1900 and 1950. The city suffered from a continuing, worsening shortage of adequate dwelling space for low-income households. At the same time, while generally well-accommodated, middle-income residents encountered crises in the availability and the affordability of housing during depression, war, and reconstruction. The federal government responded to this problem in Vancouver with nation-wide schemes that stimulated the economy or facilitated a war effort. As well, local activists pressed all three levels of government for improvements in residential conditions. Their campaign for better housing became visible in the 1910s and 1920s and grew stronger in the 1930s. Reinforced by agitation in other Canadian cities, they obtained by 1950 important if limited national programs in emergency shelter, veterans' rental projects, rent controls, and public housing. This account of the response to Vancouver's housing problem is historiographically significant in two major ways. The integration of national and local perspectives on housing issues fuses the two principal historiographical trends in post-war Canada, the "old"
political history and the "new" social history. Furthermore, emphasis upon the role of local agitation in formulating national housing policy contributes to recent British, American, and Canadian writing with an "activist" theme.
To 71 Claremont, Norwood (NHA 1938),
and 769 Sawyer's Lane, False Creek (NHA 1973),
which together have housed myself, Don,
family, friends, and assorted pets
in St. Boniface and Vancouver
for over fifty years.
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Graduate school would have been an impossibility for me without the financial support of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, B. C. Heritage Trust, Simon Fraser University, and the J. S. Ewert Fund at the University of Manitoba.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **APPROVAL PAGE** ................................................. 11
- **ABSTRACT** ........................................................... 11
- **DEDICATION** .......................................................... v
- **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS** ............................................... vi
- **LIST OF TABLES** ..................................................... x
- **LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS** ......................................... xi
- **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS** .......................................... xv
- **INTRODUCTION** ....................................................... 1
  
  **FOOTNOTES** ......................................................... 9

## Chapter

I. **HOUSING IN PRE-DEPRESSION VANCOUVER** ................. 15

  **FOOTNOTES** .......................................................... 68

II. **VANCOUVER'S HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE DEPRESSION** .... 79

  **FOOTNOTES** .......................................................... 124

III. **THE RESPONSE TO VANCOUVER'S HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE 1930s** 136

  **FOOTNOTES** .......................................................... 198

IV. **VANCOUVER'S WARTIME AND POST-WAR HOUSING PROBLEM** 216

  **FOOTNOTES** .......................................................... 256

V. **THE RESPONSE TO VANCOUVER'S HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE 1940s** 269

  **FOOTNOTES** .......................................................... 362
VI. CONCLUSION........................................393

FOOTNOTES........................................419

BIBLIOGRAPHY........................................427
# List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Housing Canadians in selected cities, 1921, by percentage</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Summary of building permits for all new construction in Vancouver, 1902-1924</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Business licenses for contractors, real estate dealers, and operators of apartment and lodging houses, Vancouver, 1930 to 1937</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Relief cases of the City of Vancouver Public Welfare and Relief Department, 31 December 1931 to 31 December 1938</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Unemployment, personal income, and rental costs in Canada, 1926 to 1940</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Average rents in dollars in Vancouver and Canada, December 1929 to December 1939</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Owner-occupied dwellings in selected cities, 1931, 1941, and 1951, by percentage</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Relief tenants, classified according to rent, in Vancouver, 8 April 1936</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Monthly shelter allowances in dollars, City of Vancouver, effective September 1932 and January 1936</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Home ownership in selected cities, 1931</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Value of tax arrears and tax sale properties, in dollars, City of Vancouver, 1930-1940</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Housing conditions in selected cities, 1941, by percentage</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Comparison in basic facilities, specific conveniences, disrepair, and overcrowding in Vancouver (1941 and 1951) and in Strathcona (ca. 1950).........................245
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure

1. Map of Vancouver in the late 1940s.......................24
2. East End cabins, ca. 1960.................................30
3. Squatters' shacks, Deadman's Island, 1925..............33
5. Central City Mission dormitory, n. d..................40
6. Better Housing Scheme home built in 1919 on Windsor Street, South Vancouver, by the British Columbia Department of Lands......59
7. Better Housing Scheme bungalow built in 1920 for about $3,500 on West 13th Avenue in Kitsilano...............62
8. A $2,400 one-and-a-half-storey home erected in 1919 on Triumph Street, East Vancouver, under the Better Housing Scheme........63
9. Map of Vancouver showing the number of persons on limited income and their geographic locations, May 1934.......86
10. Prior Street jungle, 1931.................................93
11. Dunlevy Avenue jungle, 1931.............................94
12. False Creek shack in 1934..............................106
13. Table from the civic special housing committee's 1937 report, showing the inequalities of the Dominion Housing Act program........156
14. The "Ontario type" from the Dominion Housing Act architectural competition, 1936...............160
15. Vancouver's first Dominion Housing Act home built in 1937 in Kitsilano.....................162

xii
16. Dominion Housing Act home, built ca. 1938 on West 36th Avenue near Dunbar Street..........................163

17. Dominion Housing Act home, built ca. 1938 on West 22nd Avenue near Cambie Street..........................164

18. B. C. Binning home, West Vancouver, 1940.............................................165

19. Rev. Andrew Roddan in a soup kitchen at the Prior Street jungle, 1931..............170

20. The swearing-in of Helena Gutteridge, 1937...........186

21. A post-war family crowded into 1940s low-priced housing..............................239

22. Strathcona houses, corner of Heatley and Georgia Streets, ca. 1960...........242

23. Wartime Housing Limited subdivision in North Vancouver, ca. 1940s.................280

24. Wartime Housing Limited standard house types, 1942......................................282

25. Wartime Housing Limited H12 type homes on Tobruck Street, North Vancouver, 1943........284

26. Wartime Housing Limited house type H22, North Vancouver, 1943..........................286

27. Housing Enterprises of Vancouver Limited apartments on Broadway Avenue, photographed ca. 1960........................................299

28. Wartime Housing Limited house, type H21, Vancouver, photographed ca. 1947..........322

29. Picket line outside the old Hotel Vancouver, 1946..............................................326

30. Aerial view of Renfrew Heights, 1948.........................331

31. Renfrew Heights under construction, 1948..................333

32. Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation small house design used in Fraserview, ca. 1949.......340
33. Apartments in Little Mountain Public Housing, completed 1954..................353

34. Townhouses in Little Mountain Public Housing, completed 1954..................355
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCF</td>
<td>Co-operative Commonwealth Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFMM</td>
<td>Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMHC</td>
<td>Central (Canada) Mortgage and Housing Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Communist Party of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Canadian Pacific Railway</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHA</td>
<td>Dominion Housing Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVA</td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP</td>
<td>Housing Conversion Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEV</td>
<td>Housing Enterprises of Vancouver Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIP</td>
<td>Home Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPP</td>
<td>Labor Progressive Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSR</td>
<td>League for Social Reconstruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHA</td>
<td>National Housing Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHPA</td>
<td>National Housing and Planning Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Employment Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>Non-Partisan Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPC</td>
<td>Socialist Party of Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPIC</td>
<td>Town Planning Institute of Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHA</td>
<td>Vancouver Housing Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHL</td>
<td>Wartime Housing Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPTB</td>
<td>Wartime Prices and Trade Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRAC</td>
<td>Women's Regional Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YWCA</td>
<td>Young Women's Christian Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Today Vancouver is in the midst of a housing crisis. An insufficient supply of affordable homes frustrates middle-income owners and renters. As well, the reduced availability of inexpensive rental accommodation aggravates the longstanding problem of sheltering low-income households, particularly those in the downtown area. The response by community and government to this distressing predicament has varied. Tenant groups in Kerrisdale and the West End have employed the strategy of sending delegations to City Council and the militant tactics of rent strikes and demolition blockages. Moreover, while most of the homeless live quietly by the night on the street, the beach, and the park or in cheap lodgings and hostels, an angry few have squatted in and been evicted from vacant houses with wide media coverage and some community support. The Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, the St. James' Social Services Society, and the First United Church Housing Society continue to aid their homeless constituency in innovative ways and to raise public awareness about core area housing conditions. The City of Vancouver has taken the citizens' case to Ottawa and assisted a limited dividend company in developing medium-priced rental units. Housing and neighbourhoods were the major issues of
the 1990 civic election. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has rejected calls to help in expanding the city's supply of homes beyond providing a small number of social housing units and devising a plan for denser accommodation to replace veterans' apartments in Kitsilano. Thus, both government and community have responded in varying degrees to the long- and short-term aspects of the local housing problem.

The present situation is not Vancouver's first experience with acute and chronic difficulties in residential conditions and with efforts to ameliorate them. Indeed, records held in archives in Ottawa, Victoria, and Vancouver reveal a housing problem extending back into the early years of the twentieth century and an equally persistent response emerging from citizens and governments alike. In particular, the housing hardships of the 1930s and 1940s generated a reaction of great vigour and lasting impact. Unfortunately, the history of this activism has until now remained unwritten, and a "rupture in historical memory" has left the activists of the 1990s (with some exceptions) unaware of previous crises and older struggles and achievements.

What was the nature of the earlier problem, and what was the response of local activists and governments? Does the past furnish any general lessons for meeting today's critical situation? Finally, what contributions does this study make towards the historiography of housing in Canada, Britain, and the United States?
To some, any discussion of a housing problem in Vancouver before the post-war years may seem unwarranted. The city compared favourably with other major Canadian cities in the 1931 and 1941 Census figures. The percentage of home ownership remained at about the same comparatively high rate of 50% in those two census-takings, and it rose sharply by 1951. Furthermore, Deryck Holdsworth's idyllic image of the pre-depression city as a place of homes and gardens makes difficult acceptance of the idea of a sudden, dramatic worsening of the housing situation in the early 1930s.

Still, the available primary sources disclose a housing problem characterized by two separate elements. On the one hand, a lack of satisfactory low-rental residential space plagued the core area throughout the first half of the century. On the other hand, crises in the availability and the affordability of middle-income dwellings beyond downtown occurred intermittently before 1950 and placed additional pressure on the inadequate low-income housing supply. Although the problem in both its aspects existed before 1929, it later worsened owing to conditions associated with depression, wartime, and reconstruction.

Efforts to improve the local housing situation began before World War I and continued into (and after) the 1950s. Despite Holdsworth's assertion that Vancouver encountered "little reform rhetoric" prior to 1929, civic officials and community organizations attempted to ameliorate substandard low-income dwelling conditions in the
1910s and 1920s. In addition, supported by community, labour, and veterans' groups, three levels of government co-operated in the introduction of the Better Housing Scheme during the post-World War I housing shortages. During the depression, the federal government implemented its first, long-range housing legislation and a temporary home rehabilitation program. As well, a spirited campaign by local activists to obtain subsidized public housing in Vancouver began in earnest. In the 1940s, Ottawa stepped in with emergency measures to meet wartime conditions and with new legislation to promote post-war home ownership. As the shelter situation deteriorated, community activists applied intense pressure to all governments, especially Ottawa, for programs to relieve both the temporary and the lasting aspects of the housing problem. They succeeded. By the early 1950s, they had secured short-lived improvements like an evictions freeze, emergency shelter, and continuation of rent controls and more permanent achievements like several thousand units of veterans' housing and Little Mountain public housing project.

Both the definition of Vancouver's pre-1950 housing problem and the description of responses to it require the integration of municipal and nation-wide conditions and events. The combination of local and national perspectives on Canadian housing history extends the work of those who have investigated events in specific cities and those who have examined policy-making at the federal level. Still,
because we lack a full understanding of contemporary developments in other Canadian cities, a complete fusion of the local and national dimensions of our housing history is impossible. As well, despite its integrationist approach, this account in no way implies that Vancouver was unique among the country's major cities in its difficulties and its reactions.

Any attempt to merge local and national perspectives departs from the two recent major historiographical traditions in Canada. In the post-war years, historical writing was national, political, biographical, and descriptive in character. With the arrival of the "new social history" around 1970, historians tended to concern themselves with social issues more than political events, with theory, methodology, or historiography more than narration, with ordinary Canadians more than prominent elites, and with cities, regions, and provinces more than the nation. Yet the shift in historiographical approaches was never as dramatic as it appeared. For example, in June 1986, that product of the "new social history," the *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, published several articles on the topic of national policy-making in housing. Moreover, many contemporary historians have continued to describe twentieth-century Canada from the national perspective and viewed federal housing initiatives as unilateral actions in the development of the welfare state. Still, much historical writing, particularly in the area of housing policy history, demands an amalgamation of the two traditions. Two
decades beyond the shift of the early 1970s, it is time to consider blending various elements of the post-war historiographical approaches: the local and national; the social and political; the ordinary Canadian and federal elite; and the historiographical context and narrative.

In fusing the local and national dimensions in Vancouver's housing history, this study also adds to the growing British and American literature about the role of local agitation in national housing policy-making. It argues that the initiation, implementation, or continuation of many improvements devised by the federal government often came about under pressure from "citizens in action" in Vancouver and, apparently, in other Canadian cities. The participation of these citizens complemented a tradition of housing activism that already existed in the United Kingdom and, to a lesser degree, in the United States. Unlike earlier reform drives in Canada, events during the depression politicized the activism of the 1930s and 1940s, and the participation of members of recently formed left-wing parties contributed significantly to the housing movement and its success.

A housing history based on an "activist" perspective contrasts with and extends other Canadian, British, or American work. In focusing upon a dynamic local housing movement, the study goes beyond an absorption with the residential conditions of working-class households, the social control of workers through housing reform, or the
reasons for state provision of low-income dwellings. As well, it differs substantially from other interpretations stressing the relationship between tenure, class, and social mobility, the phenomenon of suburbanization, or the implications of gender, family, ethnicity, and race for housing and its design. In showing the involvement of elements of both working and middle classes, it reveals the complexity of the city's class relations and contributes to discussions about class, race, and gender in British Columbia history, and it diverges from American reform literature excluding the participation of working people. Thus, through its "activist" approach, this account offers significant comment to historical writing taking a variety of other historiographical directions.

The study that follows proceeds chronologically through the decades of the City of Vancouver's history and ends in the early 1950s with the completion of the Little Mountain public housing and Fraserview veterans' rental projects and with the termination of rent controls. It pays particular attention to developments in the 1930s and 1940s. The various chapters outline the nature of the city's housing problem and the emergence of government reaction and local activism. A conclusion summarizes both problem and response and discloses the study's historiographical contributions. It also suggests some general historical lessons about the nature of today's problem and about the strategies and solutions for
dealing with it.
The Canadian women's movement also experienced this "rupture in historical memory" and temporarily lost the history of socialist feminism in this country. For its restoration we must thank Joan Sangster, Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1989), p. 224.


7 For the British literature, see, Joseph Melling, *Rent Strikes: People's Struggle for Housing in West Scotland, 1890-1916* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1983); idem, "Clydeside Housing and the Evolution of State Rent Control,"

8 "Citizens in action" is the title of ch. 5 in Albert Rose's Regent Park, pp. 46-60.

9 Earlier reform movements in Canada were less political, or they were at least beyond the concerns of left-wing political parties; for these movements, see, for example, Shirley Spragge's "A Confluence of Interests" and Lorna Hurl's "The Pitfalls of Philanthropy."

10 For literature on housing conditions, see, Terry Copp, The Anatomy of Poverty: The Condition of the Working Class in Montreal, 1897-1929 (Toronto: McClelland and


12 For the complexities of class relations in Vancouver and British Columbia, see, R. A. J. McDonald, "Working Class Vancouver, 1886-1914: Urbanism and Class in British Columbia," in Vancouver Past, pp. 33-69; Jean Barman, "Neighbourhood and Community in Inter-War Vancouver: Resi-

CHAPTER I

HOUSING IN PRE-DEPRESSION VANCOUVER

What was the state of housing and of housing reform in Vancouver before the Great Depression? Historical geographer Deryck Holdsworth has described the city in these years as a "unique urban landscape." It was "a city of single family homes peacefully situated on a peninsula on the edge of the Pacific and at the foot of coastal mountains" without "a dense concentration of workers' housing on expensive inner city land next to the workplace." According to Holdsworth, working- and middle-class residents could take advantage of cheap land, inexpensive building materials, good wages, and spreading street railway lines in buying or building their own suburban homes, whether a "cottage" in Grimmett or a "castle" in Shaughnessy Heights. The home-owning aspirations of immigrants recently arrived from places where they had been tenants rather than owners matched the sales rhetoric of Vancouver's real estate agents. Thus, in 1928-1929, 72% of the city's houses were single dwellings. Despite a broad spatial sorting into the working-class east side and the middle-class west side with overlapping in suburbs like Kitsilano, Mount Pleasant, or Grandview, the wage-earning population generally lived in
their own homes, which might be scaled-down versions of the California bungalow or Tudor Revival mansions. In working-class South Vancouver, single homes made up 75% of all residential types, and home owners occupied 84% of houses. A few tenements close to docks, mills, and foundries presented only potential slum conditions. Satisfactory housing contributed to the contentment and the stability of the local labour force. "Little reform rhetoric" existed "in the minds of civic leaders and embryonic planners" because "there were few tenements and few areas of abject poverty, overcrowding or disease." For nearly all men and women, the city seemed to offer adequate shelter and the hint of further affluence."

More recent writing has tempered this sanguine interpretation of Vancouver's residential situation before 1929. Another historical geographer, Donna McCririck has argued that the city before World War I did not represent a place of opportunity for all people. Land assembly practices left little room for people without surplus capital, and job insecurity and high living costs deterred many from home ownership. By 1911, between one-quarter and one-third of suburban wage-earners rented accommodation, and between 10% and 15% of the population lived in crowded, substandard housing in Chinatown and in the immigrant quarters of the East End. The city's distinctiveness lay in its natural surroundings rather than in its streetscape of detached dwellings, which was not much different from that of Winnipeg. Furthermore, in a
review of a Holdsworth paper, historian John Weaver has questioned whether land was less available elsewhere in Canada and whether home ownership levels in cities and municipalities west of Quebec were much different from Vancouver's. He has also observed that high rents, inflation, and speculation affected this west coast city as much or more than other Canadian urban areas between 1905 and 1913 when the big building boom occurred.

Some historians have noted the contrasts in housing conditions in Vancouver. R. A. J. McDonald has juxtaposed Holdsworth's description of "a suburban environment of detached residences with surrounding gardens rather than a dense concentration of tenements" with Margaret Andrews's evidence of "the higher incidence of death from disease and the deplorable tenement and rooming conditions in the east-side waterfront area." McDonald emphasized "the need to differentiate between the domestic circumstances of seasonal migrants and that of more stable urban workers." As well, Jean Barman has pointed out the residential differences between the boarding houses and tenements of the East End and the middle- and working-class suburbs east, south, and west of False Creek.

A more accurate assessment of Vancouver's pre-1929 accommodation would take into consideration aspects of those circumstances that Holdsworth has not examined in detail: housing statistics; development of downtown neighbourhoods over time; house-types other than single-family dwellings;
and residents other than middle- or working-class home owners of mainly British ethnicity. The result of such an investigation is a less optimistic picture of Vancouver's housing than the one that Holdsworth has given us. Certainly, Point Grey, South Vancouver, and the City of Vancouver generally supplied newer, better quality accommodation, particularly for skilled working people, than older industrial cities in North America and Europe. Still, the availability of adequate, affordable rental units for low-income households already presented a problem, as yet small, in the downtown area. Furthermore, periods of depression, war, or inflation temporarily affected the supply and the price of houses for suburban owners. By 1929, the pattern of a chronic shortage of satisfactory, low-income rented premises and of occasional crises in middle- and working-class ownership had appeared. As well, the first steps to ameliorate the housing problem in Vancouver had occurred at the local, provincial, and national levels, and the beginnings of a movement to improve residential conditions existed.

The statistics upon which Holdsworth based his exposition of pre-depression housing in Vancouver came from the plan for the city submitted in 1929 by the St. Louis, Missouri firm of Harland Bartholomew and Associates. Bartholomew's figures in turn originated in the South Vancouver voters' list and in other unidentified sources. The plan offered little or no statistical material about
dwellings, particularly tenements, cheap hotels, lodgings, boarding houses, shacks, and floathouses. Indeed, the plan appears to have dismissed tenements, or "cabins," simply by recommending that they no longer be permitted.

The 1921 Census of Canada furnishes more information than the Bartholomew plan, but its analysis is incomplete by contrast to later censuses. Moreover, its division of the pre-amalgamation city into Vancouver, Point Grey, and South Vancouver makes difficult any comparison of the 1921 and 1931 census data. Yet the 1921 statistics indicate that, in all probability, housing in Vancouver differed in no drastic way from that of Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Edmonton, or Victoria in terms of numbers of detached houses, ownership rates, rents, overcrowding, and construction materials.

In 1921, single houses made up 88.7% of Vancouver's 21,489 dwellings: of the rest, 6.4% were apartments, 1.6% row or terraced housing, and 2.6% semi-detached units. If one includes the municipalities of South Vancouver and Point Grey, where detached dwellings predominated, then the percentage of single houses for the entire Vancouver area exceeded 88.7%. This high percentage compared to 93.7%, 95.5%, and 89% in Victoria, Edmonton, and Winnipeg respectively, and while semi-detached and row or terraced houses prevailed in Toronto, single houses outnumbered other residential types in Hamilton (Table 1). During the 1920s in Vancouver, the number of apartment houses rose substantially. Con-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Larger Cities</th>
<th>Single Larger Houses</th>
<th>1-Room Dwellings</th>
<th>Renting Families</th>
<th>Owning Families</th>
<th>Overcrowding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>35.6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>46.9 (42)</td>
<td>1.29 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>50.4 (44)</td>
<td>1.40 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>42.6 (43)</td>
<td>1.11 (1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>47.7 (50)</td>
<td>1.21 (1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>88.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>34.5 (48)</td>
<td>1.22 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>41.4 (44)</td>
<td>1.39 (1.53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921; vol. 3: Population (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1927), table 11, p. 39, table 14, p. 53, table 17, pp. 57-59, table 21, pp. 66-67; and idem, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931: Census Monograph No. 8, Housing in Canada, prepared by Harold F. Greenway (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), pp. 51, 93. 1931 percentages are in parentheses. The percentages for owning families are rounded.
sequently, by 1931, the proportion of single houses to all dwelling types decreased to 80.4%. Like Victoria and Edmonton, Vancouver in 1921 had a higher percentage of one-room dwellings than Winnipeg, Toronto, and Hamilton: no doubt most of these 238 homes took the form of shacks along the Burrard Inlet and False Creek foreshores or in the city's uncleared outskirts (Table 1).

As well, the 1921 census data contradicts Holdsworth's assertions about unusually high home ownership levels in the Vancouver area (Table 1). Before amalgamation, the percentage of owning families (34.5%) in Vancouver lagged far behind the figures for Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton, Hamilton, and Victoria. Of course, the addition of ownership figures in Point Grey and South Vancouver would have increased this 1921 statistic. Nonetheless, McCrirk has used voters' list evidence for 1911 to conclude that tenancy rates already amounted to 38.0%, 25.2%, and 48.0% in the East End, Mount Pleasant, and West End respectively and that 25.0% of registered voters were not property owners. Finally, the 1931 Census figure of 48% for owning families in the amalgamated municipality does not differ radically from that of other Canadian cities (Table 1).

Vancouver was not unique regarding rents, overcrowding, and construction materials. Monthly rents averaged about the same in Vancouver as in Toronto, although more west coast families paid very low rents of under $9 owing to the concentration of seasonal workers living in hotels and
rooms. Using the arbitrary standard of one room per person, Vancouver's overcrowding rate matched that of other Canadian cities and showed the same general improvement between 1921 and 1931 (Table 1). Without doubt, this average of 1.22 rooms per person obscured the poor housing conditions of those living under the standard due to insufficient income as much as the Toronto figure did. In the area of construction materials, the city's homes were not unusual if compared to residences in many parts of Canada. In 1931, 83.93% of all dwellings were of wooden construction. The same trend existed in cities like Victoria, Edmonton, and Winnipeg, while builders in Toronto and Hamilton favoured brick and stone.

Holdsworth has given us a static impression of Vancouver's residential landscape. He depicted the housing of the city's various neighbourhoods when it was new, not as it altered over time. The homes of the suburban east and west sides did not experience excessive modification by 1929: in fact, the construction of new units in those areas expanded in the 1920s. By contrast, the residential conditions of the West End, business district, and East End changed noticeably by the time of the depression. In many cases, the Yaletown cottages for Canadian Pacific Railway workers, the West End mansions for railway management, and the East End one- and two-storey homes had become multiple family dwellings by the 1920s. At the end of the decade, the shift was significant enough for the Bartholomew
report to recommend the zoning of the core area into six-storey multiple dwellings, general business, heavy industrial, six-storey light industrial, and six-storey commercial districts.

The conversion of the core neighbourhoods into multiple dwelling areas began before 1900 in the business district and the East End and later spread to the West End. By 1901, a concentration of cheap dollar-a-day hotels had occurred in the eastern part of the business district and in the western part of the East End, and the Vancouver Health Department had commenced lodging house inspections. The migration of its original residents to other neighbourhoods and the arrival of European immigrants transformed the East End into a mixed single-family and boarding house area in the early 1900s. According to the Medical Health Officer, many male immigrants, especially unmarried Italian labourers, rented small East End houses and lived communally in crowded conditions. Between 1911 and 1913, lodging house inspections increased from 480 to 1,326 to 2,513 units. As well, the city granted 71, 346, and 333 lodging house licenses during those years and rejected 113, 119, and 127 applications due to the inadequacy of lighting, ventilation, toilet and bathing facilities, fire exits, and sanitation. Overcrowding greatly disturbed Health Department officials. In 1912, the lodging house inspector and his assistant conducted nocturnal visits "with good results" to flush out unauthorized tenants. An unknown number of unlicensed dwellings
Figure 1

Map of Vancouver in the late 1940s
of perhaps five to seven rooms with one to twelve lodgers also worried health officials.

As its residents gradually moved to Shaughnessy Heights and other west side neighbourhoods in the 1910s, the West End began its transition into a lodging and apartment house area. During the 1920s, the Health Department produced three reports on the overcrowding of rental accommodation located in the West End and the business district, roughly from Cambie to Thurlow Streets and from Pender to Robson Streets. At the decade's end, the City of Vancouver issued 380 and 732 business licenses to lodging house and block managers, mostly for buildings situated in the core area.

Despite the great number of single-family, owner-occupied homes in 1929 in Vancouver, rented houses, lodgings, "cabins," apartments, shacks, floathouses, and even tents accommodated a sizeable minority of the city's households. An investigation of the character of these other dwelling types permits a fuller understanding of Vancouver's early residential conditions.

Probably we know least about rented houses. In 1921, as much as 88.7% of the city's housing stock consisted of single-family homes, and tenants represented 65.5% of families in Vancouver in 1921 and 52% of those in the amalgamated municipalities in 1931. The Census does not reveal the distribution of families between leased detached residences and other types of rental quarters. Still, in 1921, 40.5%
of tenant families occupied more than five rooms, and they more likely lived in houses than in lodgings or apartments.

More complete information is available about house rents before World War I. According to the 1915 Board of Inquiry into the Cost of Living in Canada, despite two depressions, rents rose 40% in Vancouver during the previous decade owing to increased building costs and taxation, housing shortages brought on by rapid population growth, demands for additional conveniences, and speculation on vacant suburban properties. Rents for a typical six-room dwelling with sanitary facilities in a working-class district jumped from $12 or $15 in 1900 to $25 or $30 in 1912 and fell slightly to $20 or $25 in 1913. Rents for the same sized home without those conveniences followed the same pattern at $3 or $5 less. These rents were slightly lower than ones for similar accommodation in prairie cities and much higher than in Toronto or Montreal.

The dispersal of lodging houses throughout the West End and the business district had occurred by the 1920s. The Health Department documented 111 in its 1920, 1922, and 1927 surveys. A manager, who was usually a woman either renting or owning a dwelling, let rooms and housekeeping suites to single men or women, couples, and families. The building itself, which in this case might be a Yaletown version of pattern-book Gothic Revival domestic architecture, consisted of perhaps six, 12, or even 22 rooms. The manager supplied gas plates or coal or gas ranges in rooms.
and suites and, frequently, central heating. During the housing shortage following the Great War, lodging places tended towards overcrowding. However, the outward migration from Vancouver in the hard economic times of 1921-1922 and a subsequent upswing in construction slowly reduced the congestion. By 1927, a handful of the houses had actually reverted to single-family residences. Although some lodging houses were well-kept, many suffered from bad repair, dampness, lack of natural light, heat, and hot water, insufficient sanitary facilities, filth, and flooded basements. All too often, children lived in lodgings.

After 1904, rooms and suites in lodging houses usually furnished tenants with cooking fixtures fuelled by gas manufactured at the British Columbia Electric plant at the foot of Carrall Street on False Creek. The Medical Health Officer's reports between 1911 and 1913 expressed grave reservations about the installation, inspection, and maintenance of these fixtures and noted cases of asphyxiation and complaints about odours even at that time. By 1950, the matter of gas poisonings had become a problem of alarming proportions.

According to the Health Department, lodging houses included "rooms" and cheap hotels located in the business district and the East End. Although companies ordinarily ran the hotels, women or Asian male managers tended to operate the rooms. Premises like the Powell Rooms or Grand Union Rooms might have 20 or 35 rooms, but many were enor-
Some of these buildings had a dumb-bell design with a deep, narrow light-well that provided the only source of daylight and ventilation for bedrooms and toilets. This design greatly troubled health officials as early as 1912 and again in 1925 when they reported ten cases representing "a menace to the health of the occupants."

The Health Department considered "cabins" to be "the worst with which we have to contend" (Figure 2). Many "rooms" were, in fact, cabins: a two- or three-storey frame building contained single rooms opening off a porch that ran along one side of the structure from street to lane. Usually cabins covered most of a lot. Closer to the city centre, large neighbouring industrial plants or warehouses surrounded them and cut off natural light and ventilation. They appeared by 1900 mostly in the East End. Within a decade, lodging house inspectors declared them "a great menace to the public health." While recently built and structurally sound, they suffered serious deficiencies in venting and lighting. Moreover, they frequently accommodated families with small children as well as single working men. Late in 1912, the Health Department inspected 62 cabins near the old city hall at Main and Hastings Streets and found in them 1,167 men, 198 women, and 120 children. Inadequate lighting, ventilation, and cleanliness afflicted one-half to three-quarters of the cabins. A similar survey of 68 cabins made a year later produced the same results.
Figure 2

East End cabins, ca. 1960

Source: National Archives Canada, PA-154626
Apartment houses became an increasingly popular form of dwelling over time and offered more satisfactory accommodation than lodging houses. Between the 1921 and 1931 census enumerations, the percentage of apartment blocks compared to all residential types rose from 6.4% to 11.8%. Some apartments had been erected before the Great War. In 1913, Health Department officials inspected 101 blocks and indicated their apprehension about dumb-bell design and about uncertain lines of demarcation between lodging and apartment houses. In the 1920s, the number of licensed blocks rose every year, and total suites amounted to 6,100 by 1927. Two years later, the City of Vancouver issued 732 licenses to apartment managers. Although 120 companies like Pemberton and Sons Limited or Royal Trust Company managed many blocks, women operated 160 and Asians 13. Some of the better quality of these blocks, including the Devonshire Apartment Hotel, Englesea Lodge, Sylvia Court, Manhattan Apartments, and Gilford Court, remained for years (or still survive) as familiar landmarks on the Vancouver streetscape.

Foreshore shacks, floathouses, and tents functioned as less permanent types of housing in early Vancouver. Shacks were remnants of the west coast frontier. They proved to be amazingly resilient over time. After every demolition by the City, they sprang up again with renewed vigour. In 1886, following the CPR's completion, unemployed Chinese threw up huts on the marshes between Dupont (Pender) Street and False Creek. Ten years later, the City razed them due
Figure 3
Squatters' shacks, Deadman's Island, 1925

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, ST PK P281
to overcrowding and lack of sewerage. It neglected to plan for new housing in Chinatown, and, as a result, congestion and poor sanitation worsened for single Chinese labouring men. In addition, by 1894, at least 380 shacks lined the Burrard Inlet and False Creek shorelines. Unemployment, high land values, and rising rents augmented the squatting during the 1890s' depression. The City handed out eviction notices and eventually destroyed the waterfront shanties. Yet the shacks came back. In 1911, the Health Department once again cleared the Burrard Inlet foreshore of about 80 shacks and 40 floathouses, and, in 1921, waterfront habitation must have contributed substantially to the 238 one-room dwellings noted in the census (Figure 3). Indeed, shacks and floathouses on Burrard Inlet, False Creek, and the Fraser River continued to worry city officials until recent years. Before the first world war, tents also concerned the Health Department. Like shacks, they were hold-overs from the past. Vancouverites regularly summered or avoided high rents by tenting along English Bay.

Holdsworth's interpretation of Vancouver housing overlooked the accommodation of post-1900 residents of the East End and the business district who were European or Asian in ethnic origin, elderly, single, unskilled, and/or frequently under-employed or unemployed. Rather, he stressed the family homes of middle- and skilled working-class owners of British ethnicity who occupied the downtown area before 1900 or the suburban east and west sides. The most
obvious omission was the housing of single male Chinese labourers who worked in canneries or on the railroad in summer and lived in town when jobless in winter. Conditions for these men were extremely bad throughout the pre-depression years. They experienced dilapidated, unclean, dark, and unventilated surroundings, overcrowding, and exposure to environmentally related diseases like tuberculosis and typhoid. While they inhabited shacks at first, they later lodged in boarding houses operated by Chinese associations or businessmen in cellars, mezzanines, or upper floors of commercial or society buildings and in leased houses (Figure 4). Usually, groups of men from the same family, village, or district in China shared premises. Much to the consternation of health officials, the men partitioned off whole floors of large structures into small rooms and cubicles and accentuated the problems of crowding, ventilation, lighting, and disease. They prepared meals in communal cooking facilities and slept with cotton quilts and Chinese mats in low bunks running in tiers around each room. Boarding houses like the one in the two-storey Sam Kee Building at Pender and Carrall were extremely small in size: narrow cots, a cast-iron stove, and a coal box ranged along a six-foot wide room. Others managed by the Lun Yick Co. Ltd. at 507 Shanghai Alley and 15 Canton Alley had 72 and 42 rooms. According to Yun Ho Chang who arrived in Vancouver in 1908, the places where Chinese people lived were small
Figure 4

Chinese boarding house room accommodating 16 men, n. d.

Source: Provincial Archives of British Columbia,
HP 59639
and overcrowded. They'd cram 4 bunkbeds into a small room. All the cooking was done on a wood-burner and there were never enough pots and pans. 44

Robert Marrion, the City's Health Inspector, reported to the 1902 Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration that the Armstrong lodging house was a two storey brick building with 27 rooms upstairs. The rooms were 20 feet long, 13 feet wide, and 10 feet high, and were capable of holding six persons in each, according to the by-law. This was one of the best lodging houses in the city. When visited the other night all the rooms but two exceptions were occupied by more than six people. The furniture of a room would consist of a table, six bunks, and a stove: no more. As a rule, the six occupants would rent that room from a keeper who leased the building from the owner. The amount paid was $3 per month, or fifty cents per month for each occupant, provided no more than the proper number were allowed to use it. This was a fair example of the manner of living among the working Chinamen. 45

Living arrangements for families differed from the boarding houses. Some rented homes in the downtown area, and others resided in comfortable quarters at a place of business. Other ethnic groups fared better than or the same as the Chinese. Families of Japanese origin adapted to Vancouver's housing situation more easily than some other groups. Single East Indians and Italians lived communally in houses rented by one man for many, while the Health Department complained about overcrowding and cleanliness. At the same time, the women in Italian and other European families supplemented a family income by supplying probably
the best living conditions for labouring bachelors in the way of room, board, and washing.

Lodging houses, rooms, cheap hotels, shacks, and tents represented a first choice for the poor, the jobless, and the elderly. When these options failed, the homeless turned to hostels operated by the Salvation Army, the Central City Mission, the British and Foreign Sailors Society, the Anglican church, and other groups (Figure 5). Although initially the city government depended upon charities to carry the major responsibility, by the early 1900s it began to develop a variety of solutions, usually demeaning and deficient, to assist those in need of affordable housing: rent allowances for families; municipal grants to one or two hostels; and bed tickets for single males to be used in missions, hotels, or lodgings. In hard times, it used institutions like the first public library or the city gaol and facilities like the Hastings Park camp to provide the transient single unemployed with shelter in return for work. Working or jobless unmarried women remained virtually without any civic or charitable housing assistance unless they were unwed mothers or former prostitutes. During recessions, the Health Department also decided for reasons of "common humanity" not to close down lodging houses that it considered unfit for human habitation. In 1907, the Department began to care to some extent for the elderly without relatives who were unable to look after themselves, first in a former hospital building and six years later in
Figure 5
Central City Mission dormitory, n. d.

Source: Provincial Archives of British Columbia,
HP 66178
the Old People's Home (later Taylor Manor) on Boundary Road. In 1936, the Relief and Welfare Department took over the operation of the home. This early system of resources failed, especially in desperate economic times, to meet the shelter needs of the indigent, the unemployed, and the aged.

Low-income households in the downtown area thus faced a continuing shortage of adequate, inexpensive dwellings, long before the 1930s' depression. However, middle- and skilled working-class families located in East Vancouver, South Vancouver, and Point Grey also experienced intermittent hardships with housing. In the best of times, home owners and builders, who seemed secure by contrast to the needy, nonetheless engaged in a risky financial venture when they mortgaged a house. They wrestled with mortgages when faced with unemployment, labour disputes, high living costs, rising taxes, soaring land prices, and illness. They maintained their mortgage payments only by taking in boarders, renting out cottages in the backyard, managing rooms or apartment blocks, sending children to work, and keeping gardens, chickens, rabbits, and cows. Not surprisingly, many wage-earners rented rather than owned a house. Although some contractors worked on a grand scale in companies like the Bungalow Finance and Building Company or Vancouver Freehomes Limited, most were small operators, usually carpenters who erected a handful or less of units, including their own homes. Because they needed only limited capital to enter the industry, the operations initiated by members of
the building trades frequently met with financial difficulty. For example, Ernest Winch, the carpenter who in time became provincial leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, lost through foreclosure several heavily mortgaged dwellings that he had built in Burnaby and White Rock.

In addition, the First World War, the 1912-1913 depression, and the inflation of the early 1920s brought sporadic difficulties in housing. The rise and fall in the issuing of building permits for all new construction between 1911 and 1921 reveal the impact of macro-economic and political conditions on the Vancouver accommodation supply for middle- and skilled working-class owners (Table 2). The reduction in building operations during the pre-war depression and the war itself, together with the return of veterans from overseas, created by 1919 an enormous demand for homes. The shortages in accommodation drove many middle- and skilled working-class families into cheaper lodgings in the downtown area and caused doubling up and overcrowding that diminished only as supply increased in the mid-1920s (Tables 2 and 3). Post-war inflation also proved disastrous for some new home owners struggling to meet their mortgage payments. Between 1923 and 1925, 18% of the 153 residences built under the government-sponsored Better Housing Scheme were transferred to new owners or quitclaimed when prices suddenly fell after the inflationary peak of 1919-1922. Owners' equity vanished, and rented quarters of the same quality became available at rates cheaper than mortgage payments.
TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF BUILDING PERMITS FOR ALL NEW CONSTRUCTION IN VANCOUVER, 1902-1924

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Permits</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>940</td>
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<td>1910</td>
<td>2,260</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>2,775</td>
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<td>1912</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>2,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>1,314</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1,767 (338 dwellings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>2,451 (639 dwellings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>2,520 (644 dwellings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>2,183 (407 dwellings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2,628 (639 dwellings)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vancouver, Financial Statements and Annual Reports, 1924, p. 101. In 1920, the City began to summarize the number of permits issued for new dwellings; see below, p. 81, table 3.
In 1929, Vancouver was not an idyllic urban landscape for all its citizens. Its housing problems could not rival those of New York, Chicago, London, and Glasgow, or even Toronto and Montreal. Still, the long-term burden of sheltering low-income households in the core area and the occasional difficulty of accommodating middle- and working-class families in suburban districts already commanded the attention of local activists.

Although Holdsworth has stated that "little reform rhetoric" regarding housing existed in Vancouver before the 1930s' depression, in fact some activity on the part of city bureaucrats, planners, and local community groups did occur. Furthermore, several institutions and associations had developed the organizational skills and groomed the leadership necessary to undertake the improvement of society in many areas, including housing. In addition, between 1919 and 1923, the City of Vancouver and the municipalities of South Vancouver and Point Grey implemented the federally initiated and assisted Better Housing Scheme for the construction of veterans' homes.

Early in Vancouver's history, Health Department officials became seriously concerned about housing conditions in the downtown area and suggested their rectification through better regulation. By 1895, the Department employed Robert Marrion, a master plumber, whose duties included lodging
Nine years later, the City decided to professionalize the Department when it appointed Dr. Frederick T. Underhill, who had been trained in Edinburgh in both medicine and public health, as its first full-time Medical Health Officer.

Underhill directed a campaign to improve Vancouver's public health, including the regulation of rental accommodation. In 1911, under his guidance, the City created the position of Lodging House and Restaurant Inspector. The Department vigorously inspected and licensed lodgings, condemned and demolished buildings deemed unfit for human habitation, and investigated cabins in the City Hall area. Underhill himself urged a single consolidated model by-law for housing and planning throughout British Columbia; he intended that the by-law should apply to rental accommodation of all types, provide for the proper installation of gas fixtures, and contain a clause to ease demolition procedures. In 1913, the Provincial Secretary, Dr. H. E. Young, asked Underhill to draft a concise by-law, but the outbreak of World War I terminated this undertaking. The Trades and License Inspector for the City of Vancouver took over the supervision of the Lodging House and Restaurant Inspector's position in 1914 but returned it to the Health Department in 1931. During those 17 years, the Department maintained its interest in the housing situation: it prepared three surveys of overcrowding in the downtown area and one report about the use of dumb-bell design in hotels and
lodging houses.

Those involved in efforts to plan Vancouver in the 1920s played an important role as guardians of the suburban single-family dwelling. The Vancouver Board of Trade, founded in 1887 to promote trade and development, acted as the instrument of the city's business and professional elite in obtaining the 1925 town planning legislation under which both Vancouver and Point Grey set up Town Planning Commissions. The outcome of these efforts was the 1929 master plan for Vancouver, Point Grey, and South Vancouver proposed by Harland Bartholomew and Associates. The plan recommended the use of zoning to protect the amalgamated city's suburbs from downtown blight using as a model the 1928 Vancouver zoning by-law.

The planning exercise involved several individuals who became prominent in the housing debate of the 1930s and 1940s. J. Alexander Walker, a civil engineer educated at the University of Toronto, acted as engineer and secretary to the Town Planning Commission between 1926 and 1952. Walker helped to establish the Vancouver branch of the Town Planning Institute of Canada, drafted the 1928 zoning by-law, and prepared the 1929 South Vancouver plan as a consultant. George L. Thornton Sharp, an architect with Sharp and Thompson who was active with the Vancouver TPIC and the Architectural Institute of British Columbia, served on both the Vancouver and the Point Grey Town Planning Commissions. Frank E. Buck, an horticulturist from McGill and Cornell
Universities and later a faculty member at the University of British Columbia, conceived an interest in planning when he worked in Ottawa for the federal government. He sat first on the Point Grey Town Planning Commission and eventually on the Vancouver Commission. Dorothy Gretchen Steeves, who took a law degree in Holland before coming to Vancouver as a war bride in 1919, also occupied a seat on the Point Grey Commission. In the next two decades, Steeves became a well-known housing activist as a member of the CCF; Buck played an important part in the drafting of the 1937 Vancouver housing survey; Sharp designed plans for an unexecuted public housing project at Trout Lake; and Walker, representing the Town Planning Commission, acted as an adviser to city council on housing matters for many years.

Local organizations also began to take some interest in housing issues before the depression. Prompted by an Ottawa official in 1913 to co-operate in ensuring "properly built [i.e. sanitary and uncrowded] houses," the Vancouver Council of Women pressed the city to resolve shelter problems before they grew any larger and urged the National Council to investigate the accommodation of urban "masses of people" and lobby for legislation regulating the construction of apartments and lodgings. A year later, the Vancouver Council addressed a resolution to the provincial government and the civic health committee calling for residential design that incorporated sufficient light and surrounding open space. In addition, during the period of economic
readjustment following World War I, the Great War Veterans' Association of Canada and its Women's Auxiliary, the British Columbia Mainland United Soldiers, the Vancouver branch of the Grand Army United Veterans, the Amputation Club of British Columbia, and individual veterans kept up a constant pressure on municipal governments in Vancouver and South Vancouver and on the federal government for additional veterans' homes and, in particular, more Better Housing Scheme units. Finally, the local Trades and Labor Council and the University Club of Vancouver both sent telegrams in 1921 to Prime Minister Arthur Meighen advocating expansion of the national housing program.

Not unexpectedly, city officials, planners, and community organizations had contact with the broader housing reform movement. Having emigrated from Britain to Vancouver, Underhill was aware of the "gross errors" that had been made in European accommodation. He communicated with Dr. Charles A. Hodgetts, the Commission of Conservation Medical Health Officer with an interest in the shelter problem, and he knew the work of Lawrence Veiller on New York City's slums. The initiators of the planning process in Vancouver also felt the impact of the Commission of Conservation through the frequent visits of the latter's internationally respected town planning adviser, Thomas Adams, following his appointment in 1914. At the time, Adams was perhaps the country's most qualified authority on housing matters. He advised the federal government on its post-World War I shelter
program that directed and funded the Better Housing Scheme undertaken in Vancouver, South Vancouver, and Point Grey. As well, groups like the Local Council of Women and the Great War Veterans' Association of Canada had links with national executives that responded to accommodation problems on a country-wide basis.

By 1929, many groups and individuals in the community stood ready to take up the housing cause. Among the organizations were the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council, founded in 1889, the various socialist and labourist political parties, established from the 1890s on, the Communist Party of Canada, constituted in the 1920s, the Family Welfare Bureau of Greater Vancouver, organized in the late 1920s, the East End social services programs of First United Church, set up after 1914-1916 by the First Presbyterian and Central Methodist Churches, and the University Women's Club and New Era League, started in 1907 and 1916. In addition, several activists were poised to become vocal promoters of social housing as elected members of the CCF at all three governmental levels: Helena Gutteridge, the indefatigable suffragette, trade unionist, and clubwoman; Angus MacInnis, the socialist representative of labour on city council; and Laura Jamieson, the juvenile court judge and another energetic clubwoman. Moreover, the groups that organized the various branches of the housing industry and that eventually opposed the housing activists had also formed: the Builders' Exchange; the local branch of the Dominion Mortgage and
Investments Association; the Lumbermen's Association; the Real Estate Exchange; and the Associated Property Owners. Whether critics or advocates, all these groups played roles in the future struggle over social housing.

The major reform effort in pre-1929 Vancouver was the Better Housing Scheme. Dwellings built under this scheme represented the city's portion of a federal program responding to the post-World War I shelter problem. An acute accommodation shortage brought on by the cessation of building operations during the war and by the return from overseas of soldiers eager to re-establish themselves and their families in civilian life prompted proposals for state action from Members of Parliament, Ontario government members, labour, and organizations like the Great War Veterans' Association, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, and the Toronto Board of Trade. In July 1918, the Ontario government set up a scheme under which it made loans to municipalities as mortgage money for individual home buyers. Later that year, Ontario and the federal government conducted negotiations over a program under which a federal loan would furnish mortgage funding for the provincial scheme. When the issue of housing congestion arose at the Dominion-Provincial Conference in Ottawa in November, the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Sir Thomas White, offered to make such loans available to all the provincial governments.
The federal government next devised the machinery needed to implement a housing program. An order-in-council in December 1918 authorized the apportionment under the War Measures Act of $25 million to the provinces according to 1918 population size. The allotment took the form of a 20-year loan at 5% annual interest secured in provincial bonds or debentures. The federal government expected each province to negotiate an agreement for a housing scheme financed by the loan.

A subsequent order-in-council established a Cabinet committee to determine the nature and the objectives of the program. Chaired by N. W. Rowell, President of the Privy Council, the committee included G. D. Robertson, Minister of Labour, A. K. Mclean, Vice-Chairman of the Reconstruction and Development Committee of Canada, and T. A. Crerar, Minister of Agriculture. Thomas Adams acted as adviser and largely drafted the housing plan. The committee also worked with representatives of the Ontario scheme to define federal and provincial responsibilities. According to the committee report of February 1919, the program objectives were to relieve shortages through construction, to give working people, especially veterans, the opportunity to own homes at a fair price, and to promote community health and well-being through planning and housing projects. Under the program, a province had to submit for federal approval a proposal explaining the guidelines for local schemes. Federal regulations permitted maximum costs of houses to
range between $3,000 and $4,500 according to size and building material, and they allowed land ownership by province or municipality, limited dividend societies or companies, or individual home owners. The committee strongly recommended the utilization of large sites for "good planning and economy," the limitation of loans to purchasers or renters with incomes below $3,000, and the imposition of minimum standards of services, space, and sanitation. Ottawa made the expertise of Thomas Adams available to the provinces. In October 1919, Adams and the administration of the program moved from the Cabinet committee to the newly created Housing Branch of the federal Department of Health.

In addition to their stated objectives, those who supported, approved, and fashioned the federal housing program appear to have had a less visible motive. Sir Thomas White, who at first was cool to the proposed scheme, eventually offered loans for housing to the provinces because he anticipated that residential construction would contribute to post-war social stability. In May and June of 1919, the Winnipeg General Strike and the sympathetic strikes accompanying it elsewhere in the country made clear to all governments the importance of implementing the program. The June 1919 report of the Royal Commission of Industrial Relations prepared by the Honourable Chief Justice T. G. Mathers of Manitoba, stressed that insufficient and poor housing represented one of the chief causes of industrial unrest across Canada. The program received strong support from the
National Industrial Conference in September for the same reason, from business in general, and from labour and veterans. Thus, the execution of the program in the turbulent context of 1919 may be seen as insurance against social unrest, much like the contemporary British "homes fit for heroes" program.

The federal housing program of 1919-1923 stimulated the construction of 6,244 dwellings in 179 municipalities in all provinces except Alberta and Saskatchewan. Ontario passed enabling legislation in 1919 and quickly put its scheme into operation under a Bureau of Municipal Affairs Housing Branch. Its eligibility requirements tended to favour veterans who were provincial residents of modest means. Municipalities appointed housing commissions to administer local projects. The Quebec scheme offered no preference for ex-servicemen. Other provinces, including British Columbia, followed the Ontario model.

As in Britain, federal interest in the program faded after 1919 as the economy slumped and the threat of social disorder declined. At first, the government reduced the size of the Housing Branch. Later, despite an additional advance of money in 1920-1921 under pressure from veterans, provincial and municipal governments, boards of trade, labour, businessmen and community groups, it discontinued funding in the fiscal year 1923-1924. A. E. Jones has offered two reasons for the program's abandonment beyond the federal government's diminishing fears of social unrest.
First, the government viewed the program as a temporary solution to a momentary problem rather than a commitment to permanent involvement. Housing remained the responsibility of provincial and municipal governments and, in particular, the private sector. As well, the political context of the program changed as sympathetic politicians like Rowell, Crerar, and Maclean left the scene and other lukewarm ones like Meighen and King arrived.

British Columbia was one of the first provinces to participate in the federal housing program. Its Better Housing Act received royal assent on 29 March 1919. This legislation enabled the provincial government to arrange agreements to borrow federal money using debentures as security and to loan funds to municipalities at 5% annual interest repayable in 20 years. The Act also allowed municipalities to make available sums of money to soldiers for housing. Any agreement or contract made under the legislation had to include a fair wage clause. The provincial Department of Lands assumed administrative responsibility for the Act. British Columbia promptly submitted a proposal to the federal committee and Thomas Adams, and, on May Day 1919, Cabinet approved the Better Housing Scheme. The Province then applied for a $1,500,000 loan and issued debentures as security for advances. Eventually, additional funding pushed the total loan to $1,701,500. British Columbia was the only province to spend its entire allotment.
In the spring of 1919, the City of Vancouver experienced serious housing congestion characterized by rising rents, diminishing vacancies, and doubling up. The wartime construction slow-down, the establishment of veterans' new families, the migration of prairie people to the west coast, especially during winter, and the problem of material shortages and wage demands produced the crisis. The City was therefore eager to share in the Better Housing Scheme. It set up a special committee to work out details for a civic proposal, and in May it contracted an agreement with the British Columbia government. The City borrowed $300,000 from the Province repayable in 20 years at 5% annual interest and issued debentures as security for the loan. The agreement included a fair wage clause and a preference for ex-servicemen's employment, and it gave priority to soldiers and/or their families in obtaining a loan or purchasing a dwelling and made available a $300 rebate if they remained in their houses for 10 years. The scheme provided for detached dwellings of frame, stucco on frame, or brick veneer costing $3,000 maximum for four-five rooms or $4,500 maximum for six-seven rooms and complying with municipal building by-laws. It also allowed the Province, the City, or an individual to own the site of a house.

The special civic committee did not obtain all for which it negotiated. Significantly, in terms of subsequent developments, it could not convince the Province to make guarantees against losses in the scheme. Minister of Lands
Duff Pattullo argued that the federal government had similarly declined to assume liability against loss for the provinces and that the City should share equal responsibility with British Columbia for the Vancouver project. As well, the committee unsuccessfully pressed the Province to set up a central administration to direct the entire Better Housing Scheme in the interests of continuity and economy. Some committee members also believed that the Vancouver proposal should have gone to the voters in the form of a plebiscite before implementation.

The City of Vancouver set up an administrative committee consisting of three council members and three civic officials and formulated a series of rules to guide the execution of the scheme. An allotment sub-committee accepted applications and $10 fees from individual citizens, all of whom were investigated by the Civic Employment Bureau. No applicant received consideration unless she or he had been domiciled for at least six months prior to enlistment for overseas service and had an income of under $3,000. Top priority went to widows of soldiers and disabled veterans burdened with dependents and few material resources. The City Building Inspector, who sat on the administrative committee, played an important role in the scheme. He approved plans and specifications for all houses, and he supervised the tenders and contracts for construction, the expenditures and progress estimates of the contractors, and the erection of every dwelling. City council itself approved all loans
and extended written permission to owners to sublet, vacate, and transfer houses.

The municipalities of Point Grey and South Vancouver also entered into agreements with the provincial government under the Better Housing Scheme. By February 1920, the allotments amounted to $54,000 for Point Grey and $65,000 for South Vancouver, and a year later they had increased to $94,000 and $90,000 respectively. In 1919, the Department of Lands purchased 50 lots between 47th and 49th Avenues near Fraser Street from South Vancouver municipality. It combined several lots into 50' x 120' "homesites" and built 10 soldiers' houses costing a maximum $2,500 each according to plans drawn up by the Provincial Architect (Figure 6).

The province continued to administer this housing even after the municipality itself decided to participate in the scheme and set up a housing commission composed of representatives from various veterans' groups. After amalgamation, the City of Vancouver assumed responsibility for the homes erected by the Point Grey and South Vancouver municipalities.

Over the years, various critics have given us negative assessments of the 1919 federal program. The 1935 report of a special parliamentary committee on housing presented a bleak picture of mismanagement and poor construction. According to one witness, the Ottawa scheme, which was comprised of 29 houses on city lots and 142 homes in the Adams-designed community of Lindenlea, represented "a hopeless mess" and "a gross failure." Incompetent administration led
Figure 6

Better Housing Scheme home built in 1919 on Windsor Street, South Vancouver by the British Columbia Department of Lands
to the mishandling of funds (and embezzlement), to substandard construction and thus vacant houses, and to the need for additional city funding to cover tax and mortgage arrears and extra building costs. In Winnipeg, better control by city council produced 712 units of superior quality and a small surplus. The housing monograph of the 1931 Census prepared by H. F. Greenway, the final report of the housing and community planning sub-committee of the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, and A. E. Grauer's housing study written for the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations repeated this theme of mismanagement.

More recent evaluations are even less flattering than the older ones but for different reasons. Using the objectives of the program itself, A. E. Jones charged that the scheme was too limited in scope to relieve congestion, that it did not systematically favour low-income people, and that it failed completely as a demonstration of good planning and housing principles. In his biography of Thomas Adams, Michael Simpson characterized the federal program as short-term and market-oriented: its aim was to diffuse social unrest and to stimulate the private sector and generate employment without sounding too collectivistic. The housing never reached those of lowest income who most desperately needed it. Simpson mentioned other difficulties with the program. Projects did not fulfill the standards set by Adams. No government surveyed actual accommodation needs at the municipal level. Funding represented a
token sum. Some provinces did not participate, and regulations excluded rural housing. Simpson, too, called the program "a dismal failure."

The operation of Vancouver's Better Housing Scheme confirms old impressions of the federal program but also offers new perspectives. First, since the homes consisted of detached dwellings on city lots, the scheme never signified a model housing or planning project to Vancouverites. Rather, the houses conformed to the city's unplanned suburban development patterns and to its predilection for bungalow styles (Figures 7 and 8). Even the homes built on a large site in South Vancouver by the provincial government adjusted to this norm.

Secondly, the Better Housing Scheme had very little impact as an instrument of social control. It built or added onto only 153 houses in Vancouver, Point Grey, and South Vancouver. Furthermore, the scheme proved itself a poor stimulus to the economy and employment when contractors were reluctant to tender for houses. They resisted depositing 10% of the contract value as security when they could use it to better advantage in other ways, and they were loath to bid for small houses.

More importantly, the Better Housing Scheme in Vancouver failed to reach people of low income living downtown in congested conditions like those described in the 1920 housing survey. Only one house was located in the core area. The remainder were situated in suburban areas, about
Figure 7

Better Housing Scheme bungalow built in 1920 for about $3,500 on West 13th Avenue in Kitsilano
Figure 8

A $2,400, one-and-a-half-storey home
erected in 1919 on Triumph Street in East Vancouver
under the Better Housing Scheme
60% on the east side and about 40% on the west side of the amalgamated city. In addition, the allotment sub-committee gave the housing only to those applicants with the financial ability to repay their loans. Blue- and white-collar workers with up to $3,000 yearly income made up almost 80% of mortgagors between 1919 and 1929. Some level of government employed about 30% of mortgagors in those years, and professionals, business people, and agricultural workers accounted for about 20% of those who held mortgages. The value of about three-quarters of the east side loans fell short of $3,000, while about three-quarters of those on the west side exceeded $3,000. Only eleven mortgagors were female in 1919-1923; they appear to have been soldiers' widows.

Finally, the city government and community groups had no input into the design of the over-all program. Federal and provincial bureaucrats apparently never consulted civic officials like Underhill who had extensive knowledge of local housing conditions. Not surprisingly, assistance went to moderate-income households rather than low-income ones. Moreover, the scheme's organizers at every level ignored groups outside government, excepting veterans' organizations, that might have offered sound advice. For example, the Women's Department of the Canadian Reconstruction Association, which quickly became aware of the omission of women from inclusion in any housing commission set up by May 1919, suggested that recommendations from women be sent
directly to the federal government or indirectly under its auspices. Vancouver City Council similarly ignored the Women's Department of the local Reconstruction League.

The administrative and financial structure of the federal program and the Better Housing Scheme created great problems in both the short- and the long-term for the City of Vancouver. The senior governments expected municipalities to carry the burden of executing the program. In Vancouver, the City had to hire extra staff to assist the Building Inspector, who carefully supervised all contractors' work in order to prevent shoddy construction or financial liability on the part of the taxpayers. As well, the City Comptroller and the Finance Department had to assume the heavy responsibility for allotment and administration when the load became too cumbersome for a special civic committee. Eventually, they also directed the Point Grey and South Vancouver schemes. Vancouver, like Winnipeg, never experienced any hint of mismanagement of funds.

The greatest difficulty with the Better Housing Scheme in Vancouver emerged from its financial structure. The chain of lending arrangements too easily broke down during economic depression. If an individual home owner failed to meet his or her obligations, then the house reverted to the City, which had to deal with subsidizing arrears in taxes and mortgage, with renting or selling the unit, and with paying off the provincial loan. The scheme worked reasonably well in the 1920s with the exception of the 1923-1925 period.
During that decade, six mortgages were paid off, none were foreclosed, and only three were quitclaimed. The real problem arose in the depression when many mortgagors could not meet their house payments and taxes and when the City of Vancouver could not repay the British Columbia government. The Better Housing Scheme thus left a terrible legacy to the social housing movement that grew up in the late 1930s.

By then, City Council was struggling with the consequences of the scheme's financial organization without any federal or provincial support. It therefore distrusted any nationally initiated public housing proposal in which the City might have to bear unwanted costs.

Still, the Better Housing Scheme experience, together with the actions of local bureaucrats, planners, and community organizations, attests to the beginnings of housing reform in Vancouver long before 1929.

Clearly, the state of housing in Vancouver before the 1930s depression was not as bright as Holdsworth would have us believe. Chronic problems in low-income shelter concentrated in the core area and occasional crises in middle- and skilled working-class accommodation in the suburbs existed by 1929. Yet the failure to recognize the darker side of the early housing picture is not unusual. Even today, an understanding of the inadequacy of accommodation encountered by thousands of Canadians requires the penetration of aggregate data. Moreover, the majority of
Vancouverites before 1930 did live in better housing than their peers in industrial cities like New York or London, although their homes did not especially differ from others in Victoria, Edmonton, or Hamilton.

Furthermore, the emergence of the social housing movement associated with the 1930s and 1940s actually occurred in Vancouver in the 1910s and 1920s. On the one hand, while a national program to resolve critical post-World War I shortages depended on provincial and municipal governments for its implementation, it responded to community groups for its continuation. On the other hand, local bureaucrats, planners, and organizations attempted to ameliorate more deep-rooted difficulties. The failure to arrest the pre-1929 housing problem brought further deterioration in conditions in subsequent years and generated a more concerted reaction by governments and activists. Like the later movement, the early drive for improvement in housing involved both working- and middle-class elements, including veterans' associations, labour organizations, women's groups, professionals, and civic officials. But initial efforts to alleviate poor housing conditions did not experience the politicization that animated and intensified the more mature movement. Still, the groundwork for the struggles of the 1930s and the 1940s was laid in the preceding decades.


7 Percentages were calculated from Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Sixth Census of Canada, 1921; vol. 3: Population (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1927), p. 39, table 11. The type of 0.6% dwellings was not given.
Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Seventh Census of Canada, 1931: Census Monograph No. 8, Housing in Canada*, prepared by Harold F. Greenway (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), p. 147, table 6. Apartment houses, semi-detacheds, row and terraced housing, hotels and rooming houses, and other types of dwellings represented 11.8%, 1.55%, 0.72%, 5.93%, and 0.15% respectively of total dwellings.

9 McCririck, p. 73.

10 Census, 1921, vol. 3, pp.66-67, table 21. The average monthly rent in Vancouver was $34.77 as compared to $35.21 in Toronto. 818 families paid a monthly rent of under $9 in Vancouver, 703 in Toronto.


12 Ibid., p. 144, table 3.

13 I have defined the downtown neighbourhoods as Barman described them in "Neighbourhood and Community," pp. 104-105. Barman used the post-amalgamation ward system to divide up the city core. The "West End" extended from Stanley Park to Burrard Street, the "business district" from Burrard to Carrall Streets, and the "East End" (including Strathcona and Chinatown) from Carrall to Victoria Drive along Terminal Avenue. The suburban neighbourhoods filled the area between Burrard Inlet and the Fraser River, bordered by Burnaby on the east. Ontario Street was the dividing line between east side and west side neighbourhoods (Figure 1). Occasionally, I refer to the downtown eastside, the current name for the area encompassing the business district and the East End to Clark Drive.


15 City of Vancouver Archives (hereafter CVA), Public Documents #11, Medical Health Officer's Reports, 1911-1913.

16 CVA, Records of the Health Department, ser. 8-1, 145-C-1, file [entitled] Archival File re Housing, Lodging Houses, "Report of Housing Conditions Existing in the West End of Vancouver, B. C. [and Lists Nos. 1 and 2], 30

17 CVA, Records of the Permits and Licenses Department, ser. B-1, 126-B-11, Business License Register, 1929.


22 CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1911, p. 11, 1912, pp. 4, 14, and 1913, vii-viii.

23 CVA, Permits and Licenses Department records, 126-B-11, Business License Register, 1929.


25 CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1913, vii.

26 Some cabins still exist on Keefer Street in Strathcona and on W. 7th Avenue in Fairview.


28 Ibid., MHO Report, 1911, p. 5.

29 Ibid., MHO Report, 1912, p. 21.

30 Ibid., MHO Report, 1913, vii-viii.

31 Data for calculating the percentage for 1921 came from Census, 1921, vol. 3, p. 39, table 11. See also, Census Monograph No. 8, p. 147, table 6.

32 CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1913, vii.

33 CVA, Records of the Town Planning Commission, ser. 3-A-1, 61-B-4, file 7, "Apartments; City License Inspector's
Figures, May 1928." Between 1922 and 1927, the numbers totalled 408, 444, 485, 501, 549, and 579.

34 CVA, Permits and Licenses Department records, 126-B-11, Business License Register, 1929.

35 Ibid.

36 CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1911, pp. 9-10.


40 For a social analysis of these neighbourhoods, see, Barman, pp. 104-20.


43 CVA, Permits and Licenses Department records, 126-B-11, Business License Register, 1929.

44 "Opening Doors," p. 41.


47 CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1911, pp. 4, 10, and 1912, p. 15.


the Metropole Hostel (Salvation Army) with 94 beds, the
Vancouver City Rescue Mission with 300 beds, the Central City
Mission with 250 beds, the Strathcona Institute for Sailors
and Loggers (British and Foreign Sailors Society), with 40
beds, the Seamen's Institute (Anglican Church) with 30 beds,
50
For a description of Hastings Park Camp, see,
Elizabeth Lees, "'1914 Popularity and Flags - 1922 Misery
and Rags'," in Working Lives, prepared by the Working
also, Patricia E. Roy, "Vancouver: 'The Mecca of the
Unemployed,'1907-1929," in Town and City: Aspects of Western
Canadian Urban Development, ed. A. F. J. Artibise, Canadian
Plains Studies, no. 10 (Regina: Canadian Plains Research
Centre, University of Regina, 1981), pp. 393-413. The
Metropole Hostel of the Salvation Army and the Central City
Mission received provincial as well as municipal grants;
see, Matters, p. 4. In the 1890s and in 1907, the city
utilized space in the first public library and the old city
gaol to shelter the transient single unemployed.
51
Matters, p. 7.
52
CVA, PDS #11, Annual Report of the Health Department,
1910.
53
CVA, Records of the Social Services Department, ser.
6, 106-F-1, file 4, T. T. Hill to G. Sutton-Brown, 22
December 1960.
54
McCririck, pp. 117-27.
55
Ibid., pp. 123, 126; and "Opening Doors," pp. 7,
34, 68, 80, 105-107.
56
Holdsworth, "House and Home" (1981), p. 197; James
Robert Conley, "Class Conflict and Collective Action in the
Working Class of Vancouver, British Columbia, 1900-1919"
(Ph. D. dissertation, Carleton University, 1986), pp. 574-
75; and Dorothy G. Steeves, The Compassionate Rebel: Ernest
Winch and the Growth of Socialism in Western Canada
57
Calculated from data found in CVA, Records of the
Finance Department, ser. 2, 97-D-3, Better Housing Scheme
Ledger Account, 1924-1925, 113-A-15, Better Housing Scheme
Ledger Account, 1920-1923, and 115-E-2, Soldiers' Housing
Accounts, 1920.
58
Canada, House of Commons, Special Committee on
Housing, Minutes of Proceedings and Evidence, no. 4, 12 March

Andrews, p. 135.

CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1913, vii-viii.

CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-1, file [entitled] Archival File re Housing, Lodging Houses, Young to Underhill, 11 December 1913, and Underhill to Young, 23 December 1913.


Special Collections Division, The Library, University of British Columbia, Papers of Vancouver Council of Women, M657, Box 6, Minutes, 6 January 1913, p. 70, 3 February 1913, p. 90, and 6 February 1913, pp. 105-06.
Ibid., 2 February 1914, pp. 16-18.

CVA, Records of the Office of the City Clerk, ser. 1, 13-F-4, file [entitled] City Comptroller, 1921, W. Butterworth to [City of Vancouver], 14 May 1921; ibid., 14-A-1, file [entitled] Soldiers, 1921, W. H. Roberts to Mayor, 14 July 1921, Reg A. Webb to W. R. Owen, 14 July 1921, [representation from Amputation Club of B. C.], 14 July 1921, and numerous letters from individual veterans to the City, 15-16 July 1921; and Vancouver Sun, 4 September 1919, p. 2, and 4 November 1919, p. 4.


CVA, PDS #11, MHO Report, 1912, pp.6, 20; and Underhill’s notes for a draft model by-law located in CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-1, file [entitled] Archival File re Housing, Lodging Houses.


For more information on Gutteridge and Jamieson, see, Susan Wade, "Helena Gutteridge: Votes for Women and Trade Unions," in In Her Own Right, pp. 187-99; and
Sangster, passim.

75


76

Jones in The Beginnings of Canadian Government Housing Policy offers the best analysis of the federal program's origins, nature, abandonment, and achievements.

77


78

National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Records of the Department of Finance, RG 19, vol. 705, file 203-1, P. C. 2997, 3 December 1918. See also, Canada, Privy Council, Housing Project of Federal Government: Orders in Council (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1919), for national orders in council mentioned in this and subsequent footnotes.

79

Ibid., P. C. 3067, 12 December 1918.

80

Ibid., P. C. 374, 20 February 1919.

81

Jones, pp. 12-14.

82

Canada, Royal Commission on Industrial Relations [T. G. Mathers, Chairman], Report of Commission, printed as supplement to Labour Gazette 19, 7 (July 1919), pp. 6, 13, 19.

83


84

Census Monograph No. 8, p. 23.

85

Swenarton, p. 192; and Jones, p. 40.
86 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
87 British Columbia, Statutes, Better Housing Act, 1919, 9 Geo. 5, ch. 8.
88 NAC, RG 19, vol. 712, file 203-3, J. D. MacLean to T. Adams, 29 April 1919, and "General Housing Scheme of the Province of British Columbia"; and ibid., P. C. 907, 1 May 1919.
89 Ibid., Telegram from John Hart to Minister of Finance, 27 May 1919; and ibid., Executive Council Order 810, 19 June 1919.
91 Jones, p. 23.
92 CVA, City Clerk's records, 13-E-4, file [entitled] Housing Committee, 1919, J. E. Elkins to Mayor Gale, 21 March 1919.
95 CVA, City Clerk's records, 13-E-5, file [entitled] Soldiers, 1919, "Rules and Regulations Governing the Acquiring of Land and the Building of [Dwellings] for Returned Soldiers." See also, ibid., for the indenture entered into between the mortgagor and the City of Vancouver; and ibid., 13-F-4, file [entitled] City Comptroller, 1921, for examples of applications for allotment under the Better Housing Scheme. The civic officials were the city's solicitor (or his assistant), accountant, and building inspector.

Special Committee on Housing, Minutes, pp. 57-71, 331-34.

Housing Monograph No. 8, p. 33; Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning (chaired by C. A. Curtis), Final Report of the Subcommittee, March 24, 1944 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944), p. 25; and A. E. Grauer, Housing: A Study Prepared for the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1939), pp. 35-38.

Jones, pp. 41-43.

Simpson, pp. 105-08.

About 59 others were erected in Burnaby, New Westminster, North Vancouver City, Port Coquitlam, and West Vancouver; see, British Columbia, Legislative Assembly, Sessional Papers, "Report of the Superintendent of British Columbia Soldier Settlement," (1921), G12.


The data in this paragraph was collected from CVA, Finance Department papers, 97-D-3, Better Housing Scheme Ledger Account, 1924-1925, 113-A-15, Better Housing Scheme Ledger Account 1920-1923, and 115-E-2, Soldiers' Housing Accounts, 1920.

Using Ontario Street as the dividing line, east side houses numbered 90 and west side ones 63.

Government employees included clerks at the post office, customs, and Soldier Civil Re-establishment Board, a veterinary surgeon with the British Columbia government and an accountant with the provincial liquor warehouse, and clerks, policemen, labourers, firemen, janitors, and a school nurse with all three municipalities.

Canadian Reconstruction Association, Women's Department, Better Houses for Canadians (Toronto: The Department, 1919).

Sun, 20 February 1919, p. 4.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 13-E-2, file [entitled] Building Inspector, 1919, A. J. Bird to Chairman, Building Committee, 3 November 1919; ibid., 13-E-6, file [entitled] City

CHAPTER II

VANCOUVER'S HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE DEPRESSION

In examining the national response to the accommodation problem of the depression decade, historians have correctly identified "the central housing issue of the day" as "the inability of many urban residents to afford adequate housing." Furthermore, contemporary surveys of the residential situation in Toronto, Montreal, Winnipeg, and Halifax attributed bad conditions to "the inability of the lowest wage-earners to pay rents sufficiently high to obtain adequate housing accommodation." In Vancouver in 1939, local activists also blamed "slum growth" upon "a chronic shortage of low rental housing." Yet these studies concentrated upon the predicament of the low-income tenant household and overlooked the plight of the homeless single unemployed and the jobless homeowner. Thus, to define Vancouver's problem with accuracy and depth, it is necessary to investigate the availability, the affordability, and the quality of shelter for transients with no means and for renters and home owners of reduced earnings. By the 1930s, the problem represented, on the one hand, a continuing scarcity of low-cost accommodation located in the downtown area and, on the other hand, a
short-term crisis in housing for working- and middle-class households acutely affected by the depression.

In his inaugural address in January 1930, Mayor W. H. Malkin looked forward to "a year of activity and prosperity for Vancouver." He expected building permits for all types of construction to total about $50 million. With the erection over the previous year of several towers like the present Hotel Vancouver, several new apartment houses, and many homes, the real estate situation appeared superficially healthy. Still, construction of dwellings plummeted with the economy between 1930 and 1932 and ground virtually to a halt in 1933 and 1934 when the City License Department issued only 199 and 190 building permits for new residences (Table 3). Conditions improved very slowly throughout the rest of the decade. Permit issues reached 1930 levels again only in 1940. The yearly licensing of contractors and real estate dealers followed a parallel pattern of sudden reduction and gradual expansion (Table 4).

As a result of the curtailment in construction, the number of new dwellings in Vancouver increased by less than 10,000 from 1931 to 1941. Although the 1941 census reported 10,586 additional sets of living quarters over the 1931 census, building permit records showed an increase of 9,716 homes, to which federal market housing legislation contributed 2,711 units between 1938 and 1941. By contrast, the number of permits granted for 1921-1931 and for 1941-1951
TABLE 3

SUMMARY OF BUILDING PERMITS FOR DWELLINGS IN VANCOUVER, 1920-1955

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New Permits</th>
<th>New Value ($)</th>
<th>Alterations Permits</th>
<th>Alterations Value ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>1,039,744</td>
<td>1,268</td>
<td>690,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1,550,280</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>169,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>1,550,810</td>
<td>516</td>
<td>178,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>1,068,900</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>150,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1,585,475</td>
<td>444</td>
<td>153,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>2,243,850</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>177,745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1,051</td>
<td>2,695,110</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>181,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>3,179,125</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>169,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>1,074</td>
<td>2,904,184</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>176,474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1,964</td>
<td>6,665,250</td>
<td>1,009</td>
<td>396,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,579</td>
<td>4,978,625</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>330,497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td>3,868,760</td>
<td>1,046</td>
<td>240,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>992,950</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>171,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>440,000</td>
<td>467</td>
<td>96,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>460,000</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>128,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>750,000</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>143,445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>1,604,800</td>
<td>704</td>
<td>188,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>862</td>
<td>2,515,155</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>253,295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1,197</td>
<td>3,418,535</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>229,565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>2,819,575</td>
<td>789</td>
<td>228,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,552</td>
<td>4,263,720</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>274,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,130</td>
<td>6,168,375</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>250,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>1,028</td>
<td>2,665,165</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>244,575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>2,596,495</td>
<td>1,294</td>
<td>294,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>2,487</td>
<td>8,121,970</td>
<td>1,334</td>
<td>447,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>2,687</td>
<td>10,087,305</td>
<td>1,743</td>
<td>636,710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>3,307</td>
<td>14,555,950</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>741,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>2,128</td>
<td>10,022,500</td>
<td>1,623</td>
<td>876,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>3,367</td>
<td>18,469,230</td>
<td>1,417</td>
<td>826,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2,180</td>
<td>13,369,240</td>
<td>1,598</td>
<td>874,145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,781</td>
<td>11,919,360</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>854,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>8,236,710</td>
<td>1,165</td>
<td>891,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1,737</td>
<td>13,449,848</td>
<td>1,215</td>
<td>863,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1,443</td>
<td>11,399,100</td>
<td>3,103</td>
<td>1,123,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>9,415,450</td>
<td>2,996</td>
<td>1,137,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1,083</td>
<td>10,533,300</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>965,905</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 4

BUSINESS LICENSES FOR CONTRACTORS, REAL ESTATE DEALERS, AND OPERATORS OF APARTMENT AND LODGING HOUSES, VANCOUVER, 1930 TO 1937

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Contractors</th>
<th>Real Estate Dealers</th>
<th>Apartments, Flats</th>
<th>Lodging Houses, Hotels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>877</td>
<td>1,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>1,406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>1,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>1,678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

amounted respectively to 11,338 and 23,229. In 1937, the City Council's special housing committee estimated that the depression had produced a backlog of about 6,000 houses. In the mid-1930s, civic officials calculated a total of 52,001 residences: 49,322 single houses, 570 apartment houses, 75 hotels, 352 duplexes, 404 converted residences, 295 cabins, tenements, and rooming houses, and 983 apartments in store buildings.

As the house-building industry lagged, population growth inched upwards. The numbers of marriages and births dropped in the early 1930s before climbing later in the decade, while in general the number of deaths continued to advance (Table 14). At the same time, migration to British Columbia, particularly from drought-stricken prairie provinces like Saskatchewan, contributed to the over-all population increase. The population of Vancouver rose from 240,421 in 1929 to 269,454 in 1939.

Vacancies expanded and contracted with the economy. According to H. A. Roberts Limited's surveys, apartment house vacancy rates could have been 10% or higher in the worst years of the depression when many households crowded into cheaper accommodation. These rates exceeded the national average of 6.7% in 1933. They diminished after 1935 as the economy improved slightly and as the population began to grow again. By the outbreak of World War II, occupancy of houses and suites was virtually 100%. Thus, until the very end of the decade, availability alone
was not the major housing problem of the 1930s. However, the full occupancy rate of 1939 resulting from an earlier lapse in construction, from a swelling population, and from better economic conditions created a troublesome legacy for Vancouver's residents in the 1940s.

In the first year of the depression, a civic relief officer reported the "hopeless condition" of several unemployed single loggers of Swedish and Finnish origin who occupied an upper floor of a Cordova Street hotel. They were "honest and hard working" men eager "to earn a living and pay their debts." Lagging far behind with payments, they did without food, sold off their clothing, and expected to be evicted at any moment. Another officer investigating the married unemployed relief cases of South Vancouver described their "brave fight to overcome their distressing circumstances" and their "equally hard fight to keep up the standard of decency" in their "nice homes" with "well-kept gardens." How extensive, then, was unemployment in Vancouver during the depression, and how did loss of income affect the affordability of housing for transient single men, for tenant households, and for property-owners?

Available statistics provide an imprecise reckoning of the city's unemployment situation. On 1 June 1931, census-takers found 25,042 (or 30.2%) of wage-earners 20 years and over of both sexes without either a permanent
or a temporary job. The next complete enumeration of the jobless occurred in the 1941 Census. According to the average annual unemployment rates for Canada, conditions worsened in 1932 and 1933 and then mellowed between 1934 and 1939. The national rates likely remained below ones in a city like Vancouver where the transient single unemployed gathered. The 1931 Census also confirms the impact of the depression upon Vancouver's building industry: in 1930-1931, 77% of male construction workers aged 10 and over lost work time.

Other statistics suggest the magnitude of the unemployment problem. The Employment Service of Canada listed 25,643 jobless persons in the City of Vancouver for the nine months previous to 30 April 1932. A total of 22,515 registrations for unemployment and relief occurred over eleven months in 1931-1932. In May 1934, Vancouver had 7,455 and 1,116 unemployment relief cases respectively of domiciled residents and of transient families and single women, involving almost 31,000 dependents, and 9,098 single, homeless men. In addition, over 14,000 individuals relied upon workmen's compensation or mothers', old age, or war pensions (Figure 9). Most of these persons lived on Vancouver's east side. Still other figures for cases of civic relief indicate the extent of unemployment in Vancouver over several years (Table 5). Their sudden fluctuations in volume reflect the movement of single men in and out of relief camps and the return in 1938 of the administrative burden for welfare to the City.
Figure 9

Map of Vancouver showing the number of persons on limited incomes and their geographic locations, May 1934

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, CV P RE 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Indigent Relief</th>
<th>Unemployment Relief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family, Single</td>
<td>Married Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>2,588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>646</td>
<td>4,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>6,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>593</td>
<td>3,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>7,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>566</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>6,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>487</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>6,574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>439</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>5,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>350</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>4,884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>264</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>1,513</td>
<td>4,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,604</td>
<td>1,955</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, Records of the Mayor's Office, ser. 1, 33-F-1, File on "Relief," [Report of the Social Services Committee, 1938], 3 January 1939.
Personal income and rents fell and rose with employment in Vancouver according to national patterns. In 1933, employment and personal income declined across the country to their lowest levels in the decade, while rents reached bottom a year later as landlords lagged behind in adjusting to economic dislocation (Table 6). Conditions improved somewhat later in the 1930s. In Vancouver, where personal income and employment followed the national example, average rents in the city plunged to a low in 1934-1935 and then moved upwards during the 1936 Golden Jubilee celebrations (Table 7).

The most visible unemployed group in the community was the "floating population" of jobless and homeless single men who wandered in and out of Vancouver according to the season, work opportunities, relief conditions, and political protests about their predicament. The City and the private charities applied strategies developed in earlier years to cope with the high unemployment and the transiency. The civic Public Welfare and Relief Department distributed bed tickets worth 20 cents per day per individual for use in cheap hotels and lodging houses as it had in previous recessions. Still, hundreds of men, whom the hotels and lodgings could not accommodate, spent their days in poolrooms, department stores, libraries, streets, and railway stations and their nights in refuges, parks, and jungles.

By the summer of 1931, about 1,000 homeless men occupied four East End jungles. The jungle bordering Prior Street close to Campbell Avenue and the Canadian National
### TABLE 6

UNEMPLOYMENT, PERSONAL INCOME, AND RENTAL COSTS IN CANADA, 1926 TO 1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civilian Jobless Seeking Work (Thousands)</th>
<th>Personal Income (Millions)</th>
<th>Rent Component of the Cost-of-Living Index (1935-1939=100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>4,057</td>
<td>116.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>4,281</td>
<td>115.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4,600</td>
<td>118.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>4,665</td>
<td>120.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>4,392</td>
<td>123.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>481</td>
<td>3,669</td>
<td>120.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>3,063</td>
<td>110.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>826</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>99.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>3,175</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>3,398</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>3,602</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>4,070</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>4,126</td>
<td>103.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>103.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>4,972</td>
<td>106.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 7
AVERAGE RENTS IN DOLLARS IN VANCOUVER AND CANADA,
DECEMBER 1929 TO DECEMBER 1939

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>6-Roomed House with Modern Conveniences Per Month</th>
<th>6-Roomed House with Incomplete Modern Conveniences Per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Vancouver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>27.909</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>28.280</td>
<td>29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>27.095</td>
<td>27.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>23.950</td>
<td>23.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>22.262</td>
<td>17.00-22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>22.174</td>
<td>15.00-22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>22.515</td>
<td>16.00-22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>23.083</td>
<td>20.00-25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>23.773</td>
<td>22.00-27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>24.197</td>
<td>22.00-27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>24.235</td>
<td>22.00-27.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Railway yards grew from under 100 men in late June to 450 by early September (Figure 10). Many were Swedes, Finns, and Norwegians normally employed in logging and other primary industries. Another jungle under the Georgia Viaduct attracted between 75 and 250 men over the summer of 1931. Although at least 50 of these men had alcohol problems, the majority searched for work. A third jungle located on National Harbour Board property near Dunlevy Avenue accommodated about 200 young men generally "of a good type" (Figure 11). Approximately 100 men inhabited shacks scattered around the fourth jungle situated at the Great Northern Railway sidings.

In 1932, nine hostels, including the Central City Mission and the Vancouver Emergency Refuge, provided 1,033 beds to single unemployed men. As well, they supplied facilities for personal hygiene, meals, and clothing and, in varying degrees, services like medical care, laundry, fumigation of bedding and clothing, and religious and educational programs. Funding came from church aid, per capita civic and provincial subsidies, Vancouver Welfare Foundation grants, and sometimes small charges to the men.

After 1933, the burden for housing the transient, single unemployed men of Vancouver rested with the senior governments. Under the national relief legislation of 1931 and 1932, the provincial and federal governments assumed administrative responsibility for the men and shared financial costs on a 50-50 basis. As a result, thousands of home-
Figure 10
Prior Street jungle, 1931

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, RE P 12, N 3 #1
Figure 11

Dunlevy Avenue Jungle, 1931

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, RE P 14, N 10 #3
less men went first to provincial road camps and later to Department of National Defence relief camps, including Point Grey (Acadia) Camp No. 200 on the University of British Columbia Endowment Lands. By contrast, the single unemployed resident in Vancouver received shelter vouchers through the city, funded with contributions from all three governments. Men who quit the relief camps and returned to Vancouver did not qualify for bed tickets although they frequently won temporary support for themselves through protests and demonstrations. By the late 1930s, the British Columbia government had turned over its administrative role in sheltering all the single unemployed to the civic Social Service Department with funding shared by the City and senior governments. By then, single persons who were indigent or unemployed received a monthly shelter allowance rather than a daily bed voucher.

Unemployment and reduced income affected the affordability of rental housing for residents as well as transients although aggregate census figures suggest otherwise. Rented and owner-occupied units represented 48.98% and 51.02% of the total number of dwellings in the 1931 enumeration and 49.9% and 50.1% in 1941 (Table 8). Tenants made an average monthly rental payment of about $26 in both 1931 and 1941. However, by 1941 a greater proportion of tenant households, especially ones on relief, paid under $15 per month for their living quarters than in 1931 (Table 9). As well, an expansion in the shelter allowance system, in the conversion
# TABLE 8

**OWNER-OCCUPIED DWELLINGS IN SELECTED CITIES, 1931, 1941, AND 1951, BY PERCENTAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Cities</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>62.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>65.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>63.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 9

RELIEF TENANTS, CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO RENT,
IN VANCOUVER, 8 APRIL 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cases</th>
<th>Furnished</th>
<th>Monthly Rent ($)</th>
<th>Unfurnished</th>
<th>Monthly Rent ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>913 (abt)</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>486</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>224</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>1,045</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>304 (abt)</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,699 (Total)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,746 (Total)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, Records of the City Clerk, ser. 1, 16-E-7, file 17, W. R. Bone to Acting City Clerk, 4 May 1936.
of single houses into rooms and flats renting at low rates, in the occupancy of waterfront shacks and houseboats, and in the number of evictions attested to a heightened need for affordable housing.

The shelter allowance system grew rapidly during the depression. In 1932, the civic Public Welfare and Relief Department handled perhaps 1,100 cases per month. By April 1936, it dealt with more than four times that number every month (Table 9). Still, although close to two-thirds of relief tenants sought rental assistance, less than one-third of them received a weekly, biweekly, or monthly shelter allowance. Relief Officer W. Rupert Bone and the Relief and Employment Committee of City Council managed to reduce expenditures by delaying grants to clients until they remained on the welfare rolls for at least a month, built up large arrears, or faced eviction. This shortsighted method of saving civic funds placed tremendous pressure on tenants and landlords alike. Landlords faced mounting deficits in managing rental accommodation and sometimes refused to accept a shelter allowance if it fell short of the requested rent. In addition, they cut off tenants' water supply, locked them out of their homes, and even withheld their belongings. As well, Relief begrudged, or even refused to grant, allowances to families of activists like relief camp striker Arthur "Slim" Evans and the longshoremen of the 1935 Vancouver waterfront strike.

Guided by the Relief and Employment Committee and
funded by contributions from all three governments, the Public Welfare and Relief Department provided a man, woman, and two children with about $8 for unfurnished or $11 for furnished accommodation per month. The shelter allowance scale, which gave slightly less money to a couple and somewhat more to a larger family, actually became less generous by the mid-1930s (Table 10). Occasionally, Relief supplied assistance for fuel, electricity, water supply, furnishings, or appliance repairs. Clients received rent relief cheques upon producing a receipt from the landlord for the previous month's payment. To ensure delivery, a civic official wrote the landlord's name on the reverse side of the cheque. Because it did not wish to assume the role of legal tenant, the City refused to pay landlords directly or to place clients in dwellings. The main relief office at 530 Cambie Street accepted applications for rent allowances and eventually distributed cheques through four sub-depots in the South Vancouver, Collingwood, East Hastings, and Grandview areas. In 1936, the City adopted a standard cash relief system and issued monthly rather than weekly or biweekly rent cheques. Despite variations in the scale of payments, Vancouver's shelter allowance program conformed with ones in other Canadian cities.

Single unemployed women also received rental assistance. Initially, the City issued bed tickets worth 20 cents per day to between 175 and 600 single women a year for use in housekeeping suites or rooms. Because many respectable
TABLE 10

MONTHLY SHELTER ALLOWANCES IN DOLLARS, CITY OF VANCOUVER, EFFECTIVE SEPTEMBER 1932 AND JANUARY 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Household Size</th>
<th>Furnished</th>
<th>Unfurnished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>2 adults</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 adults and 1-4 or more children</td>
<td>10.00-14.00</td>
<td>6.00-12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>2 adults</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 adults and 1-7 children</td>
<td>9.00-14.00</td>
<td>6.00-8.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: City of Vancouver Archives, Records of the City Clerk, ser. 1, 15-F-1, file 4, W. R. Bone to L. D. Taylor, 21 September 1932; and Records of the Mayor's Office, ser. 1, 33-C-6, file on "Relief Department, 1936," Bone to A. Davison, 17 January 1936.
downtown lodging houses, hostels, and even the YWCA charged rates that were too high for relief recipients, many women lived in "very unsatisfactory localities and associations." A hostel like "Dunromin," which the Vancouver Police's women's division had opened as a relief refuge, soon sheltered prostitutes more than the unemployed. By the late 1930s, the City gave single women a monthly rent allowance rather than bed tickets.

Single Asian men encountered blatant discrimination in the distribution of relief to the unemployed. Senior governments excluded them from camps because "no special accommodation" was available to them. As well, in an attempt to discourage applications for assistance, provincial government officials allocated bed tickets to Asians on a different scale of relief than to whites: Chinese men received vouchers worth 60 cents per week rather than 20 cents per day. They had no choice but to sleep in overcrowded, insanitary, and disease-infested "dens." Few Asians went on relief, most struggled to stay off it, and some met with refusals from the City in any case. The larger Chinese community cared for many destitute men on and off relief. In particular, the Yip family accommodated a great many old, indigent men in a building on Canton Alley leased from the City.

Although some low-income tenants may have rented small houses or apartments, others became lodgers. The 1931 Census recorded 17,634 individuals and 3,363 families dwelling with
other households in both owned and rented homes. An increasing number of tenants, whether on relief or with reduced earnings, could not afford more expensive rental accommodation and turned to the cheaper lodging houses of the downtown area or to converted residences in neighbourhoods like Kitsilano, Fairview, and Mount Pleasant where rates were likely to be under $15 a week. Conversions occurred "by force of circumstances" as desperate owners remodelled their "very good large houses" to generate sufficient income to keep their property. For example, a home owner whose husband's death in 1930 caused her "to live altogether a changed life" raised a daughter, paid her taxes, and avoided relief by operating a lodging house in Kitsilano.

In the 1930s, many operators and owners failed to apply for licenses to alter or to manage a lodging house as they had been accustomed to do for several decades. They saved themselves fee payments to the City, and they installed appliances and undertook renovations at less cost. By 1940, Vancouver had 1,816 licensed lodging houses, but the number of unlicensed ones is unknown. Contemporary observers used figures like 3,000 and "thousands," although the City's Sanitary Inspector reported less than a thousand inspections of unlicensed places in 1931. Moreover, the statistics for licensed lodging houses and hotels indicate that such premises frequently became unlicensed in the 1930s (Table 4). The number of business licenses rose in the first years of the depression as rental accommodation expanded to absorb
households with lower incomes. Then, when the economic decline reached bottom in 1933-1934, operators suddenly stopped purchasing licenses, only to take out licenses once more as conditions improved after 1935.

The contradictions inherent in Vancouver's by-law situation in the 1930s permitted a huge increase in house conversion to occur outside proper licensing practice. The 1928 zoning by-law attempted to eliminate the lodging house in which individuals or families lived in a single room equipped with a gas plate and sink and shared toilet and bathing facilities with other tenants. However, a building by-law allowed the remodelling of dwellings into lodging houses that provided no more than 15 sleeping rooms for 5 or more persons and no cooking facilities. These houses usually offered illegally installed gas or electric plates or stoves in rooms since tenants could not afford to eat in restaurants and since owners refused to supply board. City Council did not pass a by-law controlling the installation of gas appliances in rooming houses until 1938. The license inspector also issued business permits without notifying the health officer, building inspector, or fire warden. Staff cutbacks at City Hall in the 1930s meant that the lodging house situation was effectively unregulated.

Converted houses were widespread in the West End, the business district, and certain parts of Kitsilano and Mount Pleasant. In a 1934 survey of the West End, the Vancouver Town Planning Commission noted the frequent renovation of
large dwellings into suites and of smaller ones into sleeping
or housekeeping rooms. The Commission reported 127 licensed apartment blocks, 83 licensed apartment houses converted from other buildings, and 550 lodging houses of which only 155 had paid-up licenses. A 1938 study detailed in map form the numbers of housekeeping rooms in parts of Kitsilano and Mount Pleasant. Another report in 1941 described the lodging situation in the West End and the business district. Here, the most congestion and the cheapest rentals occurred in the centre of the West End, lying between Jervis and Denman, and in the old Yaletown area, south of Helmcken and east of Burrard. Less crowding and higher rates typified lodging houses south of Davie and west of Burrard where older residents sublet one or two floors. The better rooms lay west of Denman and around St. Paul's Hospital. Fairly dense housing extended north of Robson Street with the higher quality dwellings near Georgia Street.

During the depression, low-income people increasingly found shelter in the waterfront shacks and houseboats of the Fraser River, Burrard Inlet, and False Creek. The majority lived on the foreshore not so much by choice but by their inability to find suitable housing at affordable rentals. "Shackers" were persons "of small means and of independent spirit" who survived the depression by fishing or by beachcombing and selling cut wood at the Main Street public market, or who survived on relief or on small pensions. Several "shacker" families also lived in Stanley Park.
In 1937, a total of 538 people inhabited the waterfront. On Burrard Inlet, 93 houseboats, 56 shacks on piles, and 10 more on land stretched from Coal Harbour to the Second Narrows and sheltered 239 adults and 54 children. Two years later, the number had climbed from 159 to 205 dwellings. In False Creek in 1937, 167 adults and 21 children occupied 108 boats and 18 shacks on land (Figure 12). Along the Fraser River from Main Street to Boundary Road, 62 shacks housed 117 adults and 50 children. A 1940 report showed that an enclave of 30 residences built largely in the 1930s over the Fraser or along its shoreline contained 26 households, 11 families, and 81 people ranging in age from one week to 91 years.

Throughout the depression, reform-minded city officials threatened "shackers" with removal, and landlords evicted large numbers of tenants from suites and rooms. Concerned about sewage and garbage disposal, water supply, petty crime, and fire hazards, the City attempted in 1937 to rid the Kitsilano Indian Reserve on False Creek of shacks, but their efforts resulted in a movement of the foreshore people to the area east of Burrard Bridge. In 1938, the Parks Board cleared and "beautified" the Windermere bathing pool area on Burrard Inlet. Tenants found themselves evicted because they had insufficient income to pay the rent or because their shelter allowances fell short of the amount demanded by the manager. Frequently, a relief household that could not find living quarters at department rates remained shelterless
For fifty years or more, the shores of False Creek were dotted with floating cabin habitations, of bachelors, sometimes wives too, from Westminster Avenue (Main St.) both sides eastwards to the Indian reserve. The occupants were sometimes resident, at others, transients. The first floating habitation was that of the C.P.R. construction employees, off shore from the C.P.R. Roundhouse, see photo, at the foot of Drake Street. The last shacks disappeared when the R.C.A.F. occupied the Indian Reserve, west of the Burrard Bridge, and a fish dock was built east of the bridge. Firewood cost nothing save the labour of sawing fish for the catching fresh water from a nearby watertap. It was a free cheap way of living. Gradually they were crowded out. First when the head of False Creek was filled in, then came sawmills and other industries. By 1936, they had almost completely disappeared as a large number moved up Burrard Inlet beyond the Second Narrows Bridge.

Figure 12

False Creek shack in 1934

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, WAT P 128
for several days while the City put the family's belongings into storage. In early 1936, when rents rose dramatically during Vancouver's Golden Jubilee celebrations, the courts ejected 47 relief tenants. Nine evictions were pending, and, in 4 cases, the Relief Department had placed household goods in a local storage company. Rank discrimination sometimes occurred in the removal of relief recipients. In 1934, the sheriff ousted the wife and daughter of "Slim" Evans from a house owned by a City alderman, William Tiss, who refused to accept the shelter allowance set by Council.

Many home owners as well as tenants encountered housing affordability problems during the depression. The promising statistics for home ownership given in the 1931 and 1941 censuses hide the struggle of many Vancouver residents, particularly wage-earners, to keep possession of their property. For example, while wage-earners received less average income than their counterparts in Toronto, Hamilton, or Winnipeg, many had been able to purchase a house because the proportion of lower valued dwellings was higher than in those other cities (Table 11). In fact, wage-earners owned as much as rented in Vancouver. Yet in the 1930s, they found themselves with limited incomes as well as with taxes and mortgages on homes assessed or financed at pre-1929 levels. Civic records dealing with Better Housing Scheme defaults, with tax arrears, and with shelter allowances document the predicament of many of the city's home owners.

The 1941 Census figures for outstanding mortgages
### TABLE 11

**HOME OWNERSHIP IN SELECTED CITIES, 1931**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Homes Owned (%)</th>
<th>Owned Homes Valued -$5,000 (%)</th>
<th>Average Value Owned Homes ($</th>
<th>Average Annual Earnings/Wage-Earner ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>1,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>1,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>1,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>82.0</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>4,100</td>
<td>947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>79.9</td>
<td>3,900</td>
<td>953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

hide the difficulty that an unknown number of property owners in Vancouver must have had in paying off their debts. Although average payments on principal and interest were higher on the west coast, 59.0% of Vancouver's owner-occupied dwellings had no mortgage to pay off in 1941 as compared to 40.5% in Toronto, and the average outstanding loan amounted to several hundred dollars less. Nevertheless, if the failure of the Better Housing Scheme in Vancouver is any indication, many white- and blue-collar Vancouverites defaulted on their mortgages. According to a civic summary of the Scheme's financial position, 29.80% or 45 of 151 properties reverted to the City by January 1937, and 50 agreement holders, or 33.11% were in arrears. Completed agreements numbered 27, or 17.88%, and 29 holders had up-to-date payments. The total outstanding balance amounted to $229,084.59. Thirty-two quitclaims and 17 foreclosures occurred in the 1930s, and, in 1941-1942, 51 agreement holders still continued to make payments.

While many Vancouverites owned their homes outright in the 1930s, they received insufficient income to pay the City's property taxes. Assessments remained at pre-depression levels. Consequently, tax arrears rose from about $2,285 million in 1930 to $8,327 million in 1936 before dropping to $2,712 million in 1940 (Table 12). Many properties, particularly on the east side, reverted to the City after arrears mounted for a few years and eventually ended up in tax sale. As a result, the total value of sale
### TABLE 12

VALUE OF TAX ARREARS AND TAX SALE PROPERTIES, IN DOLLARS, CITY OF VANCOUVER, 1930-1940

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tax Arrears</th>
<th>Tax Sale Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>2,285,317</td>
<td>2,000,329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,105,028</td>
<td>2,028,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>5,024,576</td>
<td>2,468,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>6,871,636</td>
<td>2,587,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>8,167,442</td>
<td>2,739,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>8,327,141</td>
<td>2,631,385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>6,273,940</td>
<td>4,126,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>5,947,985</td>
<td>4,043,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>3,818,223</td>
<td>5,633,459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>3,290,572</td>
<td>5,595,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>2,712,972</td>
<td>5,453,796</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Vancouver, Financial Statements and Annual Reports, 1930-1940.*
properties increased as well (Table 12). Since few people had sufficient capital to buy, most lots fell to the City, although owners had a redemption privilege within one or two years of sale. The total number of properties held by the City grew from about 17,600 in 1932 to over 31,000 in 1936 and fell to 28,000 in 1939. In response to the crisis, the City suspended the 1934 and 1935 sales and initiated a widely advertised tax consolidation scheme described as "a real 'new deal' - one which gives the ordinary man a chance to rehabilitate himself as a citizen taxpayer." The City also sponsored "work for taxes" schemes between 1936 and 1939 for property owners not on relief who were in danger of losing their homes in the next sale. Under this scheme, successful applicants received manual work from the City worth up to $60 at 50 cents an hour.

Many home owners, even elderly ones, did all they could to hold onto their property. A 76-year old widow, "a very fine type of old pioneer" according to a City official, owned a small cottage and several sheds "all looking their age" on Victoria Drive. She had no electricity and no water supply. The City over-assessed her property at $100, and her tax arrears amounted to $640 plus interest. She borrowed money to pay her taxes and her husband's funeral expenses. Receiving a $15 monthly old age pension, she lived on one dollar and the product of 10 hens and used the rest to pay off her debts. Another woman on West 14th Avenue, who owed $138 in tax arrears (and had no other debts), used up
insurance money to keep her house and then tried to sell it "at a great sacrifice" rather than lose it at tax sale.

The application forms of those who participated in the 1937 "work for taxes" scheme characterize the conditions under which many people attempted to keep their property. The majority of applicants were unemployed males with dependents who lived east of Ontario Street, worked at blue-collar occupations, resided in Vancouver long before the depression, and required less than $100 to prevent their property from going to the 1937 tax sale. Their property represented their life's work. Over half of them still carried mortgages on their homes, and some had other debts and medical bills. Many resorted to relief sometime in the 1930s or worked on the previous "work for taxes" scheme. Most had incomes under $400, by comparison to the $947 average annual earnings of Vancouver wage-earners in 1931. Their sources of income included temporary jobs, wages of working family members, rents from stores, shacks, or land, pensions, relief payments or employment, work for taxes, odd jobs like gardening or sewing, savings, superannuation, sale of assets like trucks or cars, and neighbours' help.

While home owners qualified for food relief, they did not initially receive shelter allowances. According to the City Solicitor, property owners could not be described as indigent or destitute under the statutory provisions for relief. In 1935, a regulation of the Unemployment Relief Branch of the British Columbia Department of Labour
granted the shelter allowance to home-owning relief recipients to assist in the payment of delinquent taxes and mortgage interest. However, City Council made this concession to property owners only after a year of public pressure.

In sum, many Vancouverites who experienced loss of employment and income during the depression simply could not afford to rent lodgings or to own property as they had previously done. They encountered a shortage of affordable housing. Although dwellings were available until the end of the decade, they were too costly for anyone on little or no income.

The need for lower-priced homes was greatest in areas where unsatisfactory living conditions flourished. Although 1931 and 1941 census data indicates that the quality of Vancouver housing remained generally good in those years, it tends to hide the substandard rental accommodation situated in the downtown area between Stanley Park and Clark Drive and in some parts of Kitsilano, Fairview, and Mount Pleasant. Substandard conditions included overcrowding, inadequate or defective sanitary facilities, interior and exterior disrepair, and a variety of other problems like insufficient light and ventilation or faulty gas fixtures. The censuses also ignore the predicament of shack dwellers inhabiting waterfront colonies, and transient, single unemployed men living through force of circumstance in hostels, jungles, and camps.

Despite favourable Census figures about Vancouver's
overcrowding situation, low-income renting households occupying less expensive dwellings in the downtown area and its adjacent neighbourhoods did experience serious crowding. In 1931, the average number of rooms per person was 1.30, and owners and tenants averaged 1.42 and 1.16 rooms per person. Nevertheless, one-quarter of tenant households and 17% of owning ones encountered overcrowding. If a renting household earned less than $800 annually or paid under $15 a month for rent or consisted of two or more families, then it likely lived in congested circumstances. In 1941, as well, the city average of 1.4 rooms per person appeared favourable. 13.2% of all households were crowded, and 8.5% of households doubled up (Table 13). However, anywhere from about one-fifth to one-third of wage-earning households in which the head earned under $1,500 averaged less than one room per person. Two local housing surveys confirmed the occurrence of congestion in specific parts of the city. The 1939 housing study prepared by the Vancouver Housing Association reported extensive overcrowding in the area bordered by Burrard, Beatty, and Dunsmuir Streets and by False Creek, in east Kitsilano, and in the East End. A partial survey conducted the next year by the Health Department's Inspector R. Startup found that crowding was common among those who were most poorly housed. Of 199 cases, 2,307 adults and children occupied 1,733 rooms for an average 0.75 rooms per person.

By the 1941 census, Vancouver on the whole seemed well
### TABLE 13

**HOUSING CONDITIONS IN SELECTED CITIES, 1941, BY PERCENTAGE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Doubled-up Households</th>
<th>Overcrowded Households</th>
<th>Dwellings Needing External Repairs</th>
<th>Dwellings with Shared Use of or without Flush Toilet /Shower</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>19.1(8.4)</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton</td>
<td>12.4(7.8)</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winnipeg</td>
<td>15.1(7.3)</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>7.6(4.3)</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>8.5(5.1)</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>10.5(4.9)</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sources:** Canada, Department of Munitions and Supply, "Preliminary Report on the Housing Situation in Canada and Suggestions for Its Improvement," prepared by Lesslie R. Thomson, Ottawa, 22 October 1942, p. 56B, table 5; Eighth Census of Canada, 1941, IX, p. 182, table 36; and Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, Subcommittee Housing and Community Planning [chaired by C. A. Curtis], Final Report of the Subcommittee, March 24, 1944 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1946), p. 105, table 24. 1931 percentages are in parentheses.
advanced in its adoption of modern sanitary facilities. Most dwellings had exclusive use of a flush toilet and of a bath or shower, although tenants shared facilities more than owners (Table 13). Running water was available to almost all homes. Still, downtown area housing for those of lowest income offered the worst facilities. In Startup's survey, one toilet and one bath respectively served 8.2 and 11.3 people. He described plumbing usually as bad, poor, or fair, seldom as good. Thirty-two of 199 cases had no bathtub or shower, and one provided no toilet. Startup found instances of 25 persons sharing a bathroom with one toilet and one bath. The 1939 Vancouver Housing Association report also presented a dismal picture of sanitary facilities in the downtown area. In the business district, under 10% of rented rooms had sinks or wash basins. Only 5% of multiple occupancy dwellings offered more than one bath, and in some instances 20, 40, or even 50 persons shared a bathroom. 16% of premises north of Dunsmuir between Burrard and Dunlevy provided no bathroom. Between Dunlevy and Clark Drive, 17% of houses lacked baths, and 4% still used outside toilets. The majority of cabins furnished only outside taps and common toilets and supplied no bathtubs or showers. The VHA survey noted that sanitary facilities were not only overtaxed in use but also, in many cases, filthy, leaking, broken, and unvented.

By 1941, when almost three-quarters of Vancouver's dwellings had wooden exteriors, the housing stock was
generally in good shape. Only 18.2% of all dwellings needed external repairs, and the homes of renters compared very well to those of owners. Of course, structures were 55 years old at the most, and many newer ones resulted from a construction boom in the 1920s (Table 2). Still, the aggregate figures conceal cases of disrepair found in the cabins and the lodging houses of the downtown area. Leaking roofs, defective eavestroughs and downpipes, dilapidated front porches or stairs, settling foundations, and rotting woodwork required attention on the outside. Inside, cracked walls, loose wallpaper, old paint, missing hardware, dim, dirty halls and stairways, and decaying wood were major areas of concern. The VHA report asserted that the most serious deterioration occurred in very old housing located between Main Street and Dunlevy Avenue. It claimed that 15% of homes between Dunlevy and Clark Drive needed major structural work and that probably half of them were beyond repair.

Other problems plagued low-priced rental accommodation in Vancouver. An estimated 200 inside rooms without natural light and ventilation existed between Burrard, Dunlevy, and Dunsmuir Streets and Burrard Inlet, and at least two-thirds of all rooms in this area lacked adequate light and ventilation as a result of poor planning and excessive lot coverage. The Chinese boarding houses on Market Alley and Shanghai Alley were so dark that city officials used matches to find their way to upper storeys. Basements and attics refinished into rooms and suites, especially in the
West End, had low ceilings, as well as insufficient light, ventilation, fire escape provisions, and sanitary conveniences. Leaks, poor ventilation, low pressure, and faulty connections associated with the installation and maintenance of gas plates, stoves, and heaters endangered the lives of many tenants occupying small housekeeping suites or rooms. Bed-bugs, cockroaches, and rats commonly infested less expensive, substandard rental premises. Overcrowded converted residences with paper-covered partitions and woodwork close to heating and hot water apparatus frequently needed proper fire escape provisions. Although by 1941, many tenant-occupied dwellings in Vancouver had radios, telephones, or even an electric vacuum cleaner, most lacked proper food storage by comparison to those in other Canadian cities. Given the temperate west coast climate, more than half of this housing did without refrigeration of any type. Slightly more than one quarter had mechanical refrigeration, and about 15% used ice.

The censuses of 1931 and 1941 did not include foreshore shacks and houseboats. Moreover, the biases of contemporaneous accounts make difficult any investigation of the adequacy of this type of cheap accommodation. On the one hand, observers tended to romanticize waterfront living. In Coal Harbour, the "Shaughnessy" of the shoreline, a "neat little house boat" became known as the "city hall" and its resident of 20 years as the "Mayor." As well, a contented "shacker" wrote to Mayor Lyle Telford praising his "roomy" accommodation off 92 Water Street with its views in three
direct ions, all "the Amenities of life," and "an abundance of light, fresh air and sunshine" that gave him "the best of health." His alternative was a dreary rooming house or cabin. On the other hand, a critic of the "Slums of the Water Front," Frank Buck, deplored the "shambles indescribable" on or near water fed by "a fountain of continuous pollution" [a sewer outlet]. He described the residents of these "pigsties" as the "Flotsam and the Jetsam" of humanity, "Wrecks of lives," "Prostitutes, whore-mongers, thieves, and ne'er-do-wells," and "gaunt, weary, depressed people, accepting the environment with a deep feeling of resentment."

A more realistic assessment reveals that foreshore conditions were neither as corrupt nor as healthy as some contemporaries would have us believe. According to several civic surveys, some colonies of shacks and houseboats provided better living situations than others. On Burrard Inlet, enclaves at Coal Harbour or at the northern end of Kaslo and Renfrew Streets sheltered prosperous occupants living in decent circumstances, but others, "the worst of their type," between Cardero and Broughton Streets and at the north foot of Clark Drive near the sewer outfall offered "a very unsatisfactory condition." On False Creek, the area at the foot of Columbia Street among the old Great Northern Railway track pilings represented "the filthiest and most distressful portion," while another part east of Cambie Street bridge was "a fairly bright and cheerful neighbor-
115

Along the Fraser River, the resident "fisher folk" and mill workers set standards of health for their community, and a "better atmosphere" pervaded the area.

Access to water supply and electricity, as well as tenure, differentiated conditions in the various waterfront colonies. The "shackers" living in better situations had water connections or use of taps or wells on adjacent property. They frequently received power directly in their homes and often supplied neighbours with electricity. Many owned their own shacks or boats and thus enjoyed greater security of tenure.

Still, sewage disposal and fire hazards represented major problems for all foreshore dwellers. Toilets placed over tidal flats and sewer outfalls from city homes or private operations like the Canadian Pacific Railway yards or the Granville Island industrial shops discharged effluent into False Creek, English Bay, Burrard Inlet, and the Fraser River and heightened the risk of typhoid epidemics. In addition, the air pollution from 11 large sawmills on False Creek created an unhealthy atmosphere. Old, abandoned timberwork or boat hulls, as well as refuse dumps, were probably more unsightly than unhygienic.

Census materials also overlooked the predicament of homeless single men. Yet contemporary local accounts give us only impressionistic assessments of hostel conditions encountered by the men. City officials defended the cleanliness, sanitation, and comfort of the Vancouver Emergency Refuge and
Central City Mission (Figure 5). However, the residents described the "pogies" as "beyond a shadow of doubt unfit for human habitation, and a menace to the health of all men compelled to live in these places." Reliefers so resented the Emergency Refuge at 37 West Pender Street, a huge warehouse with a second floor made into "military-looking sleeping quarters" accommodating 300 men in bunkbeds, that they wrecked its interior in mass protest. In 1934, another city refuge at 1038 Hamilton Street met the same fate.

Conditions at Point Grey (later Acadia) Camp improved little upon those of the "pogies." In its investigation of the Department of National Defence camp system in British Columbia, the Macdonald Commission apparently approved of the camp's dining room, kitchen, bunk house, and store rooms, but it also noted the rat menace in the buildings, the insanitary latrines and cess pools, the "crude, unsightly, and dirty" wash-houses and showers, and the worn, chipped sinks in need of replacement.

City records and other sources reveal the plight of the men in Vancouver's jungles. Near Prior Street, the men used packing boxes, corrugated iron, tar paper, barrels, tea boxes, and even old Ford cars found in the nearby dump to construct huts "as healthful as in camplife" (Figure 10). They arranged their shacks along trails named after Vancouver's major streets. Water came from a tap on adjacent city property, and the men exercised care in the disposal of human waste. In the Georgia Viaduct jungle, condi-
tions could only be described as bad. Some men built temporary cover against the British Columbia Electric Railway fence, and others slept under the floor of an old warehouse. All the residents of this jungle used one privy thrown up during the construction of the British Columbia Electric gas tank. They obtained water at a nearby gas station. The Dunlevy Avenue jungle resembled the Georgia Viaduct one but offered better lavatory facilities (Figure 11). City officials regarded these clusters of homeless men as "a hot-bed for every form of disease, physical, moral and social."

When one man was found dead of suspected typhoid at the Dunlevy site in early September 1931, Relief Officer H. W. Cooper used the "grave danger of an epidemic" as an excuse to raze all the jungles. He issued 879 bed tickets to the displaced men and sent them to the Pender Street refuge and to a temporary hostel in the old automobile building at Hastings Park. Nevertheless, the men reoccupied the old jungle locations within two weeks.

By the late 1930s, contemporary observers like the British housing and planning expert Sir Raymond Unwin recognized that, although Vancouver was not a city of slums, some of its parts did suffer from "slum dwellings and conditions of overcrowding and bad sanitation which should be removed and which at present are within a manageable scale." Indeed, a scarcity of adequate housing for low-income households existed in the downtown area and in some parts of its
neighbouring districts. Already visible in the years before 1929, the shortage had become chronic by the time of the depression. As well, high unemployment, reduced income, and construction slow-down resulted in a sudden, sharp housing crisis in availability and affordability for many middle- and skilled working-class households.


5. Ibid., 19 April 1930, p. 27.


18 In 1932 and 1933, the average annual unemployment rates in Canada were 26.0% and 26.6%. Between 1934 and 1939, the rate improved somewhat from 20.6% to 14.1%. See, James Struthers, No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), appendix 1, p. 215.

19 In 1931, the unemployment rate in Canada was 17.4%, while in Vancouver it was 30.2%. See, Struthers, p. 215, and Census, 1931, vol. 6, p. 1268, table 2.

20 Ibid., pp. 358-59, table 20. See also, CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-B-4, file for "Relief Officer, July-December 1930," "Married Applications to October 25th, 1930 - 12 O'clock Noon;" and CVA, Mayor's records, 33-D-5, file for "Vancouver Board of Trade," "Record of Trades among Married City Relief Cases Reporting for Work at Employment Service," 1937.


22 The 22,515 individuals included 9,472 single men, 11,634 married men, 1,147 women, 146 Chinese, and 116 Japanese, and the total with dependents represented 50,688 persons; see, CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-F-1, file 1, "Statement of Registrations for Unemployment Relief Taken at Hamilton Hall, 1 August 1931 to 30 June 1932."
Census Monograph No. 8, pp. 103-104.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-E-7, file 17, M. H. Blackley to W. R. Bone, 9 June 1936.


CVA, Records of the Finance Department, ser. A-1, 93-A-4, file 3, "Relief Act, 1932," 19 November 1932. Other western Canadian civic governments followed similar procedures, while in Central Canada, charitable agencies with private and public funding carried the responsibility; see, CVA, Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (1), 1932," Cooper to the Mayor, 27 April 1932, reporting a tour of Ottawa, Toronto, and Winnipeg by Relief Officer Cooper and Alderman John Bennett in which they examined unemployment methods.


CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-D-1, file for "Medical Health Officer, Jan. to June 1931," Cooper to Atherton, 3 September 1931; and ibid., 15-D-4, file for "Relief Officer, Jan.-June 1931," J. W. McIntosh to the Mayor and Council, 24 June 1931.


For the numbers of men in provincial and federal camps, see the Department of Labour annual reports in the Sessional Papers, 1934-1936; "The Report of the Macdonald Commission" in Liversedge, p. 137; and Augusta Margaret Thomasson, "Acadia Camp: A Study of the Acadia Camp Residence at the University of British Columbia from September, 1945 to May, 1949," (M. S. W. thesis, University
of British Columbia, 1951), pp. 3-4.


33 Liversedge, p. 82; and Hastings and Main, p. 69.


35 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-F-6, file 14, Bone to the Mayor and Council, 16 December 1937.

36 Census Monograph No. 8, p. 174, table 33; and Census, 1941, vol. 9, p. 98, table 20a.

37 Census Monograph No. 8, pp. 173-74, table 33; and Census, 1941, vol. 9, p. 98, table 21a.

38 Census Monograph No. 8, p. 109; and Census, 1941, vol. 9, p. 104, table 21c.

39 CVA, Finance Department records, 93-A-4, file 3, Cooper to L. D. Taylor, 20 June 1932; ibid., Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," Bone to Taylor, 12 September 1932; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 16-A-4, file 14, Bone to Taylor, 17 January 1933.

40 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-A-5, file 2, Bone to Taylor, 24 August 1933; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for Relief (2), 1932," "Summary of Vancouver's Relief Situation," 16 December 1932 and Bone to Taylor, 12 September 1932; ibid., 93-A-4, Finance Department records, file 3, "Memorandum Re Relief," 12 October 1932; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 16-A-4, file 14, Bone to Taylor, 17 January 1933.

41 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-D-3, file 7, Bone to the Relief and Employment Committee, 23 April 1935; ibid., Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," Bone to Mrs. S. Docherty, 9 December 1932; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 16-A-4, file 14, Bone to Taylor, 17 January 1933. In October 1933, 1,496 of 4,025 cases were in arrears from one to 37 months; see, CVA, Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file
for "Relief (2), 1932," Bone to Taylor, 24 October 1932.

42 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-A-4, file 14, Bone to Taylor, 17 January 1933; and ibid., 16-F-3, file 11, P. R. Bengough to F. Howlett, 26 April 1936.

43 CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-F-1, file 2, "[Report on] Allsopp, Archibald, 607-E. 26th Re: Disconnection of Water Pipes," [1932]; ibid., City Clerk's records, 15-F-1, file 3, [Correspondence about the case of landlord J. T. Richmond and tenant Roy Merry, August-September 1931]; and ibid., 15-F-3, file 8, J. M. McKenzie to City Relief Committee, 21 November 1932.

44 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-D-3, files 8 and 9, [Correspondence about the cases of Mrs. A. H. Evans and the striking longshoremen], August-November 1935; and ibid., 16-D-5, file 4, Mrs. L. N. Stoneman to Relief Committee, 17 September 1935.

45 CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-F-1, file 4, Bone to Taylor, 21 September 1932; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," "Summary of Vancouver's Relief Situation," 16 December 1932; and ibid., 33-C-6, file for "Relief Dept., 1936," Bone to A. Davison, 17 January 1936. Between 1930 and 1935, three governments shared costs on a one-third each basis; in 1934, federal grants-in-aid went monthly to each province, which then supplemented civic expenditures on a 60-40 basis.

46 CVA, Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," "Summary of Vancouver's Relief Situation," 16 December 1932; ibid., 33-F-1, file for "Relief, 1939," Bone to Corey, 16 February 1939; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 16-F-6, file 11, Bone to R. P. Pettipiece, 20 March 1937.

47 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-D-3, file 6, "British Columbia, Department of Labour, Unemployment Relief Branch, Serial No. 55, Regulations Governing Administration of Relief in Municipalities," 1 February 1935.

48 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-A-5, file 1, Bone to Mrs. J. A. McIntyre, 6 June 1933; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-C-6, file for "Relief Dept., 1936," Bone to Davison, 17 January 1936. Some defaults did occur; see, ibid., City Clerk's records, 16-B-7, file 4, Bone to W. W. Smith, 19 March 1934.

49 CVA, Mayor's records, 33-C-6, file for "Relief Dept., 1936," Bone to Davison, 17 January 1936; ibid., 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," Bone to Mrs. Best, 30 December 1932; and, ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 6, A. J. Harrison to Bone, 21 January 1939.
CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-B-7, file 7, Bone to Taylor, 17 October 1934; and ibid., 16-E-7, file 16, Bone to C. E. Tisdall, 11 January 1936.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-B-7, file 5, W. W. Smith to the Mayor and Council, 27 August 1934; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (1), 1932," "Rental Policies," 1932.

CVA, Social Service Department records, 106-D-2, file 6, Bone to Taylor, 8 June 1933; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-C-6, file for "Relief Dept., 1936," "Relief Report," 1-15 January 1935.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-A-4, file 11, E. Couper to Taylor, 30 June 1933; ibid., 16-D-3, file 7, E. Pearce to Bone, 18 April 1935; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," Taylor to Council on Unemployment Relief, 13 December 1932.

Sun, 2 April 1931, p. 10.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 3, Bone to Harrison, 27 September 1937.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-F-1, file 2, Cooper to A. G. Harvey, 6 June 1932.

Ibid., 16-D-5, file 3, "[Petition] for the Unity of Chinese and White Workers," [1935]; and ibid., 17-B-5, file 14, Bone to Corey, 1 April 1938.

Ibid., 15-F-1, file 1, "Statement of Registrations for Unemployment Relief Taken at Hamilton Hall," 1 August 1931 to 30 June 1932. In this period, 146 Chinese and 116 Japanese received unemployment relief.

CVA, Records of the City Solicitor, ser. 3, 115-C-2, file 11, City Solicitor to Special Committee on Sale of Properties, 31 March 1939.

Census Monograph No. 8, pp. 160-61, table 21.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937, p. 2; and ibid., 61-E-5, file 7, Harrison to the Zoning Committee of the Town Planning Commission, 26 October 1938, map.

Ibid., R. C. Singleton to A. Haggart, 20 January 1939.

Ibid., M. Travis-Barker to Harrison, 9 October 1938.

Sun, 4 June 1931, p. 18; CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937, p.2; and Vancouver, Financial Statements and Annual Reports, 1931, p. 112.

The number of registered licenses also rose when a temporary employee in the Health Department was appointed to carry out a lodging house survey in 1931; see, CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-D-1, file for "Medical Health Officer, Oct. to Dec. 1931," J. W. McIntosh to Personnel Committee, 21 May 1931 and 6 October 1931; and Sun, 4 June 1931, p. 18.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-E-5, file 7, License Inspector, Corporation Counsel, Medical Health Officer, Building Inspector, and Secretary for Zoning Matters to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 26 July 1938.

Ibid., [Information Sheets and Recommendations Respecting Rooming Houses and 1928 Zoning By-law], n. d., and "Definitions of Building, Lodging, Rooming, Boarding, and Apartment House," n. d.

Ibid., Harrison to the Zoning Committee of the Town Planning Commission, 28 September 1938.

Ibid., [Information Sheets and Recommendations Respecting Rooming Houses and 1928 Zoning By-law], n. d.

Ibid., License Inspector et al to Building Committee, 26 July 1938.


Ibid., 61-E-5, file 7, Harrison to the Zoning Committee of the Town Planning Commission, 26 October 1938.


CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 4, "Special Committee Reporting on the Sanitary Conditions of False Creek to Social Services Committee, 22 January 1938."

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 14 July 1939;
CVA, Mayor's records, 33-D-3, file for "Kitsilano Indian Reserve, 1937," A. Grundy to J. W. Cornett, 15 June 1937; ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14 [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937, p. 1; ibid., City Clerk's Department records, 27-C-4, file 11, R. R. Holland to J. J. McRae, 2 September 1936; ibid., 27-D-7, file 28, [Minutes of Special Committee Re. Foreshore Shacks], 26 March 1940; ibid., 16-A-1, file 14, E. L. Slevin to J. W. McIntosh, 18 August 1933; ibid., 16-E-2, file 9, C. F. Andrews et al to the Mayor and Council, 3 November 1936; ibid., 16-E-4, file 4, Slevin to McIntosh, 11 June 1936; and ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 6, Harrison to Bone, 21 January 1939.

77 Sun, 21 May 1931, p. 4.

78 CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-D-7, file 28, "[Report of] Special Committee Re Foreshore Shacks," 23 January 1940; ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937; ibid., 77-B-5, file 4, "Survey of Living Quarters on False Creek, Sept. 21-23, 1937"; and ibid., 77-B-6, file 3, Harrison to Special Committee Re Fraser River Shacks and Waterfront Areas," 10 July 1939.

79 CVA, Records of Board of Police Commissioners, ser. 2, 75-D-4, file 17, H. S. Wood to Acting Chief Constable, 27 June 1936; and ibid., Records of City Solicitor, ser. 3, 115-C-1, file 30, [Correspondence Re Removal of Kitsilano Indian Reserve Squatters in June 1937].

80 CVA, Records of the City Clerk, ser. 2-C, Minutes of the Building, Civic Planning and Parks Committee, 26A, vol. 9, 7 November 1938, p. 82.

81 CVA, Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (2), 1932," Bone to Taylor, 15 November 1932; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 16-E-7, file 17, Bone to W. W. Smith, 29 April 1936.

82 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-A-7, file 3, E. Habenicht to City Relief Department, 6 May 1933; and ibid., file 17, Bone to Smith, 1 April 1936.

83 Ibid., 16-E-7, file 17, Bone to Smith, 4 June 1936; and ibid., Mayor's records, 33-C-6, file for "Relief Dept., 1936," F. Howlett to Smith, 14 May 1936.

84 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-C-2, file 8, [Petitions Submitted to City Council Re the Evans Family Eviction], April 1934. See also, Jean Evans Shiels and Ben Swankey, "Work and Wages!" Semi-Documentary Account of the Life and Times or Arthur H. (Slim) Evans (Vancouver: Trade Union

85 Census Monograph No. 8, p. 157, table 17. The difficulties experienced by Vancouver's wage-earners in keeping their homes during the depression extends the argument about the precariousness of working-class homeownership advanced by Matthew Edel, Elliott D. Sclar, and Daniel Luria in Shaky Palaces: Homeownership and Social Mobility in Boston's Suburbanization (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).


87 CVA, Finance Department records, 93-F-7, file 1, W. L. Woodford to A. Wells Gray, 7 January 1937.

88 CVA, City Solicitor's records, 115-C-2, file 17, Woodford to A. E. Lord, 9 March 1940.

89 CVA, Finance Department records, 93-A-5, file 1, T. Prinn to Finance Committee, 25 October 1932; and Vancouver Province, 27 November 1936, p. 14, and 9 August 1939, p. 4. Available figures do not reveal whether or not properties were improved or how many were residential or commercial.

90 CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-C-2, file 5, "Help Vancouver Grow; Pay Your Taxes Now!" [1935]. This plan provided for the consolidation of arrears and interest accrued to 31 December 1934 with payment extended over a six-year period in annual instalments. Interest at 5% per annum was paid on the total balance of the consolidated sum. Total taxes for the current year had to be paid at the same time as the annual instalment or before the passing of the tax sale by-law for the current year. The brochure seems to have been directed mostly to home-owners.

91 CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-D-2, file 35, F. Jones and C. Brakenridge to Board of Works Committee, 10 May 1937; ibid., Finance Department records, 100-A-4, file 4, [Documents on Work for Taxes Scheme, September-December 1937]; Province, 16 September 1938, p. 1; and Sun, 26 June 1939, pp. 1, 12. The schemes provided manual work for the city up to $60 in any case, or 50 cents per hour. Successful applicants could not be on relief. They had to own and occupy homes of which they were in danger of losing in the next tax sale.

92 CVA, Finance Department records, 93-A-5, file 1, Prinn to A. J. Pilkington, 16 September 1932.

93 British Columbia Archives and Records Services [hereafter BCARS], Records of the Premier of British
Columbia, GR 1222, Box 12, file 5, Mrs. J. B. Mitchell to D. Pattullo, 16 October 1936.

94 CVA, Finance Department records, 100-A-4, files 5 and 6, [Applications Approved under the "Work for Taxes Scheme," 1937].
95 Ibid., 93-A-4, file 3, Pilkington to J. B. Williams, 16 June 1933, and Williams to Pilkington, 27 June 1933.
96 CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-E-17, file 17, Bone to Smith, 6 June 1936, and Smith to Relief and Employment Committee, 9 June 1936; and ibid., 16-D-3, file 6, "Regulations Governing Administration of Relief in Municipalities," 1 February 1935.
97 Census Monograph No. 8, pp. 55, 150, table 9.
98 Ibid., p. 76.
100 Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning (chaired by C. A. Curtis), Final Report of the Subcommittee, March 24, 1944 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944) [hereafter the Curtis report], p. 94, table 18.
101 Census Monograph No. 8, p. 183, table 37.
102 UCA, Dobson papers, B7, file S, "Housing Vancouver," 1939.
103 CVA, Mayor's records, 34-A-2, file entitled "Housing Act, 1940," "City of Vancouver...Partial Housing Survey; Inspections by R. Startup," 1940.
104 Census, 1941, vol. 9, pp. 71-72, table 15a, 75-76, table 16a; and "Housing Conditions in Canada, 1941," Sanford Evans Statistical Service, Index No. 3-99, p. 3.
105 UCA, Dobson papers, B7, file S, "Housing Vancouver," 1939.
106 "Housing Conditions in Canada," p. 2; Census, 1941, vol. 9, p. 9, table 2A.
107 Curtis report, p. 102, table 23. 16.7% of rented homes required repairs as compared to 19.8% of owned homes.
and ibid., 77-B-6, file 3, "A Report of Housing Conditions in Certain Sections of the City," 20 November 1940.

109

Ibid.

110

Census, 1941, vol. 9, p. 79, table 17a.

111

Sun, 30 November 1938, p. 1.

112

CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-D-7, file 28, A. H. Horsell to L. Telford, 5 May 1940.

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114

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-6, file 3, Harrison to Special Committee Re Fraser River Shacks and Water Front Area, 10 July 1939.

115

Ibid., 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937. At the time, the bridge had the name "Connaught" and a position slightly east of the present structure.

116

CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-D-4, file 2, S. Murray to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 16 November 1938.

117

Ibid., Murray to Howlett, 29 November 1938; ibid., 27-D-7, file 28, [Survey of Foreshore Shacks along Fraser River East of Nanaimo], 1940, and [Report of Special Committee Re Foreshore Shacks], 23 January 1940; ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937; ibid., 77-B-6, file 3, Harrison to Special Committee Re Fraser River Shacks and Water Front Areas, 10 July 1939; and ibid., 77-B-5, file 4, "Survey of Living Quarters on False Creek, September 21-23, 1937."

118

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 4, [Report of the Special Committee on the Sanitary Conditions of False Creek to Social Services Committee], 22 January 1938.

119

CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-D-1, file for "Medical Health Officer, Jan. to June 1931," J. W. McIntosh to Finance Committee, 1 April 1931; and ibid., 15-E-4, file 15, J. H. Hynes to McIntosh, 13 April 1932 and 1 November 1932.

120

Ibid., 16-C-2, file 9, A. E. Burton to City Clerk, 24 August 1934.

121

Liversedge, p. 16; and Sun, 15 May 1931, p. 32.
CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-B-7, file 4, Bone to the Mayor and Council, 1 May 1934; and Liversedge, p. 16.


CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-D-1, file for "Medical Health Officer, Jan. to June 1931," McIntosh to Mayor and Council, 24 June 1931; and ibid., 15-D-4, file for "Relief Officer, July-Sept. 1931," Cooper to Atherton, 3 September 1931.

Sun, 25 July 1931, p. 2.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-D-4, file for "Relief Officer, July-Sept. 1931," Cooper to Atherton, 3 September 1931.

Ibid., Dr. H. A. McDonald, Relief Medical Officer, quoted in certificate attached to ibid.

Ibid., Cooper to Atherton, 8 September 1931; and Sun, 5 September 1931, p. 1.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-D-4, file for "Relief Officer, July-Sept., 1931," Cooper to W. J. Bingham, 21 September 1931.

CHAPTER III

THE RESPONSE TO VANCOUVER'S HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE 1930S

Elements within and without government responded in a variety of ways to Vancouver's lack of adequate, affordable housing in the 1930s. For its part, the federal government under Prime Ministers R. B. Bennett and W. L. Mackenzie King provided national market housing initiatives intended to stimulate the ailing building industry and to create employment for construction workers. Although local builders, suppliers, and trade unionists actively promoted this approach, it did not resolve the urban housing problem on the west coast or, for that matter, elsewhere in Canada. In addition, a dynamic social housing movement developed in Vancouver to address the shortage of satisfactory, low-income shelter and to press governments at all levels for a low-rental project. The federal government eventually designed a rental plan for the country's low-income households, but despite the efforts of local activists, the scheme proved unworkable in Vancouver. In the end, neither market programs nor social activism resolved the city's housing problem during the depression years.
Ironically, the federal market housing program implemented in the 1930s resulted partly from the demands of groups in several cities for improved accommodation for low-income households. In Toronto, at the instigation of Dr. H. A. Bruce, the Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, the local Board of Control conducted a survey of poor housing conditions with the assistance of volunteers from the University of Toronto, the Local Council of Women, the Junior League, the League for Social Reconstruction, and the Toc H. Harry M. Cassidy, an assistant professor in Sociology at the University, acted as secretary of the survey committee. In 1934, the final report, popularly known as the Bruce report, recognized the responsibility of the community to provide "satisfactory dwellings for those who are too poor to afford them." It recommended the establishment of a city planning commission, the demolition of slums, the construction of low-cost accommodation, and the co-operation of senior governments in passing legislation, in financing projects, and in creating a national housing commission and program. Organizations in Montreal, Halifax, Ottawa, and Winnipeg also undertook surveys and prepared reports in the early 1930s. A "common strain" exposing the "serious shortage of low-rent dwellings with modern conveniences" and calling for the assistance of senior governments ran through all the reports.

About the same time, various sectors of the construction industry and some Members of Parliament began to press
the R. B. Bennett government for a national low-cost housing scheme. In 1934, the National Construction Council, which the Engineering Institute of Canada, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, the national Chamber of Commerce, and various suppliers' organizations had formed a year earlier to deal with the building crisis, conducted a housing survey in various localities and came out in support of such a program to reverse the industry's slowdown. Some trades and labour councils and provincial labour federations, as well as the Trades and Labour Congress and the Canadian Construction Association, independently called for an improvement in residential conditions and a national house-building policy to stimulate economic recovery. Bennett's maverick Minister of Trade and Commerce from British Columbia, the Hon. H. H. Stevens, also urged a federal housing scheme to generate employment. Several Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and Conservative Members of Parliament placed additional pressure on Bennett.

In mid-February 1935, Bennett appointed a parliamentary Special Committee on Housing "to consider and report upon the inauguration of a national policy of house building" with the intention of creating employment as well as dwellings. The Committee's instructions were to hear evidence about the housing issue and to recommend a policy and the means of implementing it. Member of Parliament Arthur Ganong chaired the Committee. Submissions came from a
variety of individuals and organizations, including prominent architects and planners from across Canada, civic officials from several large cities, Deputy Minister of Finance W. C. Clark, and representatives of the Dominion Mortgage and Investment Association and the National Construction Council. The Committee presented its final report to Parliament in mid-April. It recommended the establishment of a national authority to initiate and implement policies and programs, the authorization of the federal government to negotiate agreements with a province, municipality, society, corporation or individual to construct, renovate, or repair houses, the extension of federal financial assistance for home construction, and the formulation of a national housing policy to increase employment and to coordinate the activities of government and private interests.

The legislation introduced in the House of Commons in June 1935 mostly disregarded the parliamentary Committee's report and the demands of community groups for better low-cost accommodation. Instead, it reflected the interests of Deputy Finance Minister Clark and of Dominion Mortgage and Investment Association solicitor T. D'Arcy Leonard, both of whom appeared before the Committee upon the last day of its hearings. Clark wished to delay any government commitment to slum clearance and low-rental projects and preferred to use housing to bring about economic recovery. His approach stressed an indirect federal role through a "central housing
corporation" which would assume some of the mortgage risk in the low-cost schemes of limited dividend companies.

Leonard opposed a national public housing plan but supported a government-subsidized mortgage scheme to foster home ownership. The idea of a government role limited to mortgage assistance thus appealed to both Clark and Leonard. For two months, they negotiated behind the scenes on behalf of the government and the lending institutions as the specifics of the draft legislation took shape. The housing bill reached the House of Commons in June with the mortgage industry's approval. Although a contract formalized the co-operation between government and industry following the proclamation of the Dominion Housing Act in July 1935, the two parties did not work out the details of lending operations to their mutual satisfaction until almost the end of 1936.

The Dominion Housing Act promised in its first part further investigation of the accommodation issue, and, in its second part, it provided for mortgage assistance to owners and builders. Under the DHA plan, an owner or builder made a downpayment worth 20% of the value of a dwelling, and the federal government and the lender supplied 20% and 60% respectively of the mortgage. The owner made monthly payments covering principal and 5% interest over a 20-year period. The Act therefore skirted contemporary regulations in which lenders could make available no more than 60% of a house's value and in which 5 1/2% or 6% mortgages came due in short terms of perhaps five years. In imple-
menting the Act, the government designated the lending institutions able to participate in the plan and left the supervision of operations to the Department of Finance. Representatives of the architectural profession, the mortgage industry and the Finance Department worked out minimum housing standards for the plan. In addition, the Department sponsored two architectural competitions leading to a book of DHA house plans and to a selection of drawings available for a small fee to prospective home owners (Figure 14).

In guiding the legislation through Parliament, the Bennett government explicitly stated its intention of assisting house construction in order to foster a recovery of the building industry and to stimulate employment. The CCF, some Liberals, and H. H. Stevens vigorously attacked the bill because it failed to address the problem of shelter for the low-income wage-earner or, for that matter, the recommendations of the special parliamentary committee's final report. As well, some critics speculated that the lending institutions would find the Act's terms too distasteful for their participation.

The DHA complemented the "New Deal" program which R. B. Bennett introduced to Parliament in the months previous to the October 1935 general election. Like the other innovations of this program, the Act heralded the displacement of a "laissez-faire" economic system by a more interventionist "welfare state." In fact, Bennett reacted to a political threat from the left, that is, from the CCF and the commu-
nists, and his "New Deal" was "an act of sheer opportunism born out of political desperation." Like the rest of Bennett's initiatives, the DHA was moderate by comparison to what the British or even the Americans had already implemented in the housing area. Unlike the "New Deal" legislation in general, the Act never generated a constitutional challenge. Of course, when Bennett did decide to intervene in the housing field, he agreed with Deputy Finance Minister Clark and the mortgage industry that the government should play an indirect role. He thereby prevented any substantial change in the market's operation.

The application of the DHA plan across Canada proved to be ineffective. Contemporary professionals and insurance men, authors of important housing reports, and recent historians have found much to criticize in the legislation's implementation. All have noted that the DHA made possible the construction of dwellings for middle-income owners rather than for low-income tenants as demanded by community groups. In fact, two-thirds of DHA homes had a value exceeding $3,000 when a low-priced home cost below $2,500. Most of the units could have been erected without the Act's assistance and did little to foster the recovery of the construction industry.

Moreover, many of the corporations designated as lenders under the Act were reluctant to participate. They complained of high administrative costs and excessive risks. The companies that did co-operate discriminated against
applicants living in low-income urban districts or in remote smaller cities and towns. Late in 1936, amendments to the agreement with the lenders attempted to minimize undue risks and costs falling to the corporations, but, despite the amendments, few applicants from outlying communities or from low-income neighbourhoods ever received loans. Indeed, some believed that lending institutions agreed to the DHA plan only to stop the federal government from direct lending.

The Act was eventually responsible for the construction of only 4,903 houses valued at $19,619,442 across Canada between 1935 and 1938. Ontario absorbed 48% of the built units, and Quebec and British Columbia received 23% and 17% respectively of the total. Alberta and Saskatchewan constructed no homes under what a contemporary historian has called this "bad program."

When W. L. Mackenzie King and the Liberal party formed the government following the 1935 election, they decided to continue with the barely operational DHA. King apparently viewed the Act as a potential generator of employment. Furthermore, when King established a National Employment Commission in April 1936 under the chairmanship of Montreal industrialist Arthur B. Purvis, the Commission developed a job-creation initiative, the Home Improvement Plan, to put construction workers back into the labour force. The HIP was a repair and rehabilitation scheme modelled upon the United States Federal Housing Administration's "moder-
nization" program. Under the HIP, home owners could take a bank loan of up to $2,000 for a maximum of 5 years at 3 1/4% per year repayable in equal monthly instalments. No collateral or note endorsement was necessary, and the federal government guaranteed losses of up to 15% of the loan. The Canadian Bankers' Association gave quick approval of the Plan and permitted it to go ahead as a test project in Windsor before passage of the Home Improvement Loans Guarantee Act. The Department of Finance administered the HIP once the NEC's appointment terminated in 1938. A sum of $50 million carried HIP operations from October 1936 to October 1940, when the government ended the scheme due to World War II.

The Commission developed an effective advertising drive to promote the HIP. It hired Cockfield, Brown, and Company Limited to direct the campaign and gave the firm a budget for advertising through publications, displays, films, and radio broadcasts. The NEC also depended upon national organizations representing business and industry like the Canadian Construction Association to carry a large part of the task, particularly in the area of fundraising. It appointed provincial chairmen of HIP campaigns who in turn organized local committees. On 3 December 1936, a radio broadcast from Ottawa featuring a keynote speech by Prime Minister King himself introduced the Plan to the country. Then, in March, an intensive three-month promotion began with the new building year. Another public relations effort in
the autumn reinforced its work. Ottawa fed these operations with brochures, press releases, and advertisements, trailers for movie theatres, and radio speeches. Supported by the NEC Women's Committee chaired by British Columbian Mary Sutherland and endorsed by the National Council of Women, the advertising specifically targeted housewives: it reminded them of the opportunity "to improve their homes, better their communities, and help the country as a whole" by putting people back to work. Following the NEC's dissolution, the HIP campaign merged with a drive to foster the DHA. Joint committees of volunteers carried on the work despite funding difficulties.

The HIP represented a more successful program than the DHA scheme. By October 1940, the Plan had resulted in 125,652 loans worth $49,990.620 with a very low default rate. Still, Ontario again received the most loans, while British Columbia came a poor third. Once more, home owners with comfortable incomes, rather than tenants and owners with modest earnings, benefited most from the Plan. As well, judging from promotional literature, the HIP's initiators intended it to be used for the "modernization" of dwellings rather than the major structural repairs badly needed in many homes during the depression. However, the Plan supplied more employment opportunities for construction workers and labourers than the DHA, although it could not provide enough stimulus to ensure recovery. By February 1940, Ottawa estimated that the Plan had furnished 25.3 million hours of
direct labour across Canada and consumed $19 million of materials.

In July 1938, the federal government extended the DHA in a new act and set up a National Housing Administration within the Finance Department to supervise operations. Again, its objective was to increase employment, to revive the construction industry, and to expand the supply of moderately priced dwellings. Under Part I of the National Housing Act, the government and the lending institution provided 80% loans on houses worth over $2,500 or 90% loans on ones valued under $2,500, with the government portion not exceeding 20% or 25% respectively of either type. The government established a $20 million fund for the NHA plan, of which borrowers had used all but $1 million by 1941.

Like the HIP, the new legislation functioned more efficiently than the DHA. Those with more moderate income or residence in remote communities participated more frequently under the NHA. Nevertheless, the value of units between 1938 and 1941 averaged $3,947, almost $1,500 more than the price of a low-cost house. Only 20.7% of NHA homes were worth below $2,999. In addition, a household head living in a NHA unit earned an average yearly income of $2,069. She or he was therefore "somewhat better off" than the male wage-earner or salaried worker whose average annual earnings amounted to $956 or $1,819 respectively in 1938. As well, the Act led to an expansion in employment and sales.
of supplies. According to the federal government's estimates, by February 1940 the NHA had provided 33 million hours of direct labour and produced expenditures of $36 million on materials. Yet the heightened NHA activity of 1939 and 1940 came too late to assist in the recovery of the economy during its worst years.

Thus, the national programs established under the NHA Part I, the Home Improvement Loans Guarantee Act, and the DHA failed to address the nation-wide problem of obtaining adequate accommodation for low-income households as defined in local surveys and as recommended by parliamentary report. The application of these programs in Vancouver similarly disregarded the city's housing needs.

The DHA program started slowly on the west coast. The first loan approved in Vancouver in May 1936 occurred almost nine months after the Act became operable. In fact, its introduction came only a few months before the issue in November 1936 of the first HIP loan. The protracted negotiations between the Finance Department officials and the lending institutions initially delayed the DHA's implementation. Later, the designated lenders in Vancouver simply refused to participate in the Plan. In March 1936, the Mortgage and Trust Companies Association of British Columbia declared that local branches still awaited loan-issuing instructions from their Central Canadian head offices and that the latter wished to assess the program's performance in the East before advancing money in the West.
Association itself desired revisions to the contract between government and industry. The companies feared the financial risk inherent in the DHA's lower interest rate and longer amortization period and the size of administrative costs over 20 years. Other problems included the aversion of branches to risk-taking, the reluctance of head offices to delegate authority to branches, and the unavailability of application forms for potential British Columbia borrowers.

Nevertheless, national and local promoters of the house-building industry began to press for immediate implementation of the DHA in Vancouver. In a visit to the city late in 1935, the National Construction Council vice-president, Laurence I. Anthes, called for swift execution of the plan and for its expansion to include low-cost housing and "modernization." In February 1936, when the program remained inoperative west of Winnipeg, a Vancouver delegation comprised of Colonel J. F. Keen, Fred J. Hale, and R. J. Lecky requested the Canadian Construction Association convention in Hamilton to urge Ottawa to introduce the DHA in Western Canada and to broaden it to embrace home renovation and repair. A month later, Premier Duff Pattullo announced in the Legislative Assembly that he would pursue the DHA issue on a forthcoming visit to Ottawa. To many prominent Vancouver businessmen, the Act represented "a fifty-million dollar plum waiting to be picked."

After much lobbying, two lending institutions, the Canada Permanent Mortgage Corporation and the Mutual Life of
Canada, began to accept DHA loan applications in April 1936. Yet they advanced only 8 loans to builders before September. The DHA seemed "a great disappointment" to the local construction industry.

The industry's major motivation in supporting the DHA was to revive house-building activity in the city. Men like Keen, who worked for the Ryan Contracting Company, and Hale and Lecky, who acted as president and executive secretary of the Building and Construction Industries Exchange, had both a financial and a career interest in recovery. Moreover, they recognized the economic impact of the depression on construction workers and labourers. For example, Lecky was secretary of the citizens' group that operated the Vancouver Emergency Refuge for unemployed transient men, and he chaired the Committee on Homeless Men set up by the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies.

In all probability, a strong social control motive also persuaded builders like Lecky to support the DHA plan. In its report of July 1932, the Committee on Homeless Men concluded that a work system had to be found to "preserve or restore [the men's] self-respect, maintain their morale, and prevent citizens of Vancouver or any other city from bearing more than their rightful share of the financial burden."

The Committee stressed that the temper of the unemployed and their attitude to society as a whole will become increasingly violent and anti-social if those immediately responsible for caring for them treat them in such a way that the unemployed feel that they must,
In their own interest, be antagonistic and grasping, rather than co-operative and anxious to help themselves in any way possible. 58

No doubt, the social control objective acquired more urgency between 1935 and 1938 with the On-to-Ottawa trek and the occupation of the main post office, the Georgia Hotel, and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

In contrast to the DHA, the Home Improvement Plan became almost instantly operative in Vancouver. Banks made loans under the Plan even before the constitution of the British Columbia promotional committee in January 1937. By March, the HIP with 103 loans in 3 months had surpassed the "dormant but not dead" DHA program with 15 mortgages over 17 months.

To many, the Home Improvement Plan seemed "a first-class scheme." In early 1937, the Building and Construction Industries Exchange and the Real Estate Exchange endorsed the Plan, the City Council delegated one of its members to sit on the British Columbia Committee, and the Vancouver Council of Women fostered the organization of a HIP Women's Council. The popularity of the scheme among middle-class interests partly derived from a desire to obtain economic recovery. The program also offered "an immediate way of taking men off relief rolls and putting them on pay rolls" at a time when the unemployed seriously threatened social order in the city. A Royal Bank newspaper advertisement for the HIP in the spring of 1937 depicted a preferrable world in which a youngster with an ice-cream cone stood out-
side a Cape Cod cottage, waved an arm, and shouted "Dad's Got a Job Again!"

The British Columbia Committee for HIP directed an energetic campaign that complemented the nation-wide promotional drive. The Committee solicited financial contributions from trades and industries as well as from community-minded citizens, and it received some funding from the national HIP Committee which had raised $200,000. The Committee established a Vancouver office managed by Lecky to organize the local activities and to disseminate information.

The HIP newspaper campaign in the city was a spirited one. For months, the Vancouver Sun's real estate page announced that "1937 Is Home Improvement Year: The Year for Putting Men Back to Work." Articles inspired by Ottawa's press releases boosted the Plan with suggestions for modernizing bathrooms and kitchens and for converting basements and attics into usable space. Based on the premise that to "have deferred payments applied to home improvement is the answer to a homemaker's prayer," these articles followed the national example and focused heavily on women as consumers. As well, banks and suppliers advertised the easy accessibility of loans and the virtues of British Columbia products like red cedar shingles. Local papers gave extensive coverage to HIP Committee luncheons for the business community at the Georgia Hotel.

The HIP campaign reinforced other drives and displays
intended to encourage home repairs. In late April, it coincided with a Junior Board of Trade "Clean Up, Paint Up" promotion that extolled "Make a New Home with Paint!" Later, it encouraged HIP exhibitions in various communities around the city. For instance, in May, the Grandview Chamber of Commerce sponsored a display in the local Masonic hall featuring music and entertainment as well as an opening ceremony with Mayor G. C. Miller and speeches by Lecky and the local Canadian Bank of Commerce manager. In the fall, the interior decoration section of the Hudson's Bay Company department store remodelled for public viewing an older house at 52nd Avenue and Hudson Street in order to demonstrate the Plan's applicability.

In 1938, the British Columbia Committee for HIP resolved to promote the DHA and NHA programs as well as the modernization scheme. Many of the people who had called for the extension of the DHA to Western Canada, including Lecky, Reen, and Hale, were active members of the Committee. After creating a system of committees and sub-committees to deal with financing, lending institutions, speakers, meetings, exhibitions, and advertising, the Committee went on to establish the contacts necessary to promote the federal plans, including the local service clubs, the Architectural Institute of British Columbia, the Lower Mainland reeves, and the Associated Boards of Trade of the Fraser Valley.

The 1938 HIP/NHA campaign continued on the lines of the 1937 drive. Newspapers ran advertisements placed by buil-
ders, realtors, and suppliers, as well as drawings of NHA house designs offered by the National Housing Administration in Ottawa. Once again, HIP displays attended by "throng" of people went up in several neighbourhoods, and the Junior Board of Trade sponsored another week-long "Clean Up, Paint Up, Modernize" campaign. The Hudson's Bay Company department store exhibited submissions to a national DHA architectural competition.

By 1939, the Committee for HIP and NHA heavily represented the builders, suppliers, and realtors of Vancouver and their organizations, including the newly formed Building Contractors' Association, the British Columbia Lumber and Shingle Manufacturer's Association, and the Vancouver Real Estate Exchange. Nevertheless, the Committee's campaign appealed to a broader community. As supplier Byron Johnson, later a British Columbia premier, outlined to a Kiwanis Club luncheon at the Hotel Vancouver, the advantages of the government's housing plans to this community included the creation of a domestic market for the province's lumber, the reinvestment of local wealth, the expansion of employment and purchasing power, the encouragement of home ownership, the watchdog role of the private sector over a government scheme, the opportunity for youth to learn construction trades, and the provision of homes with proper living standards.

With this broad orientation, the Committee attracted delegates from the City Council, the Board of Trade, the Vancouver Loan and Mortgage Association, the Trades and
Labour Council, the Junior Board of Trade, the British Columbia Underwriters' Association, and the Local Council of Women. Even the Vancouver Housing Association, a major proponent of a low-rental scheme for the city, sent a representative to the Committee.

In May 1939, the British Columbia Committee for HIP and NHA in conjunction with the West End Chamber of Commerce sponsored a home-building show in the Hotel Vancouver's Crystal Ballroom with booths and displays featuring all aspects of renovation and construction from loan arrangements to garden landscaping. Several hundred people attended every day. However, the onset of war diverted finances, materials, and labour away from the house-building industry, and the Committee and its campaigns vanished in the fall of 1939.

How successful were these federal housing programs in Vancouver? In the end, they did stimulate construction. Despite limited participation in the DHA plan, more owners and builders took advantage of the other schemes as the HIP/NHA Committee became active. By May 1938, builders like S. D. Buzelle and J. Sexton had erected rows of homes for sale, and, by September, NHA activity exceeded the HIP's. Between August 1938 and December 1941, the NHA program in Vancouver was responsible for 2,440 loans worth $8,059,729 that created 2,711 units. A draft Vancouver Housing Association report estimated in 1939 that slightly over half of all residential construction and about three-quarters of
all house-building mortgages in the city had been financed under the DHA and the NHA between January 1938 and May 1939. Under the HIP to 31 May 1939, Vancouver banks made 2,985 loans valued at $833,113.

However, as local critics realized, the federal market housing program encountered serious difficulties on the west coast. First, as the 1937 report of the City's special housing committee pointed out, the program favoured the accommodation of middle-income households in west side districts (Figure 13). In May 1938, only about 10% of 98 homes financed by one lending institution were located east of Ontario Street. At a time when relief tenants faced eviction due to rising rents, when homeless unemployed men occupied downtown buildings to protest their predicament and when Better Housing Scheme families struggled to keep their homes, the average cost of 42 DHA houses being built in May and June 1938 around the city was $3,705. Only four of these units were situated in east side neighbourhoods like Hastings East and Mount Pleasant; the remainder could be found in west side districts like Point Grey, Kitsilano, Little Mountain, and Shaughnessy. Secondly, the federal programs injected some energy into the local construction industry according to business license records for contractors and realtors, but they did not engender a complete recovery (Table 4). Despite the HIP and DHA, high unemployment continued to plague construction workers into the late 1930s.
Figure 13

Table from the civic special housing committee's 1937 report, showing the inequalities of the Dominion Housing Act program

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, Records of the Town Planning Commission, ser. 3, 61-C-6, file 14 [Report of the Special Committee on Housing], 15 November 1937.
Furthermore, the supervision of building standards emerged as a controversial issue with the DHA/NHA programs as it had with the Better Housing Scheme. A builder who took out a loan for the construction of more than one unit often teamed up with a realtor to market the homes and offered him a commission hidden to the buyer. The builder occasionally cut corners in construction standards and supplies in order to keep within a budget reduced by commission. Unfortunately, due to cutbacks, the civic Building Department had insufficient staff to inspect new housing thoroughly, and neither the lending institutions nor the home owners were sufficiently watchful to catch problems. The press made frequent charges of racketeering and jerry-building, but only two cases ever received public scrutiny. F. W. Nicolls of the National Housing Administration visited Vancouver in January 1939 to investigate the charges. In a week of "plainspeaking," he sternly lectured the City Council, the builders, and the owners about the problem, threatened to cut off loans, and warned that his office in Ottawa would consult a "white list" of reputable contractors when it screened applications. For their part, the builders formed the Building Contractors' Association to promote higher ethical standards in the field and to advance the building industry through co-operative efforts. As a public relations gesture, the Association built two demonstration houses on West 39th and West 29th Avenues, and it supplied display sketches, plans, and models for the May 1939 home-builders'
Finally, the DHA/NHA house styles did not immediately suit west coast tastes. Vancouver's builders and owners found the plans and drawings submitted to DHA competitions and others issued by the National Housing Administration too much the "down east" or the "Ontario type" in style (Figure 14). The preference for Tudor Revival and California bungalows established before the depression held firm until the late thirties. While somewhat reduced in size and complexity, the familiar styles, with some exceptions, continued to appear under the federal programs (Figures 15, 16, and 17). They also contrasted strikingly with the first pre-war examples of the important west coast modern tradition, including the B. C. Binning house, which went up despite a struggle with a lending institution over its progressive design (Figure 18).

Yet questions of design and style and of home ownership itself under the NHA mattered little to those thousands of Vancouverites who did without affordable, adequate housing. The federal market programs simply did not meet their needs. Not surprisingly, by the late 1930s, community activists had determined to solve the shelter problem by launching a campaign for social housing.

Both outside influences and local activism moulded the emergence of Vancouver's social housing movement. Direction came externally from the traditions and the current develop-
Figure 14
The "Ontario type" from the Dominion Housing Act architectural competition, 1936

Source: Canada, Department of Finance, Dominion Housing Act: Architectural Competition; Low-Cost House Designs (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936).
DOMINION HOUSING ACT

O. Roy Moore & Co., Architects
609 Richmond Street, London, Ont.

Design No. 82
Figure 15

Vancouver's first Dominion Housing Act home, built in 1937 in Kitsilano
Figure 16
Dominion Housing Act home,
built ca. 1938 on West 36th Avenue
near Dunbar Street
Figure 17

Dominion Housing Act home,
built ca. 1938 on West 22nd Avenue,
near Cambie Street
Figure 18

B. C. Binning home, West Vancouver, 1940

Source: National Archives Canada, PA-132040
ments of reform within and without Canada, the formation of the League for Social Reconstruction, the CCF, and the Communist Party of Canada, and the introduction of a federal low-cost housing program. As well, local agitation to achieve improvements in the maintenance and shelter of the unemployed and the relief recipient gave a militant edge to housing activism. By 1937, both local and outside forces had shaped the formation of a vigorous drive for social housing.

Activists in Vancouver were well aware of international developments in the housing field. Canadian publications like the Bruce report described advances in Europe beginning in the 1850s and in the United States starting in the early 1900s. They took special interest in post-World War I British legislation that provided for the subsidization of low-rental projects and slum clearance programs undertaken by local authorities. As well, they recognized the achievements of the American New Deal, particularly the construction of low-rental complexes as public works projects under the 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act and of public housing schemes under the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act. An activist like P. R. U. Stratton, the author of the Vancouver Housing Association's draft report, had emigrated from England and was familiar with twentieth century solutions to the European residential problem. Moreover, distinguished figures in the housing and planning world like Sir Raymond Unwin visited Vancouver, spoke at
public meetings, and commented upon the city's environment. Finally, Stratton and others read and valued the work of authorities like Catherine Bauer.

The contemporary international trend in the housing field toward social scientific surveying and reporting also came to be felt in Vancouver in an indirect way. By the mid-1930s, Leonard C. Marsh, who trained as an economist at the London School of Economics under Sir William Beveridge, had become director of social research at McGill University, where he prepared studies on unemployment and contributed to reports on Montreal's shelter problem. Another welfare economist, Harry M. Cassidy, was a faculty member of the University of Toronto School of Social Work who acted as secretary of the committee responsible for the Bruce report. He later assumed the position of Director of Social Welfare for the British Columbia government, wrote a major report on the transient single unemployed, and attempted to introduce a provincial health insurance plan. A third social scientist, Coral W. Topping, who became acquainted with the work of Marsh and Cassidy through his United Church and League for Social Reconstruction connections as well as through scholarship, taught in the University of British Columbia's Economics, Political Science, and Sociology Department and administered the social work program between 1929 and 1943. Topping's students carried out surveys for Vancouver's 1937 housing report.

The lingering tradition of the Canadian social gospel
continued to affect west coast housing issues in the 1930s. Although the social gospel had long since gone into decline, its "moderate" form still existed in the United Church in the person of Hugh Dobson, the associate secretary of Evangelism and Social Service, who in 1926 moved from Regina to Vancouver. Dobson continued to see Christianity as a social religion. In Vancouver during the depression, he spearheaded the Church's social thrust, which ranged from welfare services performed by individual congregations to reports on urban conditions. The members of First United Church at Hastings Street and Gore Avenue, "the Church of the Open Door," furnished clothing to thousands hard hit by the depression and took a soup kitchen to the men in the Prior Street jungle, and their minister, the Reverend Andrew Roddan, dealt, however ineptly, with the subject of homelessness in sermons, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, and books (Figure 19). At the same time, members of various congregations participated in a national study undertaken in 1932 by the United Church's General Council to assess the impact of the depression and to make recommendations about the role of the church in the establishment of a new social order. While Harry Cassidy assisted in the preparation of the report in Toronto, the Vancouver committee included Dobson, Roddan, and Topping, who was an active member of the Canadian Memorial and West Point Grey United Churches. In 1931, Dobson chaired a British Columbia Committee on Unemployment and Relief of the local General
Figure 19

Rev. Andrew Roddan in a soup kitchen, at the Prior Street jungle, 1931

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, RE P 13
Ministerial Association, and Topping served as a member. Five years later, Dobson became chairman of a Vancouver Presbytery committee to assist the Unemployed and Part-time Workers' Organization in an investigation of the city's high rents and evictions problem.

The Canadian housing reform tradition reaching back to the work of the Commission of Conservation (1909-1921), to the celebrated planner Thomas Adams (1914-1920s), and to the Town Planning Institute of Canada (1919) directly influenced activists during the 1930s in Vancouver. With the termination of the Commission and the subsequent loss of energy of the TPIC, no effective national planning organization existed to lobby the federal government. Thus, in 1937, George S. Mooney, the executive director of the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities as well as a member of the League for Social Reconstruction and the CCF, led a new generation of planners and some older TPIC members in the organization of the National Housing and Planning Association. Mooney regarded this new group as a replacement of both the Commission and the TPIC. He approached Alexander Walker, the secretary-engineer of the Vancouver Town Planning Commission, to help in the creation of a local branch. The constitution of the Vancouver Housing Association, the group that guided the city's social housing movement for many years, occurred in January 1938.

During the depression, many Vancouver women shared the traditional commitment to solving housing problems...
expressed in Octavia Hill's charitable work in London, in American material feminist domestic architectural design, in working-class women's militancy in the Glasgow rent strikes, or in women's contributions to the Toronto Housing Company development. The work of the National and the Local Councils of Women had been instrumental in the articulation of housing concerns across Canada and in Vancouver in the pre-depression years. During the 1930s, the Vancouver Council argued for adequate relief and shelter for single unemployed women (as well as for single transient men) and for a moratorium on mortgage payments. However, by then, other women's organizations, especially working-class ones, and individuals like Helena Gutteridge, who was also a member of the Vancouver Council, had independently taken up the housing cause. Indeed, their work helped to redefine the role of local women in the housing field from a philanthropic one to a political one.

Contemporary intellectual and political solutions to the economic and social dislocation caused by the depression, whether democratic socialist, communist, or liberal in nature, lay behind much of the agitation about Vancouver's housing problem. Of prime importance was the formation in 1931 in Central Canada of the League for Social Reconstruction. A group of intellectuals of a democratic socialist persuasion, who were deeply concerned about the breakdown of the capitalist order during the depression, came together to develop solutions for a new,
more just social order. Many, like Harry Cassldy, Leonard Marsh, and George Mooney, were academics or professionals motivated by social conscience and by desire for public recognition of their skills. Still, the Vancouver members of the LSR branch, which had formed by early summer 1932, tended not to fit the academic or the professional model. Rather, for every C. W. Topping, there were political figures like Grace and Angus MacInnis or Dorothy Steeves who blended a sense of social justice with political ambitions for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and for themselves.

The League's achievements included the publication in 1935 of its blueprint for the new social order, *Social Planning for Canada*. One chapter written by Humphrey Carver, an architect with expertise in planning and housing presented the LSR's solution to the national shelter problem. In response to unrestrained speculative development on the urban fringe and to decay of the downtown core, a socialist government would initiate planning based on surveys and compulsory powers and establish a federal housing and planning authority to provide accommodation for low-paid wage-earners owned by a federal, provincial, or municipal government or its agent. The benefits of this "large-scale housing programme" would include a healthier, more appropriately designed social environment for wage-earning families. A subsequent chapter suggested that non-profit or limited dividend housing corporations could also play a part in a government program.

The LSR gave "quiet assistance" to the newly formed
CCF. It decided against formal affiliation with the party in order to preserve its educational objectives. Still, two League members, Frank Scott and Frank Underhill, helped to draft the Regina Manifesto, which in many ways expanded the LSR's own policy statement adopted 18 months previously. In British Columbia, the LSR clubs decided to join the CCF as a group in 1933. By the mid-thirties, the League co-operated closely with the CCF at the national level, and members who did not view themselves as socialists left the organization. The League died out in British Columbia in the late 1930s, and its last national convention occurred in June 1941.

The CCF established a British Columbia wing in 1933. At first, the party was a federation of the Socialist Party of Canada with the LSR branches and the CCF clubs. The Marxist SPC descended through the Independent Labour Party and the Federated Labour Party from the original SPC, which had been founded in 1902 as the Socialist Party of British Columbia. A general (although incomplete) consolidation of the CCF occurred by 1935. Several CCF members who had participated in the province's lengthy socialist tradition, notably Helena Gutteridge, Angus MacInnis, Ernest E. Winch, and Dorothy Steeves, became prominent players in the social housing movement of the 1930s and 1940s.

The Communist Party of Canada formed in 1921 in Ontario within the Comintern affiliation. Although it was initially an underground organization, it soon invented a legal party called the Workers' Party of Canada and in 1924
renamed itself the Communist Party of Canada. With a small but militant membership, the CPC attempted to exert influence over trade union activities through the Workers' Unity League. Early in the depression, party members organized Unemployed Workers' Associations affiliated with the WUL across Canada and in Vancouver. Later, these associations set up branch and block organizations led by CPC members to represent the unemployed and the relief recipient on issues like shelter allowances, rising rents, and evictions.

In addition to left-wing intellectuals and politicians, "the Government Generation" was bent on refashioning Canada of the 1930s into the modern welfare state. This "new reform elite," characteristically well-educated, middle- or upper-class anglophone males, sought to bring order from the chaos of the depression by using lobbying techniques, governmental process, and civil service appointments rather than by following the voluntarist and philanthropic example of the previous reform generation. As neither LSR advocates nor "non-partisans," they tended to work from within the Liberal party. A "brain-trust" among Liberal intellectuals emerged by 1932-1933 under the influence of Vincent Massey and Norman Rogers and attempted to separate the party (and Mackenzie King) from its laissez-faire tradition and to accept a more interventionist stance.

Once in positions of power, this new generation of Liberal politicians was able to make substantial, although not radical, changes. For example, Norman Rogers as
Minister of Labour succeeded in founding the National Employment Commission that prepared the way for an unemployment insurance scheme. The NEC also created the Home Improvement Plan, and, as well, the Department of Finance accepted its idea of extending the federal housing legislation to include provisions for moderately priced dwellings. Nevertheless, the Commission's proposal for low-rental projects and slum clearance as a means of stimulating increased construction and employment met with failure. The Finance Department and, in particular, Deputy Minister W. C. Clark, a more conservative "mandarin," opposed a draft bill submitted by Rogers because it was a "radical innovation" requiring federal, provincial, and municipal subsidization of low-income accommodation.

If Department of Finance officials objected to the NEC scheme, they later drew up their own low-rental housing plan under Part II of the 1938 National Housing Act. The Act provided local housing authorities with federal loans of up to 90% of the construction cost repayable at an annual interest rate of 1 3/4% to 2%. The sponsoring municipality had to forego all but 1% of taxes on the project, and the province had to agree to cover any losses. The Act also placed limits on maximum rentals and family incomes. Unlike the NEC scheme, the NHA plan supplied no subsidy for reduced rents to make possible the inclusion of low-income households. In July 1938, when the legislation received royal assent, the federal structure for a low-income housing pro-
gram was in place. However impossible to implement, the new plan animated Vancouver's housing activists.

Thus, by the late 1930s external forces had fashioned a social housing movement that was oriented towards social scientific methodology, social justice, and state intervention, that continued older reform traditions, and that aspired to achieve low-rental housing under specific federal legislation.

Local activism to obtain improved maintenance and habitation for the unemployed and for relief recipients also shaped the development of Vancouver's social housing campaign. This agitation focused on specific grievances and took a variety of directions with few substantial results. Still, in the late 1930s, many of those who had fought for better conditions in relief accommodation began to work towards the achievement of a low-rental project. Moreover, the social housing movement absorbed some of the peaceable and militant strategies of the relief activism.

The activists belonged mainly to working-class organizations. In particular, they came from groups formed to assist the jobless like the Unemployed Workers' Association, the Single Unemployed Protective Association, the British Columbia Joint Committee on Unemployment, and the Unemployed Women's Protective Association. They also represented the labour movement through the Vancouver, New Westminster, and District Trades and Labour Congress, the Brotherhood of
Railway Carmen of America, the Seafarers' Industrial Union, the Amalgamated Building Workers of Canada, and the Marine Workers' and Boilermakers' Union. Members of the CCF and its predecessors played forceful roles within and without the party. Many communists worked through unemployed groups, trade unions, and Finnish and Ukrainian associations.

Progressive women's organizations such as the New Era League, the women's sections of the Independent Labour Party or the CCF, the Mothers' Council, the Women's Labour Leagues, the Women's Joint Committee between CCF and CPC Women, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom were spirited participants. The desire for social change found in these various groups stemmed from personal experience of the depression's impact and from an ideological commitment to reconstruct society on a socialist model.

The issue of proper accommodation for the unemployed and the relief recipient also aroused the concerns of several organizations other than strictly working-class ones, including the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies, the United Church, the Vancouver Council of Women, and the Single Unemployed Women's Aid Board. As well, representatives of the building industry like R. J. Lecky linked the issue of relief shelter with the federal market housing promotion. The motivation of organizations and individuals alike was complex. The social control objective expressed in the report of the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies Committee on
Homeless Men doubtlessly lay behind the work of many groups. Yet the question of support for the unemployed also aroused public sympathy. Many Vancouverites had experienced the personal destructiveness of the depression and believed that the economic and social disorder of the decade was a national problem and "no fault" of its victims.

Activist groups demanded work or improved maintenance for the unemployed and the relief recipient. While they did not come together only to press for better accommodation, many of their grievances dealt with shelter and reflected contemporary housing conditions. For example, protests about the treatment of reliefers usually included the lack of bed tickets for homeless single men, especially relief camp strikers, the poor living arrangements in the "pogies," or the necessity for many transient jobless men to live in jungles. Complaints about the maintenance of the married unemployed involved rent relief cuts, landlords' rejection of lower shelter allowances, rising rents, evictions of relief recipients, and withholding of personal belongings following eviction. Also, by the mid-1930s, many organizations objected to the insanitary and overcrowded housing occupied by relief and low-income households, the lack of decent accommodation for single women on relief, and the discrimination in the relief system experienced by Asians.

The agitators employed the techniques of lobbying and of individual advocacy in directing their protests and
demands towards the civic, provincial, or federal governments. They placed phone calls to the mayor or wrote to an elected official. Many went as delegates to City Council to represent the interests of an individual like Mrs. Arthur Evans and to argue for changes in policy. Unemployed organizations regularly sent delegations straight to the Relief Officer to challenge him over particular cases. The protesters tried briefs, memos, surveys, reports, resolutions, and petitions to government as well. For example, in its 1934 report to City Council and to Premier Duff Pattullo, the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies Committee on Homeless Men recommended improved conditions in relief camps, better provisions for single men over 21 living at home, supervised institutional care for single men who were physically unfit for camp life, and (demonstrating their concerns about social stability) a "detention camp" in Vancouver for those expelled from the camps. A 1934 CCF Unemployment Council resolution to Mayor Louis D. Taylor specified the nature of the minimum needs of the unemployed including an increased rent allowance paid in cash and administered by Victoria throughout the province. The British Columbia Joint Committee on Unemployment, representing 65 organizations and 30,665 persons, sent a memo in 1934 to Pattullo urging increases in direct relief and rent allowances, freedom for single people to sleep in places of their own choice, and alleviation of overcrowded accommodation. Several locals of the Workers' Alliance of British
Columbia presented a 1937 brief to City Council's Social Services Committee about the rising rents, evictions, overcrowding, and insanitary conditions commonly experienced by Vancouver's unemployed. In addition, the Unemployed Workers Association conducted a survey of the rental situation faced by relief recipients.

The protesters did not shrink from more militant but disciplined tactics. The Single Unemployed Protective Association picketed homes of families like the Evans to stop their eviction. They frequently held mass meetings downtown that drew enormous crowds. In December 1930, about 1,000 men led by Workers' Unity League leader Tom McEwen met the civic Relief Officer on the Cambie Street grounds and demanded bed and meal tickets for single men and adequate support, including rent allowances, for married men. By April and May 1935, when the relief camp strike was in full swing, enormous rallies of thousands of people deplored, among other things, the living conditions in the camps and the lack of food and shelter for the strikers. Indeed, between 1935 and 1938, the "snake" parades, leafletting, tin-canning, tag-days, occupations of the city museum or of the Georgia Hotel, main post office, and Vancouver Art Gallery, and even the On-to-Ottawa Trek may be seen in part as demonstrations about insufficient maintenance for the single unemployed. This militancy aroused tremendous public sympathy for the strikers, and hundreds of citizens provided food and shelter, attended rallies, congregated outside occupied
buildings, or waved farewell to delegations sailing off to Victoria to meet the Premier.

Elected (and sometimes unelected) officials in the civic, provincial, or federal governments were the targets of this protest. Frequently, the Mayor and City Council requested assistance from the government in Victoria or in Ottawa, which in turn would attribute responsibility to the other senior government. The federal government regarded relief as a provincial matter, and the Province viewed the breakdown in the economy which necessitated relief as a national problem. Achievements were thus few in number. However, if the social threat became too great, the senior governments would react by creating or closing camps, establishing a commission to investigate camp conditions, or providing funds for direct relief or public works. Even the City's Welfare and Relief Department responded to the individual advocacy of the unemployed organizations to relieve the distress of their members.

Associations of lodging house operators and east side property owners also represented before City Council the interests of their members adversely affected by the depression. They sometimes opposed the grievances of groups acting for the unemployed and the relief recipient, much as they later resisted the low-rental project advocated by the social housing campaigners. Using letters, resolutions, and delegations, ratepayers and electors' associations for east side wards, the Vancouver Federated Ratepayers' Association, the
Italian Home Owners' and Electors' Association, and the Windermere District Improvement Association approached the City with demands for a moratorium on the mortgage payments of unemployed citizens, for "work for taxes" schemes, for suspension of tax sales, for melloration of regulations leading to the sales, for shelter allowances for ratepayers on relief, and for alleviation of evictions. By contrast, the Lodging and Restaurant Keepers' Association and the House Owners' Association wanted changes in the rent relief system benefiting landlords rather than tenants: higher allowances; free water; staggered license fee payments; and assurances of rental payment before tenants received more relief work. Ratepayers succeeded in winning concessions from the city government while the lodging house keepers failed altogether. In May 1936, with prior provincial approval and under pressure from property owners, the City extended shelter allowances to home owners on relief to be used for mortgage or tax payments. In addition, it suspended tax sales for a time and introduced "work for taxes" schemes.

The protests about shelter in the early 1930s in Vancouver greatly influenced the development of a local social housing movement. By mid-decade, many of the relief and unemployment activists, together with local professionals, academics, church people, left-wing politicians, and some construction industry representatives like R. J. Lecky, recognized the existence of a serious low-income
housing problem and went on to lead the movement despite the resistance of property interests. Moreover, in the late 1930s and the 1940s the movement adopted many tactics utilized in relief protests.

The members of this movement also seized the opportunity presented by the election of a socialist as City alderperson. On 24 March 1937, the voters of Vancouver elected that "persistent lady," Helena Gutteridge, to City Council in a by-election. Born in Britain, she trained in London at the Regent Street Polytechnic and the Royal Sanitary Institute in hygiene and sanitary science: her education may have engendered her interest in housing. She participated in the British woman suffrage movement, and, following her emigration to Canada in 1911, she was active in the British Columbia Woman's Suffrage League, the United Suffrage Societies of Vancouver, and the Vancouver City Central Woman's Suffrage Referendum Campaign Committee. As a strong trade unionist as well as a feminist, she belonged to the Women's Minimum Wage League and the Women's Employment League, contributed to the Labour Gazette and The B. C. Federationist, and worked on the mothers' pension, workmen's compensation, and peace issues. In the 1930s, as corresponding secretary for the CCF Unemployment Council, she joined the struggle to assist the jobless and homeless. A member of the CCF and its British Columbia predecessors, she ran for City Council twice before her 1937 victory.

The housing issue began to simmer as soon as Helena
Within a week of the by-election, the first annual congress of the Greater Vancouver and New Westminster Youth Council passed a resolution urging the city to set up a special committee to investigate and to publicize information about slum conditions in the city and to press senior governments to take immediate action to remedy those conditions.

In fact, on 28 June 1937, Council did establish a special housing committee to survey and to report upon the residential situation. Its members included Gutteridge as chair, A. J. Harrison, the civic secretary of zoning matters, as secretary, and Frank Buck, a University of British Columbia horticulture professor, as the representative of the Town Planning Commission.

The special housing committee held its first meeting within two weeks and initiated the process of collecting data and surveying housing accommodation in the business district between Burrard and Beatty Streets, in the East End between Cordova, Main, Prior and Gore Streets, and in the waterfront shacks and houseboats of Burrard Inlet and False Creek. The committee assembled information about the living quarters of mothers' pension recipients, on the shortage of rental housing, on the relationship of home building and population growth, and on British and American schemes. Assistance came from the Town Planning Commission, the Workers' Alliance, the Vancouver Youth Council, the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies, the Local Council of Women, and the
Figure 20

The swearing-in of Helena Gutteridge, 1937

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, PORT. P 276
Vancouver, New Westminster, and District Trades and Labour Council. C. W. Topping, some Sociology Department students, City Hall employees, and clergymen like Hugh Dobson, Andrew Roddan, and Reverend Father Cooper also helped with the report. That winter, many of the energetic individuals who participated in the committee’s meetings and surveys joined tours of the city’s poorest residential conditions.

The housing committee presented an interim report to Council in November 1937 and continued with its data collection until early 1938. On 14 February, Council adopted the final survey which revealed "a deplorable shortage of housing accommodation" and "many persons living in what are generally described as 'slum conditions' of the worst kind." The study focused particularly upon overcrowding, dilapidation, illegal suites, waterfront conditions, and the lag in construction accompanied by a steady population increase. Clearly, the Dominion Housing Act program had not met the city’s problem. The committee asked Council to urge Ottawa to make funds available for a housing scheme.

By October 1937, a Vancouver Sun writer already referred to a "campaign to secure a low-rent housing program for Vancouver" composed of members of the special housing committee and of delegates from the various interested organizations. The campaign represented a coming together of middle- and working-class groups like the CCF, the Workers' Alliance, the Youth Council, and the Trades and Labour Council, the Council of Social Agencies, the Local
Council of Women, and elements in the civic bureaucracy, the professions, the church, and the university. The goal of these activists, as stated by Helena Gutteridge, was to obtain a national "building programme to relieve overcrowding rather than slum clearance." In their view, "the housing problem [was] a Dominion-wide question, and its solution rested with the federal government." The campaigners applied indirect pressure to act on the federal government through City Council. They directly approached the local MP Ian MacKenzie and Prime Minister Mackenzie King for a low rental scheme. The housing committee forwarded copies of its interim report to many Members of the Legislative Assembly and Parliament, to contributing organizations, to the Social Services Council of Canada, and to other city governments. It also sent a copy to W. C. Clark who replied that he had read it "with very much interest indeed." Despite emphasis on a federal solution, some campaigners lobbied Premier Duff Pattullo, the provincial Cabinet, and the Legislative Assembly for "an adequate housing program."

The formation of the Vancouver Housing Association in 1937-1938 gave organizational energy and definition to the housing campaign. Early in 1937, George Mooney apprised Alexander Walker of plans to create the National Housing and Planning Association and asked him to sit on the initiating committee as the British Columbia representative. In March, the Ottawa conference of the Union
of Canadian Municipalities decided to proceed with the national organization. Much later in the year, Mooney visited Vancouver and encouraged the establishment of a local group. In December, Gutteridge, Dobson, and others attended an initiating meeting, and, in January 1938, a branch called the Vancouver Housing Association came into existence with a full constitution and an executive consisting of chairman W. S. Owen, a lawyer, vice-chairman Hugh Dobson, secretary John Jopson, a Youth Council activist, treasurer P. R. U. Stratton, committee members Helena Gutteridge, R. J. Lecky, A. J. Harrison, and ex-officio member Alexander Walker. Since the branch's major interest concerned housing, it dropped the word "planning" from its name. At its initial meeting, discussion already centred on a NHPA resolution for the creation of a national low-income housing scheme. The work of the VHA and the housing committee soon merged. The Association decided to continue with the survey, and members like Dobson attempted to educate the public about the housing problem through lectures and radio broadcasts. As well, the VHA reinforced the committee's attempt to force the federal government to bring in a low-rental program under a public or semi-public body.

In the spring of 1938, such a program appeared to be imminent. The NHPA resolved to lobby Parliament about the implementation of the proposal contained in the National Employment Commission's final report. The North Vancouver CCF MP (and former reliefer), Grant MacNeil, informed Helena
Gutteridge of the likelihood of a scheme in February and suggested that she and her committee prepare to inaugurate such a program. By May, the federal Finance Department was drafting the National Housing Act. However, it quickly became clear that the legislation was not all for which the campaigners hoped. Speaking to the Architectural Institute of British Columbia, F. W. Nicolls of the Finance Department warned, "It is not social legislation. We expect to get back every dollar put up."

When Parliament passed the new legislation in the summer of 1938, the campaigners concentrated on the acquisition of a low-rental scheme under Part II of the Act. In August, the housing committee began to explain the salient points of the legislation to the Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee and to Council. From the beginning, the 1% tax exemption clause in NHA Part II presented a major obstacle in achieving a project for Vancouver. The clause would "likely kill the whole scheme across the Dominion, because municipalities won't agree to it." A majority of City Council members objected to the clause because it would diminish badly needed tax revenues, because it would discriminate against citizens paying full taxes, and because it would create a "preferred class of property owners."

Many aldermen also opposed the federal program because the City of Vancouver had "lost heavily" in the Better Housing Scheme "spree." By the late 1930s, the City fully understood the Scheme's financial failings. In-
deed, in 1935 and again in 1937, it had sought relief from both the provincial and the federal governments, and its approaches had been resisted in each case. As Helena Gutteridge herself remarked, the City had been "badly stung" on the Scheme and probably would not undertake another similar plan.

Still, the drive to improve conditions in Vancouver's accommodation continued. The Vancouver Housing Association's survey was almost complete by December 1938. As well, P. R. U. Stratton developed a VHA plan to build 50 low-cost 4-room cottages at Trout Lake to be rented at under $15 per month. He argued that the City could still collect sufficient revenue under the 1% tax clause to pay for the project's services, and he encouraged Council to experiment with his plan before committing itself to the NHA program. In addition, the housing committee supported a move to rid the waterfront of shacks and houseboats, especially when the possibility of violence between "shackers" and tugboat captains arose on the Fraser River. The committee also initiated discussion of a housing standard by-law to consolidate clauses relating to dwellings contained in several civic by-laws. Furthermore, housing conditions and schemes became a topic for heated debate in the municipal election that December.

In January 1939, City Council decided not to take up the NHA Part II low-rental plan. Not even the attendance of F. W. Nicolls at a Council meeting convinced
it to try the plan: it did not accept his argument that the City should be prepared to shoulder some of the financial burden of a social housing program. In February, an attempt to use the National Housing Conference to make the federal government change the objectionable tax clause failed. Grace MacInnis, the VHA delegate at the Toronto meeting suggested that local attempts to employ the Act were necessary before the government would budge on the issue. She recommended that the city approach the provincial government for enabling legislation. However, despite his introduction to the Bruce report through Harry Cassidy and despite the personal endorsements of low-rental housing by Dr. G. M. Weir, the Education minister, and Dr. H. E. Young, the Provincial Board of Health secretary, Premier Duff Pattullo followed the advice of his Finance minister, John Hart, who feared that the province might have to assist in loan repayment. Pattullo refused to take on "guarantees of so uncertain character."

Under the "political generalship" of Helena Gutteridge, the activists started an educational campaign in January 1939 with a public meeting at the Elks Hall. About 300 people listened as Gutteridge explained the Trout Lake plan and as Dobson, Owen, Jopson, Conservative Party MP Howard Green, and Anglican archdeacon Sir Francis Heathcote spoke in its favour, and they watched films showing "in black and white" Vancouver's slum conditions. In March, a report of an Assize Jury of the British Columbia Supreme Court turned
public attention to the "filth" and the "crime" of cabins in Hogan's Alley. Thereafter, at two or three meetings a week, Gutteridge used the Assize Jury's findings to make her point about the need for low-rental housing. Warning City Council that "when women's social concern is aroused, they always see things through to their logical conclusion," Gutteridge also discussed the housing issue at a meeting of about 50 women's clubs held under the auspices of the Local Council of Women. The contributions of MLA Dorothy Steeves and of R. J. Lecky added strength to her address.

The "vigorous campaign" continued in April when Sir Raymond Unwin visited Vancouver at the VHA's invitation and largely through Stratton's efforts. Unwin spoke to a Quadra Club luncheon sponsored by the British Columbia Committee for NHA and HIP, to City Council, and to a women's meeting at the Georgia Medical-Dental Building auditorium. He argued that Council should accept the tax exemption clause in NHA Part II as it resembled the subsidy principle used in Britain.

In May, Mayor Lyle Telford, a former CCF member, publicly endorsed the scheme and the clause when he opened the home-building exhibition at the Hotel Vancouver. As one onlooker mused, the low-rental housing proposal with "more lives, apparently, than a cat" refused to become a dead issue.

The campaign also took the plan back to the "battle-ground" of the City Council and its Building, City Planning, and Parks Committee. Several indecisive meetings occur-
red: delegations representing the opposing sides appeared, and the pros and the cons of the issue came out. Support for the scheme and for the NHA Part II came from both working- and middle-class groups. The Building Trades Council, the Vancouver, New Westminster, and District Trades and Labour Council, the British Columbia Federation on Unemployment, the Greater Vancouver Youth Council, the Relief Projects Workers' Union, and the British Columbia Federation on Unemployment joined with the Building Exchange, the Greater Vancouver Health League, the Goodwill Activities Association, the British Columbia Division of the Canadian Federation of the Blind, the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies, the Parent-Teachers' Association, and the British Columbia Committee for NHA and HIP in favouring low-rental housing under the federal plan. A great many women's groups united with them: the Vancouver Council of Women; the Mount Pleasant Women's Christian Temperance Union; the Canadian Daughters' League; the Progressive Women's Federation; the New Era League; the women's auxiliaries of Shaughnessy and Chown Memorial United Churches; the local section of the National Council of Jewish Women; the junior division of the Catholic Women's League of Canada; and the Civilian Pensions Mother's Organization. The stated reasons for supporting the plan included the poor housing conditions disclosed in the local surveys, the social costs of these conditions as revealed in the Assize Jury report, the need for new low-priced dwellings, the desira-
bility of stimulating business recovery and employment in the building industry, the example of public housing programs in other countries, and the federal offer to assist construction. No one overtly expressed the objective of preserving social stability among the unemployed or the low-income as clearly as the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies. Still, influenced by the Assize Jury report, many campaigners associated social disorder with tenements and social stability with low-rental housing and slum clearance.

Opposition came from the Real Estate Exchange, the Associated Property Owners' Association, the Federated Ratepayers' Association, and the Board of Trade. The reasons for their resistance lay in the taxation clause of NHA Part II, which they believed gave an unfair advantage to public housing occupants and discriminated against other taxpayers in the city. Moreover, they feared that low-rental projects would attract tenants from "decent housing" and leave the independent landlords with relief recipients and the type of bitter management experience encountered earlier in the decade.

On 17 July 1939, the City Council, the VHA, and the housing committee met to work out a solution to the dilemma. The meeting resolved that the committee, the Association, and those alderpersons who wished should confer and plan a scheme to submit with Council's approval to the voters during that fall's civic election. Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II made further progress impossible.
The City never held a plebiscite on the housing project. As well, Helena Gutteridge was defeated in the 1939 civic election. Despite attempts to have it extended, the NHA Part II deadline of 31 March 1940 passed without the successful initiation of a local scheme.

In the 1930s, Vancouver's housing problem was met with responses at the local and the national levels. Ottawa unilaterally provided country-wide initiatives emphasizing a market-oriented approach that dealt with the needs of middle-income households. The programs depended upon the local housing industry for implementation on the west coast. At the same time, Ottawa's alternative plan for low-rental projects proved unworkable in Vancouver despite the application of intense pressure upon civic, provincial, and federal governments by "citizens in action." Arguably, the story of federal policy-making during the depression is incomplete without the integration of national and local events.

If Vancouver is any example, the social housing movement was a more forceful "radical alternative" than some might believe. Community action to improve the residential situation, which involved both broad working- and middle-class representation, matured in the 1930s and made shelter a matter of public discussion. International developments in housing reform, recently formed left-wing political parties, lingering social reform and social gospel movements, and local activism about unemployment and relief
shaped agitation in Vancouver and furnished personalities, organizations, and strategies for a campaign. The reform efforts of middle-class bureaucrats, professionals, and labour, women's, and veterans' groups of earlier decades became politicized through the injection of leftist ideology, tactics, and activists during the depression. Although Vancouver's "citizens in action" experienced disappointment and frustration in the late 1930s, they achieved some success by establishing housing as a permanent issue of local debate, by defining the city's problem of low-income accommodation in two reports, and by forging a community movement sturdy enough to meet the further deterioration in conditions during the war and reconstruction.

2. Ontario, Lieutenant Governor's Committee on Housing Conditions in Toronto, Report (Toronto: n. p., 1934) [hereafter Bruce report].

3. Ibid., p. 117.

4. A Report on Housing and Slum Clearance for Montreal, prepared by a Joint Committee of the Montreal Board of Trade and the City Improvement League (Montreal: n. p., 1935); Montreal Council of Social Agencies, Committee on Housing, Housing for the Low Wage Earner (Montreal: n. p., 1936); and City Improvement League, Montreal, Committee on Housing, A Survey of the Location of the Present Housing of the Unemployed in Montreal, prepared with the help of the Montreal Junior Board of Trade (Montreal: n. p., 1936). For summaries of reports in other cities, see, Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931: Census Monograph No. 8, Housing in Canada, prepared by Harold P. Greenway (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), pp. 34-36.

5. Ibid., p. 36.


7. Canada, House of Commons, Special Committee on Housing, Report to the House (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1935), p. 3.


9. Ibid., no. 10, pp. 334-58; and Hulchanski, pp. 23-26.

10. Special Committee on Housing, Minutes, no. 10, p. 354.

11. For documents relating to these negotiations, see, National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], Records of the


15 NAC, RG 19, vol. 706, file 203-1A, Clark to C. A. Dunning, 20 January 1936; Bryce, p. 166; and Canada, Department of Finance, Dominion Housing Act: Architectural Competition; Low-Cost House Designs (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936).

16 For debate on second reading of the bill, see, Canada, House of Commons, Debates, 4 (1935): 3910-65.


19 Ibid.

See also, Bryce, p. 166.

21 Hulchanski, p. 36.
24 Hulchanski, p. 36, table 3.
25 Ibid., p. 38.
26 NAC, Records of the Department of Labour, RG 27, vol. 3347, file 1, "House Renovation Scheme [Press Release]," 17 October 1936. See also, information on the American scheme in ibid., RG 27, vol. 3358, file 10. W. A. Mackintosh, the Queen's University economist, recommended the plan to the NEC; see, ibid., RG 27, vol. 3358, file 4, "Preliminary Report on Housing." For a pamphlet explaining the scheme, see, ibid., RG 27, vol. 3347, file 1, "Home Improvement Plan."

31 See, NAC, RG 27, vol. 3357, file 3, for records of the HIP committees.
32 NAC, RG 19, vol. 706, file 203-1A-3, [Radio Broadcast, 3 December 1936].
33 See, for example, NAC, RG 27, vol. 3354, file 10,
and vol. 3376, file 2.

34


35

Grauer, pp. 42-43; Curtis report, p. 27; Bacher, pp. 194-22; and Thompson, pp. 106-108. See also, NAC, RG 19, vol. 709, file 203-1A, "The Operation of the National Housing Act up to December 31, 1941, and the Home Improvement Loans Guarantee Act up to Its Termination October 30, 1940."

36


37

Ontario received 60,000 loans worth over $24 million, while British Columbia had under 13,000 loans valued at over $4 million.

38


39

Canada, Statutes, An Act to Assist in the Construction of Houses, 1938 [National Housing Act], 2 Geo. VI, ch. 49.

40


41

Curtis report, pp. 327-28, tables 90a, 90b, and 90c.

42

Thomson, p. 117; and Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Canada Year Book, 1941 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1941), p. 342, table 23.

43


44

City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter CVA], Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 15 May 1936. This DHA house is located at 3424 West 6th Avenue in Kitsilano (Figure 15). Canada Permanent Mortgage Corporation financed a loan of between $3,500 and $4,000. Thomas R. Smalley was the contractor.

45

Vancouver Sun, 3 November 1936, p. 3.

46

Designated lenders in Vancouver included Canada Permanent Mortgage Corporation, Sun Life Assurance Company,
Confederation Life Association, Mutual Life Assurance Company, and Manufacturers' Life Assurance Company. See, NAC, RG 19, vol. 706, file 203-1A, "Districts in Which Loans Will Be Considered by the Approved Lending Institutions under the Dominion Housing Act."

47
Sun, 6 March 1936, p. 21.

48
Ibid., 24 September 1936, pp. 1, 3, 5.

49

50

51
Ibid., 24 March 1936, p. 5.

52
Ibid., 23 May 1936, p. 19.

53
Ibid., 16 May 1936, p. 19.

54
Ibid., 24 September 1936, pp. 1, 3, 5.

55

56
CVA, Records of the Office of the City Clerk, ser. 1, 15-F-1, file 3, R. J. Lecky to W. R. Bone, 27 July 1932; and Sun, 30 November 1931, p. 1.

57

58
Ibid.

59

60
Ibid., 17 March 1937, p. 18.

61
Ibid., 17 October 1936, pp. 1, 7.

62

63
Sun, 2 December 1936, p. 21.

64
Ibid., 17 April 1937, p. 22.

65
Ibid., 27 January 1937, p. 4.
For example, see, ibid., 27 March 1937, p. 23, 10 April 1937, p. 23, or 17 April 1937, pp. 22-23.

Ibid., 25 February 1937, p. 11. Mary Sutherland made this assertion.

Ibid., 27 February 1937, pp. 23-25, and 17 April 1937, p. 22.

Ibid., 28 January 1937, p. 4.

Ibid., 16 April 1937, p. 7.

Ibid., 20 May 1937, p. 2.

Ibid., 4 August 1937, p. 12.

Ibid., 8 January 1938, p. 21.

Ibid., 24 February 1938, p. 5.

For example, see, ibid., 19 February 1938, p. 22. The National Housing Administration in Ottawa made available blueprints and specifications for a $10 fee.


Ibid., 28 May 1938, p. 25.

For representation on the Committee, see, ibid., 26 January 1939, p. 3.

Ibid., 17 February 1938, p. 1.

Ibid., 6 May 1939, p. 28.

Ibid., 14 May 1938, p. 25, 21 May 1938, p. 25, and 3 September 1938, p. 23.


CVA, Records of the City Clerk, ser. 2-D, 26D, vol. 69, 6 May 1938, p. 91.

Sun, 25 June 1938, p. 23.

CVA, Mayor's records, 33-D-5, file for "Vancouver Board of Trade," W. E. Payne to the Board, 30 June 1937, including "Record of Trades among Married City Relief Cases Reporting for Work at Employment Service." See also, the applications for the 1937 "Work for Taxes" scheme in CVA, Records of the Finance Department, ser. A-2, 100-A-4, file 4.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 1 February 1939. The Sun unreservedly referred to these builders and realtors as "building sharks" and "the 'gyp' variety," see, 23 January 1939, p. 20, and 24 January 1939, p. 5.

Ibid. See also, ibid., 10 February 1939, p. 6, and 4 March 1939, p. 29.

Ibid., 26 January 1939, p. 18.


Ibid., 17 September 1938, p. 25, 10 February 1939, p. 6, and 4 March 1939, p. 29.

Ibid., 6 May 1939, p. 28, 8 July 1939, p. 24, and 22 July 1939, p. 23.

Ibid., 28 May, 1938, p. 25, and 4 February 1939, p. 23. Vancouverites apparently preferred a bungalow finished in cedar shakes and shingles to a "square box, two stories high."


Bruce report, pp. 78-91.

UCA, Dobson papers, B7, file S, "Housing Vancouver,"
1939, ch. 6.

99 Sun, 8 April 1939, p. 27, 11 April 1939, p. 12,
13 April 1939, p. 6, 15 April 1939, p. 27, and 20 May 1939,
p. 26. See also, CVA, Records of the Town Planning Commissio-
n, ser. III, 77-B-5, file 6, "Sir Raymond Unwin's
Impressions of Vancouver;" and UCA, Dobson papers, B13, file
6, [Notes on Sir Raymond Unwin]. Another visitor was Mrs.
Harold J. Laski, vice-chairperson, Fulham Borough Council's
housing committee; see, Sun, 27 February 1939, p. 24.

100 Catherine Bauer, Modern Housing (Boston and New
York: Houghton Mifflin, 1934). See also, UCA, Dobson
Papers, B13, file 6, "Vancouver Housing Association...A
Short Housing Bibliography," [1938]. The bibliography,
which Stratton sent to Dobson, includes references to Bauer
and many contemporary American publications and cites loca-
tions in the Town Planning Commission Library or the
Vancouver Public Library.

101 Report on Housing and Slum Clearance for Montreal,
p. 3; Housing for the Low Wage Earner, p. 1; and
Survey of the Location of the Present Housing of the
Unemployed in Montreal, p. 1.

102 Bruce report, p. 6; and Allan Irving, "The Doctors
Versus the Expert: Harry Morris Cassidy and the British
Columbia Health Insurance Dispute of the 1930s," BC Studies,
no. 78 (Summer 1988), pp. 53-79.

103 CVA, Records of the Town Planning Commission, ser.
3, 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on
Housing], 15 November 1937. See also, CVA, City Clerk's
records, 27-C-6, file 24.

104 Richard Allen, The Social Passion: Religion and
Social Reform in Canada, 1914-28 (Toronto: University of

105 Andrew Roddan, God in the Jungles: The Story of
the Man without a Home (Vancouver: n. p., [1931]); idem,
Canada's Untouchables: The Story of the Man without a Home
(Vancouver: Clarke & Stuart, 1932); UCA, Records of First
United Church (Institutional Mission), Vancouver, I-33,
B7, file 13, "The Interesting Story of First United Church in
Vancouver," by Andrew Roddan (September 1934); and Sun,
4 July 1931, p. 8, 18 July 1931, p. 10, 1 August 1931, p.
21, 12 September 1931, p. 10, 17 October 1931, p. 20, 24
October 1931, p. 10, and 31 October 1931, p. 22.

106 Marilyn Joan Harrison, "The Social Influence of the
United Church of Canada in British Columbia, 1930-1948"

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, G. S. Mooney to A. Walker, 16 January 1937.

Ibid., Walker to Mooney, 17 January 1938.


Dorothy June Roberts, "Doctrine and Disunity in the

117


118


119

Ibid., pp. 246-47.

120

Horn, pp. 37-38.

121


122


123


124


125

For the NEC's draft bill, see NAC, RG 27, vol. 3388, file 1, Purvis to N. Rogers, 25 March 1937; and for Clark's criticism, see, NAC, RG 19, vol. 705, file 203-1A, Clark to Dunning, 9 March 1937, with "A Low Rental Housing Program: Summary of Criticisms." For Clark as a "mandarin," see, J. L. Granatstein, The Ottawa Men: The Civil Service Mandarins, 1935-1957 (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1982), passim.

126

Irene Howard, "The Mothers' Council of Vancouver: Holding the Fort for the Unemployed, 1935-1938," in Vancouver Past, pp. 268-69, 272-74. The names of organizations listed in this paragraph have been taken from records listed in nn129, 130, and 131.

127

See above, pp. 149-50. For the Local Council of


For example, see, CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-B-4, file for "Relief Officer, July-December 1930," H. W. Cooper to W. C. Atherton, 18 December 1930; ibid., 15-D-6, file 9, J. D. Vulliamy to C. Jones, 29 December 1931, J. Todd to City Clerk, 26 June 1931, and C. Robinson to City Clerk, 24 July 1931; ibid., 16-F-3, file 10, W. Page to Mayor and Council, 30 March 1936, G. H. Henry to Acting Mayor and Council, 6 October 1936; ibid., 16-C-2, file 9, A. E. Burton to City Clerk, 24 August 1934; British Columbia Provincial Archives and Records Services [hereafter BCARS], Records of the Premier, GR 1222, Box 127, file 10, Burton to D. Pattullo, ca. 27 August 1934; and Ronald Liversedge, Recollections of the "On To Ottawa Trek", ed. Victor Hoar (Carleton Library, no. 66; Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), pp. 15-16. For more on unemployment, relief, and protests in the 1930s, see, Lorne Brown, When Freedom Was Lost: The Unemployed, the Agitator, and the State (Montreal and Buffalo: Black Rose Books, 1987).

CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-F-3, file 8, J. McKenzie to City Relief Committee, 21 November 1932; ibid., 16-A-7, file 3, E. Habenicht to City Relief Department, 6 May 1933, and A. Falconer to City Clerk, 28 April 1933; ibid., 16-F-3, file 10, M. McLellan to Finance Committee, 7 July 1936, J. Beynon to Finance Committee, 7 July 1936 and 3 September 1936, and J. Offer to City Clerk, 18 December 1936; ibid., 16-F-3, file 11, P. R. Bengough to F. Howlett, 26 April 1936, Ukrainian Labour Temple Association to City Council, 26 April 1936, Vancouver and District Waterfront Workers Association to City Council, 8 July 1936, M. McLellan to Finance Committee, 22 September 1936, and C. Doherty to City Council, 11 November 1936; ibid., 16-F-4, file 8, "Report on Conditions Prevailing among Vancouver's Unemployed [by the Workers' Alliance of British Columbia, June 1937]; ibid., 16-F-4, file 9, Workers' Alliance, "Resolution for the Creation of Useful, Productive Work" and "Resolution Re High Rentals & Evictions;" and Liversedge, pp. 17-18.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-F-4, file 8, "Report on Conditions Prevailing among Vancouver's Unemployed;" BCARS, GR 1222, Box 127, file 9, "Memorandum on Relief and Other Matters Presented by British Columbia Joint Committee

132
Liversedge, p. 23.

133
CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-C-2, file 8, [Protests over the Evans Family's Eviction].

134
Liversedge, pp. 32-33.

135
See nn129, 130, and 131.

136
CVA, Mayor's records, 33-B-2, file for "Relief (1), 1932," "Report of the Committee on Homeless Men, July 1932." The same report, originally sent to Premier Pattullo, may be found in BCARS, GR 1222, Box 127, file 4.

137
CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-C-2, file 9, [CCF Unemployment Council resolution to endorse the minimum needs of the unemployed, November 1934].

138
BCARS, GR 1222, Box 127, file 9, "Memorandum on Relief and Other Matters."

139
CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-F-4, file 8, "Report on Conditions Prevailing among Vancouver's Unemployed."

140
Ibid., 16-F-3, file 10, J. Beynon to City Clerk, 30 June 1936. This organization was also known as the Unemployed and Part-time Workers' Association.

141

142
CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-B-4, file for "Relief Officer, July-December 1930," Cooper to Atherton, 18 December 1930.

143
For the militancy between 1935 and 1938, see, Liversedge, pp. 58-84; Lane, pp. 82-122; and Howard, pp. 249-87.

144
Lane, p. 97; and Liversedge, p. 23.

145
See, for example, CVA, Mayor's records, 33-A-5, file for "Unemployment, 1930," W. H. Malkin to W. L. M.
King, 22 May 1930, and H. Baldwin to Malkin, 31 May 1930.

Liversedge, p. 23.

146

CVA, City Clerk's records, 15-E-7, file 12, M. Marchant and S. E. Johnston to Mayor and Council, 9 August 1932; Ward 7 Ratepayers' Association to Mayor and Council, 23 July 1932, H. Reid to C. Jones, 9 August 1932, and A. Rowan to Jones, 22 August 1932 and 24 August 1932; ibid., 16-A-4, file 12, H. Reid to Jones, 8 July 1933, and H. D. Wilson to Jones, 14 July 1933; ibid., 16-A-4, file 13, D. G. Cameron to Mayor and Council, 10 November 1933; ibid., 16-B-7, file 2, A. Tremblay to Jones, 23 August 1934, Wilson to Mayor and Council, 8 October 1934, Rowan to Jones, 15 November 1934; ibid., 16-D-3, file 4, [Petitions from Italian Home Owners' and Electors' Association and Windermere District Improvement Association to Mayor and Council, 3 August 1935]; ibid., 16-E-7, file 12, Ward 3 Ratepayers' Association to City Clerk, 18 February 1936; ibid., 16-E-7, file 13, H. Reid to F. Howlett, 11 April 1936 and Reid to Howlett, 9 May 1936, and Rowan to Howlett, 16 May 1936; and Sun, 11 July 1935, p. 18.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-A-4, file 14, Bone to Taylor, 14 March 1933; ibid., 16-B-7, file 1, Mrs. B. Winstone to City Clerk, 9 May 1934; ibid., 16-B-7, file 3, Winstone to Council, 22 October 1934; ibid., 16-B-7, file 4, Bone to W. W. Smith, 22 February 1934; and ibid., 16-D-3, file 4, A. O. Matthews to C. E. Tisdall, 26 March 1935, and Winstone to City Clerk, 10 April 1935. Ratepayers' associations sometimes made demands for landlords as well; see, ibid., 16-E-7, file 16, Bone to Tisdall, 15 January 1936.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-E-7, file 17, Bone to Smith, 6 June 1936, and Smith to Relief and Employment Committee, 9 June 1936.


CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-C-2, file 9, [CCF Unemployment Council Resolution].

Ibid., 16-F-4, file 8, "Resolutions of the First
Annual Greater Vancouver and New Westminster Youth Congress (Held in Vancouver, March 27-29, 1937)."

153

Ibid., 27-C-6, file 24, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing, 15 November 1937]. Another copy is located in CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14.

154

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-6, file 1, [Minutes of the First Meeting of the Housing Committee, 9 July 1937].

155

Ibid., [Minutes of Housing Committee Meeting, 7 October 1937].

156

Ibid., [Minutes of Housing Committee Meetings, 29 September and 3 November 1937].

157

UCA, Dobson papers, B7, file S, "Went around City to See Housing," and "Itinerary, 30th December 1937."

158

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 3, Howlett to A. J. Harrison, 15 February 1938; and Ibid., 61-C-6, file 14, [Report of the Special Committee on Housing].

159


160

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 8 January 1938.

161

Ibid., 16 February 1938.

162

NAC, RG 19, vol. 710, file 203-1A, E. W. MacKay to King, 15 February 1938 and J. Jopson to King, 26 April 1938, with copy to I. Mackenzie; and CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 4, Housing Committee to Mayor and Council, 6 December 1937.

163

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 3.

164

Ibid., Clark to Harrison, 8 December 1937.

165

CVA, City Clerk's records, 16-F-4, file 9, "[Workers' Alliance] Resolution for the Creation of Useful, Productive Work," 1937.

166

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, Correspondence between Mooney and A. Walker, 16 January 1937 to 19 January 1938.

167

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 20 December 1938; Vancouver Daily Province, 27 June 1938, p. 8;

168  
NAC, RG 19, vol. 710, file 203-1A, Secretary, Vancouver Housing Association, to Dunning, 14 May 1938.

169  
CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, "[Notice] to All Members of the Provisional Committee, the National Housing and Planning Association," April 1938.

170  
Ibid., 77-B-5, file 3, G. MacNeil to H. Gutteridge, 17 February 1938.

171  
CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 27 May 1938.

172  
CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-6, file 1, Housing Committee to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 18 August 1938.

173  
Helena Gutteridge made this statement; see, CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 9 November 1938.

174  
Ibid., 14 February 1939.

175  
Ibid., 29 June 1937; and Sun, 12 January 1939, p. 1.

176  
CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-C-1, file 4, "[Brief] Re Better Housing," 5 August 1935; CVA, Finance Department records 93-F-7, file 1, W. L. Woodford to A. W. Grey, 7 January 1937, and F. Jones and D. E. McTaggart to Dunning, 25 March 1937; and NAC, RG 19, vol. 712, file 203-3, McTaggart to Dunning, 2 April 1937, A. MacInnis to Dunning, 9 April 1937, Dunning to McTaggart, 12 April 1937, and Dunning to MacInnis, 12 April 1937.

177  

178  
Sun, 17 July 1939, pp. 1-2; CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-6, file 1, [Minutes of Housing Committee Meeting, 29 December 1938 and 12 July 1939]; and ibid., 77-B-5, file 2, Stratton to Housing Committee, 6 December 1938.

179  
For reports, surveys, and other records about foreshore dwellings, see, CVA, City Clerk's records, 27-D-4, file 2; Sun, 19 October 1938, p. 15; and Province, 12 October 1938, p. 7, and 28 October 1938, p. 34.
CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-6, file 1, [Minutes of Housing Committee Meeting, 14 January 1938]; ibid., 61-C-6, file 14, Special Committee on Housing Standard By-law to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 24 November 1939; ibid., Mayor's records, 34-A-2, file for "Housing Act, 1940," H. L. Corey to Mayor and Council, 21 March 1940; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 27-E-3, file 18, [Draft Standard of Housing By-law, 1940].

These discussions led to the city's "Partial Housing Survey" conducted by R. Startup in 1940 and to the formulation of a draft by-law in 1941.

Province, 2 December 1938, p. 11, and 12 December 1938, p. 5.

Sun, 17 January 1939, pp. 1, 2.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 20 January 1939; and Sun, 17 January 1939, pp. 1, 2, and 21 January 1939, pp. 1, 10.


BCARS, GR 1222, box 14, file 7, H. Cassidy to Pattullo, 27 November 1934; ibid., box 31, file 5, Harrison to Pattullo, 1 May 1939, "Memorandum to the Honourable the Prime Minister," 4 May 1939, and Pattullo to Harrison, 5 May 1939; and Sun, 22 June 1939, p. 1, and 23 June 1939, p. 22.

Sun, 6 January 1939, p. 3, and 6 March 1939, pp. 1, 5.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 6, [Report by Assize Jury, Supreme Court of British Columbia, 22 March 1939; and ibid., 77-B-5, file 5, "Extract from a Memorandum by the Assize Jury to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of B. C.," 22 March 1939. See also, CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 25 March 1939; and Sun, 29 March 1939, p. 11. Publicity was also given to civic discussions about fire-trap tenements on Triumph and Powell Streets.

Sun, 25 March 1939, p. 27, and 29 March 1939, p. 3.

Ibid., 4 March 1939, p. 29, 8 April 1939, p. 27, 11 April 1939, p. 12, 13 April 1939, p. 6, 15 April 1939, pp. 27-28, and 20 May 1939, p. 26; CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, Stratton to Walker, 5
April 1939; and ibid., 77-B-5, file 6, "Sir Raymond Unwin's Impressions of Vancouver," 1939.

191

Sun, 11 May 1939, p. 12.

192

Ibid., 4 March 1939, p. 29.

193


194

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Notes by A. Walker on reverse of Agenda of Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 16 June 1939]; ibid., City Clerk's records, 27-D-5, file 17, [Letters and delegations endorsing and opposing a low-rental housing scheme under NHA Part II]; ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 5, Bengough to Telford, 28 June 1939, [Resolution of Greater Vancouver Health League], 14 June 1939, C. Pritchard to Howlett, 14 June 1939, R. J. Lecky to Mayor and Council, 15 June 1939; and R. H. Leadless to Harrison, 10 February 1939; and ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 6, [Minutes of Special Meeting of Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee], 14 February 1939, and Howlett to Harrison, 2 May 1939, 16 May 1939, and 31 May 1939, "Memorandum and Resolution [in support of low-rental housing]" from the B. C. Old Age Pensioners Benevolent Association, Victoria Road Branch of the Communist Party, and Parent-Teacher Federation, J. Jopson to Harrison, 16 June 1939, and Leadless to Harrison, 14 February 1939.

195

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Notes by Walker on reverse of agenda of Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee]; ibid., 27-D-5, file 17, [Letters and delegations endorsing and opposing a low-rental housing scheme]; ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 5, "Memorandum and Resolution [from Shaughnessy Heights United Church Women's Guild, n. d.], Progressive Women's Federation to City Council, 24 April 1939, and Mrs. J. Jackson to City Council, 12 April 1939; and ibid., 77-B-5, file 6, Howlett to Harrison, 2 May 1939, 16 May 1939 and 31 May 1939.

196

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, [Notes by Walker on reverse of agenda of Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee]; ibid., City Clerk's records, 27-D-5, file 17, [Letters and delegations endorsing and opposing a low-rental housing scheme]; ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 5, F. Hoole to Housing Committee, 16 June 1939, A. L. Rowan to [City Council], 2 May 1939, and [Minutes of meeting between City Council and Vancouver Housing Association]; and ibid.,
77-B-5, file 6, Howlett to Harrison, 16 May 1939.

197 CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 5, [Minutes of meeting between City Council and Vancouver Housing Association].

CHAPTER IV

VANCOUVER'S WARTIME AND POST-WAR HOUSING PROBLEM

Vancouver's housing problem of the 1940s emerged from wartime and post-war shortages that intensified a long-standing need for adequate, affordable accommodation centralized in the downtown area and its surrounding neighbourhoods. As contemporary observers realized, building material and labour scarcities, demographic changes, and federal government programs of the wartime and reconstruction periods reduced the housing supply. In turn, the shortages "greatly aggravated" a serious problem created by deferred construction during the depression, by insufficient supplies of low-priced rental dwellings, and by deterioration of housing stock built before the Great War. The lack of accommodation represented an acute need for satisfactory rental units for particular groups in specific areas as much as the total number of absent units across the city. Thus, questions of affordability and adequacy assume equal importance to availability in analysing wartime and post-war housing difficulties.

While the general picture according to the 1941 and 1951 census figures collected by the Dominion Bureau of
Statistics remained satisfactory, a year-by-year examination of the decade reveals both a short-term crisis for middle-income families and a continuing scarcity in affordable shelter for low-income households. The situation gradually worsened after 1941 to a critical point in 1945-1946 and levelled off only at the end of the decade. For many war workers, servicemen, and veterans, as well as their families, the problem was a temporary one: by the 1950s, they had relocated in new homes in the suburbs or in adjacent municipalities. Still, for low-income households, chronic deficiencies in satisfactory, inexpensive rental accommodation persisted into and beyond the 1950s.

During the 1940s, a lack of living space forced Vancouver's residents to crowd into apartments, rooms, cheap hotels, cabins, and waterfront shacks. "One-room gypsies" trekked from lodging to lodging seeking a permanent home. Others found more desperate solutions to their predicament. Unable to find accommodation for themselves and seven children, one couple lived in tents along the Capilano River. In another case, a mother with seven children occupied a shack in the bush near Burnaby Lake while her husband, a longshoreman, took a Cordova Street cabin. A few Vancouverites dealt with the housing problem in an innovative, even an eccentric, manner. After spending months in temporary quarters, a serviceman and his wife turned a Spanish-style filling station near Locarno Beach into a comfortable bungalow
with a victory garden in the parking lot. One Saskatchewan expatriot, who wanted to bring his mother, brother, and sister to the west coast, built a house on a truck costing $190, while a Great War veteran proclaimed that discarded British Columbia Electric trollies "in every backyard" were the answer to the lack of housing. Frustrated by an unproductive job search after the war, a middle-aged ex-serviceman lived in caves near Siwash Rock in Stanley Park. No one, however, chose to protest shortages like a Revere, Massachusetts, woman who sat on a 50 foot pole "as good a place to stay as lots of places we've lived."

Vancouver's shortage of homes derived partly from the "backlog" of deferred construction that accumulated in the 1930s despite federal market housing programs. By 1937, this "backlog" amounted to about 6,000 units, and, four years later, it had climbed to an estimated 10,000 units. By the outbreak of war, vacancies in rental accommodation had dropped to "the dangerously low figure of two-thirds of 1%." Vancouver therefore entered the wartime decade with a short housing supply.

A slowdown in the local house-building industry owing to the diversion of materials and labour to the war effort, to post-war reconversion, and to a rise in construction costs increased this "backlog." Both skilled and unskilled workers enlisted in the armed forces or entered wartime shipbuilding or aircraft manufacturing industries. As well, many commodities required by builders were scarce: hot
air furnaces, soil pipe, asphalt roofing, gypsum wall-board and lath, brick, rock wool insulation, bathtubs, cast-iron enamelled sinks, and range boilers. By October 1944, deficiencies in building materials and labour delayed the completion of 2,500 dwellings. After the war, the shift from wartime to peacetime production continued to restrict the supply of construction workers and materials: in September 1945, shortages presented obstacles to completion in 726 of 1,824 projects. Even after the peacetime reconversion of war industry, however, building materials were still so scarce that a black market in plumbing supplies, bathtubs, electrical fittings, lumber, and flooring did a lively business. Supplies became more plentiful by 1949. In addition, increased construction costs owing to rising prices and wages and to diminishing efficiency brought on by the demand for materials and workers slowed down house building: costs rose between 47% and 62% between 1939 and 1945 and continued to mount after the war.

In 1944, the report of the housing and community planning subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, the Curtis report, calculated the immediate accumulated building need for major Canadian cities as 230,000 units based mainly upon current wartime shortages, overcrowded households, and substandard replacement. The estimated actual building need for Vancouver was 17,731 units. Within the next two or three years, rough estimates of this requirement climbed to over 25,000 units.
As building efforts lagged, family formation and housing demand swelled. Marriages and births in Vancouver increased dramatically in the 1940s in contrast to the 1930s, while deaths continued to inch upwards as the population expanded (Table 14). In 1946, the marriage, birth, and death rates per 1,000 were 11.9, 22.0, and 9.8 respectively as compared to 7.35, 14.45, and 9.58 per 1,000 between 1934 and 1938. The volume of estimated house completions in Canada following the outbreak of war did not exceed net family formation until 1947.

An influx of war workers, servicemen's families, prairie migrants, and European immigrants to Vancouver in the 1940s intensified the need for housing. Between September 1939 and June 1942, Greater Vancouver experienced an 80.5% expansion in the employment of salaried and wage workers, especially in shipbuilding in North Vancouver and in aircraft manufacturing in Vancouver and Richmond. The growth was smaller than in Halifax (108.9%) or Windsor (121.1%) but greater than in Toronto (56.6%) or Winnipeg (30.2%). Observers expected these workers to stay in the area once the war ended. An unknown number of families accompanied servicemen stationed on the west coast. In addition, the city continued to attract a steady inflow of migrants from other parts of Canada, particularly the prairie provinces. Between 1939 and 1946, British Columbia received 163,000 interprovincial migrants. According to family allowance figures, about 5,000 families
### TABLE 14

**VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE CITY OF VANCOUVER,**

**1930-1950**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Births</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Marriages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>242,629</td>
<td>4,003</td>
<td>2,281</td>
<td>2,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>246,593</td>
<td>3,730</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>1,767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1933</td>
<td>243,711</td>
<td>3,188</td>
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<tr>
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<td>244,329</td>
<td>3,179</td>
<td>2,211</td>
<td>2,137</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>259,987</td>
<td>3,780</td>
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<td>4,804</td>
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<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>299,460</td>
<td>7,180</td>
<td>3,808</td>
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<tr>
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<td>311,799</td>
<td>5,827</td>
<td>3,434</td>
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<tr>
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<td>323,850</td>
<td>5,711</td>
<td>3,560</td>
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<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>331,500</td>
<td>6,979</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7,811</td>
<td>3,768</td>
<td>5,471</td>
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<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>358,135</td>
<td>7,195</td>
<td>3,984</td>
<td>5,490</td>
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<tr>
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<td>369,040</td>
<td>7,522</td>
<td>3,980</td>
<td>5,155</td>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>380,175</td>
<td>7,329</td>
<td>4,143</td>
<td>4,881</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Assessor's estimate at close of year and census figures for 1931, 1941, and 1951.

2 Exclusive of stillbirths.

---

settled in British Columbia in 1947, about half of them in Greater Vancouver. Moreover, then as now, many prairie people wintered on the coast and returned home in the springtime. Finally, post-war immigration added substantially to population growth. Of 47,860 immigrant household heads in Vancouver in 1951, 2,270 arrived after 1946 compared to 1,460 between 1931 and 1945.

Demobilization augmented the demand for accommodation following World War II. Although about 35,000 servicemen from Greater Vancouver and about 27,800 from Vancouver itself had enlisted in the forces, local observers expected twice as many men to return to the area after the war's end. Furthermore, about half of the discharged men were married, or would be married, within one year. By September 1946, 34,090 returned men already lived in Vancouver, 20,543 men still overseas soon would return, and about 1,800 war brides had arrived. As well, all veterans receiving university or vocational training in British Columbia resided in Vancouver: single and married ex-servicemen made up about half of the University of British Columbia student enrolment immediately after the war. By the 1951 Census, about 24,000 of the over 101,000 household heads in Vancouver had seen service in the Second World War.

As a consequence of family formation, migration, immigration, and demobilization, Vancouver's population rose by over 110,000 between 1939 and 1950: by contrast,
between 1930 and 1938, it had increased by less than 22,000 (Table 14). The expansion in the number of available dwellings did not keep pace with this population growth. In September 1946, 93,200 families benefited from 80,750 existing dwellings, 2,843 under construction, and a minimum of 1,000 condemned places. Between the summers of 1946 and 1947, when a population enlargement of 14,800 persons required an additional 4,600 units, the actual number of new dwellings amounted to 2,669 units and enlarged the sizeable depression and wartime shortage with an annual deficit of about 2,000 units.

Federal wartime programs applying to house construction sometimes reduced the availability of accommodation. For example, the curtailment of the 1938 National Housing Act program and the termination of the Home Improvement Plan reduced construction at the beginning of the war. As well, in 1941, the government set up a Construction Control Division within the Department of Munitions and Supply and eventually appointed a Controller to restrict civilian residential and other types of building across Canada in order to divert materials to war industry. The impact of construction controls on Vancouver's housing situation was extensive. The issue of civic building permits dropped noticeably in 1942 and 1943 after the imposition of controls, whereas increases in permits in 1944 and 1945 may be attributed to federal initiatives designed to relieve accommodation shortages (Table 3). Controls also resulted
in delays in house completions. Required to apply for both civic and federal building permits under wartime controls, builders and owners often started construction under a civic license while waiting for a federal one and stopped when they reached the $500 or $1,500 limit, thereby increasing the number of incompletions. To the city building inspector's dismay, controls resulted in "jerry-built" housing when some owners circumvented value and size restrictions by putting up tiny dwellings known locally as "Tom Thumb" or "Peewee" houses. As the inspector commented, "We welcome Tom Thumb houses, but not those that stick out like sore thumbs."

Regulations imposed by other controllers and branches within the Department of Munitions and Supplies to limit the availability of building materials also discouraged and delayed civilian house construction. For example, the Priorities Branch gave preference in building supplies to federal housing programs for war workers, servicemen's families, and veterans rather than home owners and contractors thus curtailed private dwelling completions. After the war, the Department's Timber Control inhibited construction by directing lumber away from the domestic market to the more lucrative export one until a policy change in 1947 rectified the situation.

Despite their many benefits, rent controls implemented under a 1940 order-in-council by the Wartime Prices and Trade Board in Vancouver and North Vancouver affected
the availability of housing during the war. These controls applied to evictions as well as to rent levels and defined the conditions under which a landlord could regain possession of a residence. In 1943, a WPTB order made eviction easier with the result that a large number of notices to vacate came effective between 1 May and 1 October 1944: 704 notices matured in Vancouver between July and September alone. In the following year, 1,100 notices came due between June and October. Although repossession did not occur in all cases, the evictions that were carried out in Vancouver coincided with a growing housing shortage, and many tenants and their families could not find suitable accommodation. In July 1945, a freeze finally ended evictions under controls.

A decision to terminate the national housing registries set up under the WPTB to assist tenants in finding homes only aggravated post-war shortages. Vancouver's registry successfully placed thousands of families in accommodation and skillfully monitored the local situation for about five years. In 1946, the registry closed down although over 6,000 still waited for a place to live.

House conversion under the National Housing Administration of the Department of Finance generated some negative as well as positive results. In Vancouver, the Administration divided up older apartment blocks and larger homes into smaller units for bachelors and couples involved in the war effort. Still, "non-essential" former tenants and
their families could not return to these premises, creating additional hardship during the shortages. Moreover, the community at large perceived that these conversion projects absorbed building materials, labour, and government funds to shelter only a few people.

As the various factors of supply and demand came into play, shortages intensified, climaxed, and levelled off throughout the 1940s. They began to emerge in the first two years of the decade. In July 1940, a Vancouver Real Estate Exchange survey established vacancy rates of 0.69% for houses and 4.21% for suites. By November, rental housing in the $20 a month range was in heavy demand.

During the following summer, Wartime Housing Limited, the federal crown corporation charged with providing war workers' accommodation, surveyed Vancouver's rental situation, found it deficient, and started to build homes for the employees of Burrard Drydock Company Limited and North Van Ship Repairs Limited in North Vancouver.

More severe shortages developed with a rush between April and December 1942 as wartime employment mushroomed. WHL decided to construct more workers' units in North Vancouver. A Real Estate Exchange survey in June revealed a vacancy rate of 0.78% for houses and 1.22% for apartments. The WPTB housing registry opened its doors on Dunsmuir Street, and its staff began to assist despairing prospective tenants in their searches for accommodation.

By 1943, Vancouver ranked second behind Halifax in
housing congestion in Canada. The vacancy rate declined even further, and a national housing registry survey uncovered only 15 vacant houses in the city. Local newspapers offered pitifully few dwellings for rent. The maximum housing level occurred that summer as 1,000 women from elsewhere in Canada arrived to work at Boeing aircraft plants and as 156 eviction notices came due. Shortages halted the city's campaign to demolish waterfront shacks and frustrated the attempts of 300 out-of-town university students to find places to live. The housing registry was "really beginning to roll." Between April and October, it received 4,685 applications for housing from servicemen's families, 2,316 from war workers, and 3,393 from civilians. It placed only about 9,000 of 19,700 applications that year.

In 1944, 5,000 houses remained unfinished owing to scarcities of materials and labour. Over 2,000 households, of which about one-third belonged to ex-servicemen, faced eviction that summer. Once again, the registry filled only slightly more than half of its requests for housing.

The availability situation became acute in 1945 as the war ended and service personnel returned home. The registry settled 10,000 persons in accommodation between January and October, and, by December, an all-time high of 4,143 families, the majority of them involving veterans, sought housing in the city. The vacancy rate reached 0.004%. Over one thousand families encountered the
threat of eviction between June and October. Scarcities in supplies and labour continued to tie up new house construction.

In May 1946, the situation remained "terribly acute," "showing no sign of improvement," and "compressing more and more people into the same cubic space of living accommodation, at the cost of widespread inconvenience and distress." Although the armed forces had demobilized thousands of veterans in Vancouver by May, they expected to send 8,000 more, many with wives and children, back to the city from overseas. Federal government housing programs for veterans in Greater Vancouver were slow to start and to complete units. About 500 married university student veterans could not locate suitable housing for the fall. A total of 4,400 applicants sought accommodation in WHL units. Although the issue of civic building permits had increased, delayed construction and rising costs hindered production.

By 1947, the national housing registry no longer existed although, by year's end, WHL had on file 6,600 applications for houses. Several government-initiated subdivisions for veterans opened, but high building costs still impeded new construction.

The housing shortage persisted but levelled off in the last two years of the decade. The waiting list for housing built directly by the federal government amounted to over 7,500 applications in October 1948 and
Scarcities in supply and excesses in demand therefore characterized to a large extent the wartime and the early post-war housing problem. However, the shortages also exacerbated the pre-war need for affordable accommodation, particularly low-income rental units. Federal programs in the 1940s did not adequately increase the amount of permanent rental housing. Instead, they addressed the objectives of Canadians who could afford to own rather than rent dwellings.

What were the expectations of Vancouverites with respect to renting and owning in the 1940s? The desire to become a home owner was high. In June 1944, about three-fifths (60%) of 1,028 tenants sampled in the city wanted to own a house. 48% of all tenants could have made a 10% down payment at that time. However, fewer than one-third of them had any definite idea of owning in the next few years due to employment uncertainty and high buying costs: house prices, especially east side ones, went up by 173.0% on average for four-, five-, and six-room dwellings between 1939 and 1946. About two-fifths (40%) of the sampled tenants planned to continue renting. Incomes of less than $1,200 or $1,500 played "a major part" in framing their expectations. According to another survey made in 1949, the situation had not changed significantly: 46%, compared to 48% in 1944, could buy, and 54% could rent. The deciding factor again appears to have been income size.
Thus, while many tenants wished to become owners, many others wanted to remain renters.

In fact, many Vancouverites realized their expectations of owning a home by 1951. The proportion of owner-occupied dwellings rose to 63.0% from 51.0% in 1931 and from 50.1% in 1941 (Table 8). The trend towards ownership started early in the 1940s among those who benefited from wartime industrial expansion. In 1940-1941, the City of Vancouver finally sold to boilermakers and others many of the Better Housing Scheme bungalows that had reverted to it during the depression. Two years later, the local mortgage company branches had disposed of all the houses that had reverted to them in the thirties, and owners held the only homes for sale. In addition, the wartime savings accumulated by Vancouverites and the federal government's post-war market housing programs encouraged the building and the purchase of new units in the City of Vancouver and in the metropolitan area: in 1951, 68.5% of dwellings in Greater Vancouver were owner-occupied. Nevertheless, the rise in home ownership did not occur without considerable frustration for builders and owners brought on by labour and materials shortages and by rising costs.

The major instrument used to foster ownership was the 1944 National Housing Act. Part I of the Act reaffirmed the joint loan method initiated under the 1935 and the 1938 legislation but made mortgage money more widely available. More significantly, a later amendment to the Act introduced
the Integrated Housing Plan under which the federal government provided joint loans for veterans' dwellings erected by builders and assumed the risk for any unsold units.

The NHA Part I fostered a large amount of construction in Vancouver. Between 1946 and 1950, federal officials approved 7,030 loans for mainly owned homes, and between 1947 and 1950, work started on 5,916. Building under the Integrated Housing Plan began rather slowly in 1946. By November, 280 units for Vancouver had been approved, 58 started, and two finished: 50 were going up in the Little Mountain area. Builders subsequently erected more Integrated Housing in the Grandview Highway area between Nanaimo and Renfrew Streets, in Hastings East, and in South Vancouver. However, the largest thrust of the Integrated Housing Plan occurred on large land tracts in surrounding municipalities and included Willingdon Heights in Burnaby, Victory Heights in New Westminster, Capilano Properties in North Vancouver District, and a development near Lion's Gate Hospital in North Vancouver City.

In the early 1950s, families continued to move into new homes built under the NHA in suburban Vancouver and in North Shore and Burnaby subdivisions like the British Properties, Norgate, Boulevard Heights, Suncrest, and Southern View. However, construction slowed down when the Korean War brought rising costs for erecting and selling units. By July 1951, homes priced at under $10,000 were fast disappearing.
Heavy emphasis upon home ownership in federal programs meant that builders put up very insufficient housing for the 37-50% of Vancouverites who lived as tenants. In 1947, the production of new rental units in Canada amounted only to about 30% of all residential construction. This trend was attributable partly to intensified post-war demand for owner occupancy. Builders also found investment in the rental market unattractive because both construction costs and rents were higher in the late 1940s than they would be in a few years.

Despite rising expectations about home ownership after the war, it appeared "evident" to federal officials "that many purchasers of new houses would have preferred to rent rather than to purchase." Moreover, many low- and moderate-income tenants could not afford the uncontrolled rents commanded by new units built in the late 1940s, and the accommodation shortage was so great that no units "filtered down" to those in need of inexpensive housing.

In 1944, the Curtis report determined that large percentages of low- and moderate-income tenants in Canada spent more than one-fifth of their earnings on rents. In Vancouver, where the average monthly rent was $26, 88.5% of the lowest third of 35,513 tenant households, who earned under $1,200 a year and had an annual average family income of $574, paid disproportionate rent: on average, they could afford monthly rents of $9.57 and actually paid $18. Half of the middle third of tenants,
who had incomes between $1,200 and $1,800 and average annual family earnings of $1,287, spent slightly more on rent than they could afford: they had average actual rents of $22 when their proportionate rent amounted to $21.45. Home ownership was a possibility for this middle group through Part I of the 1944 NHA, under which house payments ranged between $20 and $26 a month. However, continuing occupancy as renters also remained a reality for those paying disproportionate rents. According to the 1944 survey of the city's tenants, about two-fifths planning to remain renters could afford rates between $16 and $30. About 10% of this group paid $15 or less. 42% reported 1943 incomes of under $1,200 and claimed maximum affordable rentals of $20 a month.

Tenants of the lower third income grouping tended to live downtown where rental housing was concentrated. In the lodging house area west of Burrard, rents amounted to $16-28 per month for a room and $24-40 for a two-room suite. East of Burrard, rents typically cost $14-30 per month for a room and $16-32 for a two-room suite. Monthly rates were still lower in the Strathcona area. On average, a single house rented for about $16, an apartment for between about $16.50 and $23.50, a rooming house or cabin for $17, an unfurnished room for $6, and a furnished one for $9.50. Board and room cost $10 per month if unfurnished and $13 if furnished.

Controls imposed during the war under the Wartime
Prices and Trade Board kept rents down. Superseding provincial law, they applied to all dwelling places, including lodging and boarding houses, and fixed charges at 2 January 1940 levels. Decontrol began in 1947 when accommodation built after 1 January of that year was freed from rental and eviction regulation. Starting in 1947, the WPTB permitted rental increases of 10% applying to self-contained housing completed before 1 January 1944. Post-war inflation thus put the prices of new rental units out of competition with those of older ones. Controls remained in effect in varying degrees throughout the 1940s.

If the controls program protected the interests of many tenants, the decision to sell off rental housing built directly by federal crown companies did not. Between 1941 and 1949, these companies completed over 2,800 homes for war workers, servicemen's families, and veterans in Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Richmond. They began selling them to tenants in 1947, offering 1,953 up to 1952 and disposing of 1,872 up to 1951. In April 1951, about 2,000 veterans' families still waited for housing after six years. At a time when Vancouver desperately needed moderately priced rental accommodation, the government actually depleted stock through its own initiatives.

The federal government also attempted to encourage the construction of low- or moderate-cost rental dwellings under the National Housing Act through a limited dividend
corporation, Housing Enterprises of Canada Limited. However, the company "could not produce a desirable type of housing at the cost levels originally contemplated." Monthly rentals of between $45 and $65 for one- to three-bedroom apartments were too high for many veterans and others. In 1947, several projects across the country, including the row and apartment houses erected along Fourth and Broadway Avenues, were transferred to the recently created federal crown company, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

With the insufficient construction of apartment blocks, particularly low-priced units, and the sale of some government-built rental dwellings, Vancouver's tenants encountered a limited accommodation supply. Those with an affordability problem experienced the greatest hardship. Many low-income households found themselves trapped in downtown tenements, lodging houses, and cabins. In particular, social assistance families experienced inadequate housing conditions and paid rents in excess of their shelter allowances. In East Kitsilano, 60% of households surveyed by a committee of the Henry Hudson School Parent-Teacher Association resided in substandard accommodation due to cheap rentals and would have moved to better living quarters if possible; 10% could afford more suitable housing but could not locate any. Many wage-earning East Asians employed in the False Creek industrial area lived singly or with their families in East Kitsilano.
Several Vancouver Housing Association studies also disclosed the shortage of less expensive accommodation. In 1954, the VHA surveyed 138 families with children occupying dwellings with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities in the area between Burrard Avenue, Commercial Drive, Broadway Avenue, and Burrard Inlet; it did not include families with children inhabiting self-contained rental housing. The VHA concluded that "a marked reduction" in the number of families occupying shared accommodation had occurred since the acute post-war housing shortage. While some households had moved into subdivisions created by CMHC or private builders, the VHA had evidence "that a large number of families [had] moved to substandard housing in the outer districts, where cheap accommodation in the shape of basement suites and housekeeping rooms [had] become available through the spread of multiple occupancy uses and the illegal conversion of single family homes." Of 138 households, 27% were single parent families, 16% received social assistance allowances, and 40% lived at or near subsistence levels. Skilled and unskilled wage-earners represented the majority of male family heads: they and their families had been "forced" to accept their lodgings "simply because there was no other accommodation where children were accepted at rents they could afford to pay." As well, the VHA found in a 1951 study that single working women had the choice of paying unaffordable rates to obtain better housing distant from their work or lower
rents to secure inferior rooms closer to their jobs. Similarly, many senior citizens with low and/or pension income continued to occupy downtown area rooms and suites. Searching for the cheapest quarters, low-income households often competed with moderate-income families for the city's oldest, least satisfactory housing. Although in general the quality of housing in Vancouver was favourable, overcrowding, disrepair, and deficient basic facilities afflicted certain types of rental accommodation concentrated in the downtown area much as they had during the depression and pre-depression periods. For example, according to the 1941 census, 13.2% of Vancouver households experienced overcrowding. The figure compares very favourably with the average of 18.5% for 27 Canadian cities. Nevertheless, the crowding situation deteriorated and then improved in the next few years as the availability of accommodation contracted after 1941 and expanded again at the end of the decade. By 1951, crowded households in the city represented 9.9%, although the increase in actual numbers amounted to 6.7%.

In 1941, the conditions of overcrowding for the 9,387 affected households were serious. By contrast to those in uncrowded residences, their premises more probably needed external repairs, offered shared toilet and bathing facilities, lacked proper food storage, and sheltered lodgers. Crowded households less likely possessed a telephone, an electric vacuum, or even a radio. 83.5% of
them tended to be wage-earning, renting ones with annual incomes of under $1,500. As in the pre-war years, overcrowding was concentrated in Vancouver's downtown core where the highest population density occurred (Figure 21). It worsened in Strathcona between 1944 and 1950. Of 1,000 families surveyed in the late 1940s, 48% lived in crowded circumstances. 38.6% in single houses, 71.5% in apartments, 63.9% in rooming houses, and 57.3% in cabins encountered congestion. Overcrowding was also high among the elderly and the seasonally employed living in boarding houses in Chinatown, in the downtown area north of Hastings Street, and in East Kitsilano near False Creek. In 1947, the Vancouver Housing Association estimated that crowding affected 40% of the rooming population.

Still, congestion apparently eased as the shortages declined at the decade's end. A 1948 Vancouver Health Department study of 600 lodging houses in the West End and elsewhere in the city anticipated more overcrowding than it found, and a later expanded survey of 1,000 lodging houses confirmed the results. In 1951, a study of West End rooming houses found little overcrowding except among families. By 1957, the overcrowding rate in the East End had decreased to 15%. In all probability, many families residing in downtown lodgings in the mid-1940s later moved directly into veterans' rental housing in Renfrew Heights and Fraserview.

In 1941, 18.2% of Vancouver's occupied dwellings
Figure 21

A post-war family crowded into 1940s low-priced housing

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, 586 (B106)
needed external repairs, compared to an average of 16.5% for 27 major Canadian cities. During the 1930s, many owners and landlords lacked sufficient cash to renovate or repair their buildings. Despite construction and rental controls and shortages of labour and building supplies in the 1940s, fuller employment and higher, steadier earnings made possible more exterior repairs. The total number of dwellings in disrepair fell from 12,943 to 5,495 over the decade. However, such a substantial drop may have reflected different measurement standards in the 1941 and 1951 census takings. In addition, intensive house building activity in the late 1940s drove the proportion of dwellings needing renovation down to 5.4% by 1951.

The improvement in the external repairs situation apparently occurred outside the downtown area, which continued its gradual deterioration. The city's core contained Vancouver's oldest housing, most of which was of wooden construction (Figure 22). In 1948-1949, lodging house studies of the West End and elsewhere in the city demonstrated the lack of satisfactory exterior or structural maintenance in about one-third of the surveyed buildings.

A 1951 report of the rooming house district east of Burrard Street between Dunsmuir Street and False Creek concluded that the small, poorly built residences were approaching the end of their useful lives and that "not a few have already passed it." Nearly half of the 800 houses displayed a poor structural condition. Landlords held their property on
Figure 22

Strathcona houses, corner of Heatley and Georgia Streets, photographed ca. 1960

Source: National Archives Canada, PA-154630
speculation and refused to spend "a cent more than they have to on upkeep." In East Kitsilano, 18% of houses were in very bad repair, and some required demolition. Health inspectors' reports of the downtown area routinely noted dilapidation in cheap hotels and cabins. The City had declared many of these places unfit for human habitation, but, in some cases, people continued to live in them. A 1950 study described the state of deterioration in Strathcona with respect to exterior and interior walls, roofs, foundations, ceilings, floorings, and stairs, as "a menace." It rated only 0.6% of residential properties as good, while 11.5% were fair, 60.0% poor, and 27.9% bad. Time and again, health inspectors indicated that little could be done to stop the decay of downtown residential buildings as long as the housing shortages lasted. By 1957 in the East End, major defects in housing remained: 32% of 1,852 residential structures, or 4,612 units, were in a poor or very poor state of repair, and 16% had damp walls and floors.

The facilities and conveniences found in Vancouver's housing generally improved between 1941 and 1951 (Table 15). Residents enjoyed more furnaces, refrigerators, electric or gas ranges, bathtubs, and showers. Exclusive use of flush toilets declined slightly owing to wartime house conversions. Like owners, tenants benefited from more mechanical refrigeration. However, they less likely had individual use of toilet and bathing facilities and did not possess significantly more conveniences like radios, telephones,
Table 15
COMPARISON IN BASIC FACILITIES, SPECIFIC CONVENIENCES, DISREPAIR, AND OVERCROWDING
IN VANCOUVER (1941 and 1951) AND IN STRATHCONA (CA. 1950)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vancouver 1941</th>
<th>Vancouver 1951</th>
<th>Strathcona</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furnace</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric/gas range</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical refrigeration</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flush toilet</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tub/shower</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>67.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>93.9%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior disrepair</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>05.4%</td>
<td>27.9% (bad)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>60.0% (poor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcrowding</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>09.9%</td>
<td>48.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Exclusive use

** Defective facilities (either no facilities or some shared by too many people; dirty or otherwise inadequate)

or electric vacuums in 1951 than in 1941.

Not unexpectedly, the downtown area endured the most serious deficiency in basic facilities (Table 15). In the West End, 40% of all housekeeping rooms lacked a sink as ordered by civic by-law. Few sleeping rooms supplied a washbasin to their tenants. Moreover, half of the surveyed lodging houses failed to conform to a by-law requiring the provision of a bath or shower, a toilet, and a washbasin for every three housekeeping rooms. Although West End lodging houses furnished central heating, they frequently neglected to supply adequate lighting in hallways and stairwells. The "traditional soapbox" on the window ledge, rather than a properly screened and ventilated cupboard, continued to be the most common form of food storage. East of Burrard, lodging houses were deficient in housekeeping sinks, in bathing and toilet conveniences, and in central heating: heat came from a gas ring or a hallway stove. Similarly, East Kitsilano tenements offered wood and coal cooking and heating appliances and insufficient numbers of toilets and bathrooms. In Strathcona, limited access to plumbing facilities was customary in apartments, rooming houses, and cabins. Cupboards, coolers, or window boxes provided food storage as commonly as refrigerators, and stoves or heaters afforded warmth as much as furnaces. The use of wood or coal stoves exceeded that of any other form of cooking facility; the entire area boasted only nine electric ranges.
By the 1954 VHA shared accommodation study, 63% of households in the surveyed area had suites with wood or coal stoves for heating, and 47% shared a bath and 30% a toilet with nine or more people. In the East End in 1957, 18% of residential structures offered toilet facilities shared by over six persons, and 14% provided a bath in an outside structure or no bath whatsoever. Indeed, inspections revealed that, despite a lowered overcrowding rate, 60% of surveyed dwellings were inadequate according to an "evaluation of all aspects of accommodation affecting its livability."

Housing in the downtown area suffered from problems other than overcrowding or deficiencies in facilities and physical condition. City Health Department officials and Vancouver Housing Association activists raised concerns about basement and attic lodgings east and west of Burrard Street. Civic by-laws called for 7' 6" ceilings in these rooms and for no more than 400 square feet of living space in basements. Of 1,000 lodging houses surveyed in 1949, 14.7% of all occupied rooms were in basements or attics; more than half of the basement rooms and about one-quarter of the attic ones had insufficient headspace. Too frequently, basements and attics lacked adequate light and ventilation and convenient access to toilet and bathing facilities. As well, basements were often plagued with vermin and dampness, and attics with excess heat. In a 1952 study of Kitsilano's housekeeping rooms and suites between Alma Road, Trafalgar Street, Point Grey Road, and Fourth Avenue,
67% of basement suites, which the City had banned in November 1950, had ceilings lower than the permitted height of 138 7' 6".

By the late 1940s, civic officials expressed apprehension about the use of domestically produced gas for cooking purposes. In the early days of the British Columbia Electric Company, gas had been manufactured in such a way that the carbon monoxide content represented about 6% of the product, and death by gas, except in suicide cases, was almost unknown. However, in 1947, British Columbia Electric changed its technology and produced a gas with a carbon monoxide content of about 30%. The gas supplied rings and stoves in the West End, the business district, Chinatown, and Strathcona, and increasingly in suburban neighbourhoods, including new ones like Renfrew Heights. In Kitsilano in 1952, 22%-31% of dwellings furnished gas cooking facilities installed in the 1930s and 1940s in contravention of civic by-law. In 1951, gas plates and stoves represented 92% of all cooking facilities in West End lodging houses. Fixtures in older dwellings were frequently installed in sleeping areas with little or no ventilation, inadequate pressure, and rubber connections. Although the availability of electrical appliances had increased, landlords often resisted switching to electricity owing to the high cost of rewiring and to the dependency on gas for heating as well as cooking in some areas.

Between 1942 and 1950, inhalator calls responding to
gas poisoning incidents grew significantly: over those years, there was an average increase of 3.71 accidental deaths by coal gas and a total of 4.11 deaths per 100,000, with a sudden rise in 1947-1949. Finally, in the early 1950s, the problem of rising rates of death owing to domestic gas poisonings became of intense public concern. Fatalities increased from 36 in 1947 to 88 in 1953, and 42 deaths and 68 recoveries from accidents and suicides occurred in the first half of 1954. Cooking and heating with manufactured gas represented a greater hazard in cheaper rental accommodation where installation and maintenance were often inadequate and illegal.

The "deadly domestic gas" situation resulted in several investigations and reports and in a special committee of City Council. It remained a major concern of Vancouver's medical health officer, Dr. Stewart Murray. Late in 1953, after much discussion and despite opposition from apartment and rooming house operators and owners, Council brought in a by-law requiring installation of safety devices on all gas appliances. During the following August, the provincial government implemented legislation that required gas appliance inspection and that over-rode the Vancouver by-law. Nevertheless, local and provincial efforts did not prove effective. Only the arrival of natural gas from Alberta later in the decade solved the problem.

Civic officials and housing activists noted other problems in the downtown area's accommodation like deficient
environments, vermin infestations, and unsatisfactory fire protection. For example, in the West End, despite their proximity to English Bay and Stanley Park, senior citizens and small children lacked greenspace immediately adjacent to their lodging houses. In the VHA's shared accommodation study, 22% of households had no access to play space for small children. The "degrading" surroundings of the South False Creek industrial site interfered with a wholesome family life for East Kitsilano residents. Although Strathcona had many "good features," it was surrounded by the British Columbia Electric gasworks on the west, a slaughter house on the north, and a city dump on the flats to the south. Furthermore, rodents and bedbugs infested downtown housing from Strathcona to the West End. Serious fire hazards remained in the boarding houses of Chinatown with their partitions, wood and coal stoves, coal oil lamps, and inadequate fire escapes and in the tenements of East Kitsilano and east of Burrard with their exposed wiring, defective stovepipes, and tinder-dry wooden interiors. In the East End in 1957, 10% of residential buildings lacked sufficient fire exits.

Some areas offered better quality rental housing than others. The high-rent apartment block areas of South Granville, Cambie, or Oak almost never appear in health inspectors' reports and surveys. Inspectors often described houses in Kitsilano or Fairview as "well run" and "very clean." They also generally viewed as soundly built and
appropriately maintained the 70% of West End lodging places that were owner-operated. However, lodging houses east of Burrard, 80% of which were speculative properties, and rooming houses in Strathcona usually suffered from bad management and poor structural condition.

As in the past, inadequate living conditions tended to occur in certain types of rental accommodation—cabins, Chinese boarding houses, cheap hotels, and waterfront shacks. Forty cabins, "the City's poorest type of accommodation," still remained in Strathcona in 1950, while a few others survived in East Kitsilano and east of Burrard. Usually dilapidated, dirty, and vermin-infested, cabins ordinarily lacked electricity and offered instead wood or coal stoves and coal oil lamps. Most had no bathtubs or hot water supply, and all provided "common cast toilets," and outside taps. The residents of Chinese boarding houses, which were mostly located on or around East Pender Street, continued to experience overcrowding, insufficient light and ventilation, fire danger, disease risks, vermin, deficient sanitary facilities, structural faults, and poor maintenance. Under civic pressure in 1947-1948, a landlord successfully relocated 300 men living in Marshall Wells Limited warehouses on Shanghai Alley, but hundreds of other men continued to live in unhealthy conditions. Accommodation in downtown eastside hotels represented virtually no improvement over cabins or boarding houses. As well, the longstanding problem of foreshore shacks persisted throughout the for-
ties. In 1949, 107 shacks on land, 234 floathouses, and about 525 fishing boats bordered Burrard Inlet, False Creek, and the Fraser River. Water supply and waste disposal for the shacks remained as matters of grave concern to civic officials.

During the shortages of the 1940s, the city felt obliged to tolerate many cases of poor housing accommodating moderate- or low-income families unable to find shelter elsewhere. Inspections and warnings to operators and owners might or might not result in superficial improvements. The demolition of many places placarded as unfit for human habitation occurred only after 1950. In addition, landlords used rent controls and high building costs as excuses not to make improvements.

Moreover, many kinds of households suffered hardships owing to the absence of decent, inexpensive homes. According to the Vancouver Housing Association, the chief victim was the serviceman or veteran and his family, whose plight was, "to put it mildly, a crying scandal." As well, wounded Seaforth Highlanders returning from Italy, "practically all of them in a highly nervous condition," desperately needed, and frequently could not find, good homes for convalescence. "After living a camp existence for 6 years, the veteran continued to camp - in other peoples' homes, in basements, garages, or under any roof he can find." Not infrequently, the wives and children of overseas men lived in filthy rooms in the downtown area. Indeed, until shor-
tages declined at the decade's end, many ex-servicemen and their families occupied rooms or suites in the lodging houses and cabins of the West End, business district, and East Kitsilano or moved into waterfront shacks.

Groups other than veterans inhabited unsuitable housing. War workers, some of whom travelled long distances from downtown to the Boeing plant on Sea Island, rented damp basements, hotel rooms, or "disreputable and filthy" houses. Owing to the shortages, many families with young children lived in cramped, unwholesome lodgings in the downtown core. Relief households commonly ended up "huddled in hovels" because their shelter allowances of $6 per month for a family of three or $8 for one of six or more fell short of market rents. Single working women found few respectable self-contained suites at moderate prices east and west of Burrard, and they often had to spend more of their modest salaries than they could afford for better quarters. A few hostels like the Blue Triangle Residential Club, the Young Women's Christian Association, and the Sisters of Service Residential Club offered them only a limited amount of space. Their situation improved somewhat in the early 1950s as multiple occupancy spread into one- and two-family zones in the outer districts. Single men, especially the elderly and the seasonally employed, crowded into cabins, lodging houses, and cheap hotels in the downtown eastside, East Kitsilano, Chinatown, and Strathcona, or into waterfront shacks.
Some of those hardest hit by the shortages were impoverished single elderly women and men. In 1949, about 14,000 persons over 65 resided in the City of Vancouver, and about half had incomes of under $60 per month. Only 43% of those over 70 drew the $40 old age pension, which was not universal until 1951. Some had veterans' or war widows' allowances. Many "helpless or indifferent" pensioners lived in one-room cabins with stoves, coal lamps, and minimal plumbing facilities. All too often, they lived alone in basement or attic rooms or suites with inadequate sanitary, cooking, and heating facilities.Insensitive landlords discriminated as much against them as families with children in letting rooms or responding to their needs. Not infrequently, they intimidated older residents, especially women, by turning off the heat in order to force them to vacate their rooms and to make way for younger tenants. Still, by contrast to this "picture to which only Dickens could do justice," some managers treated the elderly well. A woman who operated some cabins called "Little Haven" on Glen Drive for about 28 individuals tried "to give to each the shelter, privacy, and decency of their own little place." Moreover, landlords could not cope with older tenants no longer able to care for themselves. Few services and facilities existed in the community to assist and to accommodate the infirm. Institutional options in the early 1940s included the Old People's Home, later called Taylor Manor on Boundary Road, the mental hospital at Essondale, and the 33 boarding
homes for about 600 aged residents licensed under pro-
vincial welfare legislation.

Vancouver's housing problem of the 1940s thus repre-
sented in part a lack of adequate housing for low-income
households in the downtown area. This deficiency had trou-
bled the city during and even before the 1930s: by 1950, it
had become chronic. Still, the problem also included a
temporary scarcity of owned and rented units throughout the
east and west side neighbourhoods affordable by middle-
income families: a similar predicament had occurred during
the depression and after the Great War. In sum, the housing
problem in Vancouver before 1950 consisted, on the one hand,
of a continuing shortage of satisfactory low-income accom-
modation and, on the other hand, of occasional crises in
middle-income residential supply. Coupled together, the
two aspects of the problem created acute housing conditions
during depression, war, and reconstruction.


Sun, 28 April 1947, p. 2. For the other cases mentioned here, see, ibid., 9 August 1946, p. 13, 10 July 1947, p. 11, 27 August 1943, p. 3, and 14 May 1947, p. 3. See also, Vancouver Province, 30 January 1947, p. 10.

Province, 4 September 1946, p. 26. For the possibility of turning old streetcars into temporary veterans' homes in Richmond, see, Sun, 4 September 1946, p. 13.


City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter CVA], Records of the Town Planning Commission, ser. 3-A-1, 61-C-6, file 14, "Housing - The Great Challenge" [by Frank Buck], [1943].

Housing Vancouver (1947), p. 2.


Sun, 29 April 1947, p. 9.


O. J. Firestone, Manpower and Material Requirements for a Housing Program in Canada (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1946), p. 34.

Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning [chaired by


16 Housing Vancouver (1947), p. 11.


19 Curtis report, p. 132.


22 Housing Situation in Vancouver, p. 2.


27 CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-D-2, file 5, "Citizens' Rehabilitation Council of Greater Vancouver: Housing;" and British Columbia Archives and Records Services [hereafter BCARS], Records of the Premier of British Columbia, GR 1222, Box 173, file 11, "Brief Prepared by Housing Committee, U. B. C., Branch No. 72, Canadian
Legion."


29 CVA, Mayor's records, 34-C-7, file [entitled] "Housing (1), 1947," "Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Municipal Survey."

30 Housing Situation in Vancouver, p. 2.

31 J. de N. Kennedy, History of the Department of Munitions and Supply: Canada in the Second World War (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), vol. 2, pp. 80-87.

32 Sun, 9 July 1943, p. 8.

33 CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-2, 24 March 1943 and 25 March 1943.

34 See, Kennedy, vol. 2, for descriptions of all the various controls.

35 Sun, 1 May 1947, p. 1.

36 NAC, Records of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, RG 64, vol. 29, "Canadian Rental and Eviction Controls: World War II and the Post War Years," 1 December 1947.

37 Ibid., p. 49.

38 Ibid., p. 54.

39 Sun, 1 October 1946, p. 8.


41 CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 7, "The Vancouver Real Estate Exchange Lmtd: Vacant Houses and Business Premises in Letter Carrier Delivery Area," 1 July 1940.

42 Sun, 8 November 1940, p. 26.


44 Province, 27 July 1942, p. 22.


Sun, 2 December 1943, p. 15.

Province, 21 January 1943, p. 1; and CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 8, "Vancouver Real Estate Exchange Lmtd: Survey of Vancouver, Showing Number of Buildings and Vacancies," 18 July 1944.

Sun, 4 February 1943, p. 14.

Ibid., 20 August 1943, p. 1.

Province, 6 January 1943, p. 5; and Sun, 3 September 1943, p. 17, and 17 August 1943, p. 1.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-2, 6 March 1943.

Province, 12 November 1943, p. 1.

NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203-C-17, "Submissions on behalf of the '5000 Homes Now!' Committee."

Sun, 20 October 1944, p. 24.

Ibid., 25 August 1944, p. 17.


Province, 4 October 1945, p. 3; and Sun, 5 December 1945, p. 13.

Housing Vancouver (1946), p. 3.

NAC, RG 64, ser. 1030, vol. 700, file 25-1-3, Minutes of Special WPTB Meeting, 23 July 1945.


Ibid., 20 September 1946, p. 15.


Housing Situation in Vancouver, pp. 2-3; and Sun, 19 March 1947, p. 13.

Housing Situation in Vancouver, p. 5.

NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17, "Vancouver Housing Opinion Survey," September 1944.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 34-F-2, file entitled "Housing, 1949," "City of Vancouver Housing Authority, Housing Survey," [1949].


Province, 25 February 1943, p. 25.


Canada, Laws, Statutes, etc., An Act to Promote the Construction of New Houses, 1944 (National Housing Act, 1944), 8 Geo. 6, ch. 46.

CMHC, Annual Report, 1946, pp. 5-6.


Sun, 26 September 1946, p. 7, and 19 November 1946, p. 2; and Province, 7 September 1946, p. 31.


Ibid., 5 January 1951, p. 10, 4 April 1951, p. 9, and 20 July 1951, p. 21.

CMHC, Annual Report, 1947, p. 19. This figure
included Wartime Housing Limited/CMHC housing.


84 Selby, pp. 91-93; and Sun, 29 April 1950, p. 15.

85 Curtis report, p. 113. Leonard Marsh (and others) argued that the average tenant family should not allocate over one fifth of its budget to rent. A rent falling within this limit was "proportionate" rent: one that did not was "disproportionate."


87 Curtis report, pp. 111-12, 119-20.


90 Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, pp. 12-14.

91 For rent controls, see, NAC, RG 64, vol. 29, "Canadian Rental and Eviction Controls." See also, Curtis report, pp. 37-40, 255-61. As well, see below, pp. 271-74.

92 Sun, 7 April 1947, p. 1.

93 In these years, Vancouver obtained about 1,800 units, North Vancouver 750, and Richmond 300 from WHL and CMHC. See below, pp. 277-78, 320-21, and 329-30. Vancouver's total does not include the Fraserview units built in 1949-1950.

Sun, 18 April 1951, p. 23.

Ibid., 1947, p. 10.

Province, 26 April 1947, p. 11. These rentals applied to the Vancouver projects.


CVA, City Clerk's records, ser. 1, 28-E-6, file 12, "Kitsilano Survey (Demonstration Housing Survey), 1947."

Special Collections Division [hereafter SCD], The Library, University of British Columbia, Papers of the Angus MacInnis Memorial Collection, M397, box 40B, file 9, "Survey of Families with Children Living in Shared Accommodation," May 1954. The VHA estimated that probably 200 families shared accommodation in the survey area. See also, Michael Wheeler's "Evaluating the Need for Low-Rental Housing: A Review of Conditions among Family Applications for the Little Mountain Low-Rental Housing Project, Vancouver, and Consideration of Criteria for Future Housing Projects" (M. S. W. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1955), based on the VHA's survey and other sources.


Ibid., p. 2.


VHA, Housing for Our Older Citizens (Vancouver: n. p., 1949); and idem, A Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End and Downtown Districts of Vancouver (Vancouver: n. p., 1951).

Curtis report, p. 96.


Ibid., pp. 184-203, table 38.

Ibid., p. 183, table 37.

Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, p. 19.

Ibid., p. 18, table 11.

Housing Vancouver (1947), p. 2.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, "Lodging House Study," August 1948; and ibid., Records of the Health Department, ser. 1, 146-B-3, file 8, "Report on 1,000 Vancouver Lodging Houses," 16 February 1949.

Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End, pp. 3, 9.


Curtis report, p. 102, table 23.

Census, 1941, vol. 9, p. 11, table 3a; and ibid., 1951, vol. 3, 18-6.


CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, "Lodging House Study," (1948); and ibid., Health Department records, 146-B-3, file 8, "Report on 1,000 Vancouver Lodging Houses," (1949).


Ibid., p. 10.

Housing Vancouver (1947), p. 2.

CVA, Health Department Records, ser. 8, 145-C-4 to 145-D-4, Health Inspectors' records, ca. 1930-1965. These reports, which are arranged by street address, are most useful for the late 1940s and the early 1950s.

Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, iii.

Ibid., p. 3.

Vancouver Redevelopment Study, p. 7.
Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End, p. 5.

Ibid., p. 4.

Ibid., p. 10.

Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, p. 18, table 8.

Ibid., p. 18, table 9.

Ibid., p. 17.

SCD, M397, box 40B, file 9, "Survey of Families with Children in Shared Accommodation."

Ibid.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-C-7, file 8, "Memo Re Basement Suites in Apartment Houses," [1947].

CVA, Health Department Records, 146-B-3, file 8, "Report on 1,000 Vancouver Lodging Houses."

CVA, Town Planning Commission Records, 61-C-6, file 14, "Lodging House Study."

CVA, Records of the Department of Permits and Licenses, ser. C-6, 124-A-5, file 3, "[Survey of use and occupancy of existing dwellings in the Area Bounded by Bayswater, Trafalgar, the Lane South of 4th Avenue and the Lane North of Broadway and in the Area Bounded by Alma, Bayswater, Point Grey Road, and the Lane North of 4th Avenue]," 3 July 1952.

CVA, City Clerk's records, ser. 1, 78-B-1, file 1, "[Brief to] Special Committee of Rooming House Owners and Operators of Vancouver to Mayor and Aldermen," 16 March 1954.

Sun, 2 December 1948, p. 13.

CVA, Permits and Licenses Department records, ser. C-6, 124-A-5, file 3, "[Survey of use and occupancy of existing dwellings]."

Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End, pp. 3-4. For descriptions of specific cases in the downtown core, see, CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-4 to 145-D-4.
CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-E-6, file 7, W. Bradshaw to S. Murray, 20 October 1950.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 20-D-1, file 9, S. Murray to W. Orr, 22 April 1954; and Murray to Chair and Members, Building and Town Planning Committee, 14 June 1954.

Ibid., 28-E-6, file 7, and 28-F-2, file 14; and ibid., Town Planning Commission records, 78-A-3, file entitled "Gas Poisoning, 1953," and 78-B-1, file 1. See also, Sun, 1 February 1951, p. 15, and 16 February 1951, pp. 1, 2.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 78-B-1, file 1, "By-law No. 3406: A By-law to Amend By-law No. 2483, Being the 'Gas Fitting By-law,'" 19 October 1953. See also, Sun, 2 October 1953, p. 53, and 15 January 1954, p. 8.


Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End, p. 5.

Vancouver Redevelopment Study, p. 7.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-E-6, file 12, "Kitsilano Survey," 1947.


See, CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-4 to 145-D-4 for specific cases at particular addresses. See also, Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, pp. 16-17; CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, "Vancouver Health Department - City Hall - General Observations on Other Types of Housing in Vancouver," August 1948, and "Lodging House Study," August 1948; and ibid., Health Department records, 146-B-3, file 8, "Report on 1,000 Vancouver Lodging Houses," February 1949.

Ibid., Health Department records, 145-C-4 to 145-D-4, for individual cases; and ibid., City Clerk's records, 28-E-6, file 12, "Kitsilano Survey," 1947.

Vancouver Redevelopment Study, p. 7.
157

Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End,
pp. 2, 6-7.

158

Ibid., pp. 9-10.

159

Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, p. 9; CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, "Vancouver Health Department - City Hall - General Observations on Other Types of Housing in Vancouver;" ibid., City Clerk's records, 28-E-6, file 12, "Kitsilano Survey," 1947; and ibid., Health Department records, 145-C-4 to 145-D-4, Health Inspectors' records, passim.

160

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, "Vancouver Health Department - City Hall - General Observations on Other Types of Housing in Vancouver."

161

Sun, 1 March 1947, p. 13, and 16 July 1948, p. 9; CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-4, [report on 1 to 25 Canton Alley, 1946-1947]. For descriptive material on Chinese boarding houses, see, for example, ibid., 145-C-4, [reports on Alexander Street], 145-C-5, [reports on Carrall Street], 145-C-6, [reports on East Georgia Street], and 145-D-2, [reports on East Pender Street], passim.

162

For example, see, ibid., 145-C-5, [reports on cheap hotels on West and East Cordova Street, including the Atlantic Hotel, the Marble Rooms, and the Sterling Hotel at 77, 107, and 177 West Cordova, 1930s to 1950s]. See also, ibid., 145-D-3, [Reports on other cheap hotels on Powell Street, like the Grand Trunk Rooms and Ohio Rooms at 55 and 245 Powell Street, 1940s to 1950s].

163


164

Housing Vancouver (1947), p. 3.

NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203-C-17, J. Clarke to I. Mackenzie, 21 September 1944.

Housing Vancouver (1947), p. 3.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-6, file 4, Minutes of meeting, Housing Committee, Welfare Council of Greater Vancouver, 3 May 1944, with attached report from the national housing registry, April 1944.


Province, 15 February 1943, p. 4; Sun, 10 May 1943, p. 19; and NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203-C-17, J. McPeake to W. L. M. King, 19 April 1944, with attached brief, "Submissions on Behalf of the '5000 Homes Now!' Committee."

CVA, Health Department records, 145-D-1, [report on lodging houses at 437 Alexander Street, 1948, and 663 Cambie Street, 1945]; 145-D-1, [report on lodging house at 210 Keefer Street, 1948-1954], 145-D-7, [report on Cobalt Hotel, 917 Main Street, 1944-1955], 145-D-3, [report on lodging house, 546 Prior Street, 1944], 145-C-4, [report on lodging house at 1357 Barclay Street, 1946-1949, 809 Bidwell Street, 1951, and on a shack below Burrard Bridge, 1948], and 145-C-6, [report on lodging house, 1526 Davie Street, 1944-1946].

CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-F-2, file 8, [Annual Report of the Social Services Department, 1946]; and ibid., Mayor's records, 34-B-1, file entitled Relief, 1940, "City of Vancouver Monthly Relief Schedule," [1940].


For example, see, Rebuilding a Neighbourhood, p. 12.

VHA, Housing for Our Older Citizens (Vancouver: n. p., 1949), pp. 1-7; and Survey of Rooming Houses in the West End, p. 8.

CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-4, [report on cabins at 343 Alexander Street, 1944-1953]. Forty cabins at this address housed mainly pensioners. After many inspections and repeated warnings, the cabins were demolished in 1953.

*CVA, Health Department records, 145-C-7, [report on cabins at 204 Glen Drive, 1945-1952]. By 1952, St. James Anglican Church operated "Little Haven."*

Housing for Our Older Citizens, pp. 8-14. Not included here are the seniors' housing projects started by private groups later in the 1940s.
CHAPTER V
THE RESPONSE TO VANCOUVER'S HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE 1940S

Both the federal government and a broad range of community activists reacted to wartime and post-war housing conditions in Vancouver. In order to expedite the war effort and reconstruction, the government prescribed a variety of remedies intended to ease the shelter problem all across the country. It first initiated temporary relief for the immediate emergency and later provided permanent market housing programs to fuel the post-war economy and to increase supply. Still, Ottawa's unilateral efforts failed to resolve the city's residential difficulties.

Vancouver's social activists increasingly responded to the deteriorating local housing situation. Some attempted to eliminate the crisis faced by homeless veterans. Others, many of whom had participated in the social housing campaign of the 1930s, worked to rectify the chronic need for low-income dwellings as well as the temporary accommodation shortage. Relatively quiet at first, the activists gained strength as a movement by 1944 and commanded wide public support by 1946. Despite opposition from a small, vocal element of real estate interests, lenders, and builders,
they effectively urged governments at all levels to implement social housing programs. They attributed the major responsibility for resolving the housing problem to the federal government, but they also pressed the civic and the provincial governments to make changes. In the end, they achieved improvements like an evictions freeze, emergency shelter, continuation of rent controls, and veterans' rental homes. As well, local activists joined with national forces to obtain the 1949 amendments to the National Housing Act making possible public housing developments.

Unfortunately, the activists' accomplishments were limited in time and scope. The federal government eventually sold off rental dwellings built for veterans and war workers, closed emergency shelter units, and conveyed rent controls to the Province, which soon terminated them. Public housing constructed in the 1950s barely touched the long-term problem of adequately accommodating low-income households. Yet, despite these limitations, the story of the social housing campaign demonstrates that activism secured concrete improvements in accommodation that still shelter many Vancouverites in the 1990s.

Between 1940 and 1946, the federal government imposed a number of programs intended to further the smooth prosecution of the war effort and to facilitate
the reconstruction of the post-war economy by relieving the housing problem. It introduced controls over rents, evictions, construction, and supplies, created Wartime Housing Limited, continued the 1938 National Housing Act, replaced the Home Improvement Plan with the Home Extension and Home Conversion Plans, established the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction's Subcommittee on Housing and Town Planning, passed the 1944 National Housing Act, implemented the Integrated Housing Plan, fostered the formation of Housing Enterprises of Canada, instituted Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and constructed Department of Veterans' Affairs homes. Unfortunately, these federal activities did not resolve the housing situation either at the national level or in Vancouver.

In 1939, Cabinet set up the Wartime Prices and Trade Board under the War Measures Act to stop the inflation of the price and the supply of "any necessary of life." A year later, it extended the Board's regulatory powers to residential accommodation as a "necessary of life" and appointed a Rentals Administrator. A subsequent Board order applied controls to fifteen localities including Vancouver and North Vancouver and fixed a maximum rental at 2 January 1940 levels. Voluntary committees in all controlled areas investigated complaints, devised procedures, examined records, and obtained information respecting
rentals. Vancouver's committee consisted of J. N. Ellis, a county court judge, J. G. Walker, a real estate executive, and W. J. Bartlett, a past president of the Vancouver Trades and Labor Council. As housing congestion spread across the country, the Board gradually extended controls. By 1 December 1941, they applied everywhere with rentals frozen at an 11 October 1941 level. A more decentralized, complicated system with full-time appraisers, regional offices, and consolidated procedures slowly developed. In 1943, J. G. Walker became Vancouver's rentals appraiser; he heard disputes, and appeals on his decisions went to a special appeal court.

The Rentals Administration did allow changes in maximum rents and in tenant evictions. It permitted rent increases due to alterations in taxes, mortgage interest rates, insurance premiums, service costs, and heating charges payable by the landlord, to structural improvements, to wear and tear caused by the tenant, to differences between the basic day rent and the prevailing rates for similar accommodation elsewhere in a particular locality, and to modifications in written agreements between landlord and tenant. In 1941, eviction could occur for a variety of reasons: non-payment of rent; broken lease conditions; use of the premises for other or immoral purposes; inadequate care; authorized rent increases owing to major repairs or conversion that the occupant could not
afford; repossession by the landlord for personal or family use; change from residential to business use; and sale of the dwelling with the condition of vacancy included. Later, in 1943, the WPTB limited the eviction conditions to occupation by the landlord for his own or family use for a one-year period and to subdivision of the unit to accommodate more residents. It demanded a minimum six-month notice for repossession and a three-month notice for conversion. As well, landlords could not terminate leases between 30 September and 30 April for monthly or weekly tenure.

By 1942, the WPTB had committed itself to making full use of existing accommodation as well as to regulating rentals and evictions. The Rentals Administration had encountered public pressure to go beyond the imposition of controls to the actual provision of housing in acutely congested areas. Upon Finance Minister J. L. Ilsley's advice, the Board increasingly exercised some responsibility in allocating, requisitioning, and rationing housing. In October, it issued Order No. 200 under which it could carry out compulsory surveys and permit every householder to share, let, or sublet portions of a home regardless of local laws, by-laws, conveyances, deeds, agreements, or leases. In Vancouver, Order No. 200 took precedence over the City's zoning by-laws and the Province's Shaughnessy Heights Restriction Act. As a result, many larger houses
in older one-family dwelling zones and in Shaughnessy Heights became multiple-family units. Although pressed by associations of property owners and lending institutions, City Council, its building committee, and the Town Planning Commission had no power to stop the conversions.

The WPTB also attempted to utilize fully existing rental accommodation by establishing registries in congested areas and conducting compulsory surveys of residential space through its Consumer Branch run by Byrne Hope Sanders and the Women's Regional Advisory Committees. Thirty registries supervised by Mrs. Harvey Agnew, president of the YWCA's National Council, were in full operation within months, while two dozen committees stood ready to swing into action when necessary. Vancouver's WRAC set up a local committee chaired by Mrs. Laura Selman of the United Services Bureau to create a registry and to organize a survey. Opening in December 1942 at 771 Dunsmuir Street under Millicent Fleming's office management, the registry took over the work of the Bureau and the YWCA in finding rooms for home-seekers and soon attracted the services of about 100 volunteers. It placed advertisements in the local newspapers calling on the patriotism of Vancouverites to help the war effort by renting spare rooms. In April, the Real Property Administration and the registry carried out a compulsory survey of Vancouver, North Vancouver, and Burnaby that revealed 2,097 vacant rooms and prompted 1,830 householders to volunteer
space. The registry staff inspected premises, listed them, accepted applications, and placed home-seekers throughout the four worst years of Vancouver's housing shortages.

Early in 1941, the federal government moved to restrict civilian building in order to divert valuable materials and labour to the war effort. In April 1940, it had replaced the War Supply Board with the Department of Munitions and Supply under C. D. Howe to manage war production. The new department's Priorities Section and later its Priorities Branch met wartime industrial requirements, and individual Controllers regulated the supply of materials like timber, rubber, and steel. Initially, Priorities Branch created a Construction Control Division and appointed a Priorities Officer. Later, Cabinet named a Controller of Construction and separated the Construction Control Division from Priorities Branch. In British Columbia, an advisory committee screened local applications for permits and advised the Ottawa Control on allocation. Construction Control gradually limited residential building activity by issuing federal permits for homes costing over $5,000. In April 1943, it allowed house construction valued up to $500 to proceed without licence. It gave priorities to builders erecting 100 or more new units, but, in mid-summer, it placed curbs on sizes of dwellings. In February 1944, the Control allowed the building of homes costing up to $1,500 and, about a year
later, again reduced the limit to $500. The federal government discontinued construction controls in December 1945.

Late in 1940, upon the recommendation of its Economic Advisory Committee, the federal Cabinet recognized that housing shortages in industrial areas impeded production, that private industry could not meet the need for accommodation, and that the government itself would have to build temporary housing for war workers. Under the War Measures Act and the Department of Munitions and Supply Act, Privy Council ordered the formation of a crown corporation under C. D. Howe to erect war workers' housing. The incorporation of Wartime Housing Limited occurred on 28 February 1941.

The new company behaved like an independent developer in the private sector rather than a national housing agency. Howe enlisted the successful Hamilton contractor, Joseph M. Pigott, to act as WHL's president and appointed representatives of the professions, business, and labour as directors of the company's board. WHL itself operated in a decentralized, businesslike manner. Although Pigott reported directly to him, Howe, as the impresario of a "circus" of 30 wartime crown corporations spread across 3,000 miles, wanted to hear about major problems instead of day-to-day operations. By 1945, WHL maintained a headquarters in Toronto and 51 branch offices supervising work in 73 municipalities.

Intervening directly in the housing industry, WHL
constructed and managed rental units for war workers and their families. It first surveyed production areas to determine housing requirements. If it uncovered a serious shortage in a specific locality, it then undertook one or more building projects. The company assembled land through legal agreements with municipal authorities, expropriation from private owners, or use of federal property. It produced its own standard residential designs and specifications. It received priorities on building materials in which private contractors did not share. Eventually, WHL rented and managed 16,869 houses and several staff houses built up to 1945, when the last war workers' house was finished. As well, it was responsible for schools, firehalls, pumphouses, garages, community centres, and office buildings necessary for the completion of its task.

Wartime Housing carried out two war workers' developments in Greater Vancouver where private industry had failed to meet the wartime demand for housing. In June 1941, it surveyed the City of Vancouver and the District and the City of North Vancouver and concluded that the employees of Burrard Drydock Company Limited and North Van Ship Repairs Limited desperately needed additional accommodation. WHL subsequently built nearly 300 temporary single family homes and two staff houses in the Lonsdale area of the City of North Vancouver. In 1942, it erected 450 other single dwellings near Fell Avenue on the flats of the District of North Vancouver. Agreements with both the City and the
District resolved the specific details of land transfer, payments in lieu of taxes, services, and post-war disposal of the units. Later, WHL assisted the City in building one school and extending another. McCarter and Nairne, a prominent Vancouver architectural firm, supervised the North Vancouver project, as well as other ones in Esquimalt, Prince Rupert, and Nanaimo, and Smith Brothers and Wilson, a well-known local contractor, built the housing. A WHL regional official, Norman B. Robinson, opened an office in North Vancouver to direct the construction and the management of the British Columbia program.

In December 1942, using the same architects and contractor, WHL provided 300 temporary houses in Richmond for Boeing Aircraft of Canada Limited workers employed at a Sea Island plant. It expropriated land from farmers in Richmond, negotiated an agreement with the municipality for water supply, and gave the new subdivision of Burkeville a firehall and community centre.

On the whole, WHL performed well in housing a limited number of tenants employed in war industry. Officials like Howe and Pigott associated with WHL's work argued in reports, speeches, articles, and films that the crown corporation performed an excellent, efficient job as a "well-established" and "smoothly operating" agency. Contented tenants made comfortable their homes, planted victory gardens, and participated in community activities.

Moreover, in supplying thousands of badly needed rental
units, WHL made significant contributions to Canadian housing in construction, design, and site planning. Its usual construction method of rapidly assembled semi-prefabrication or "demountable" technology was innovative, although, owing to a scarcity of plywood on the west coast, the North Vancouver and Richmond housing employed more traditional building techniques. A plain but distinctive standard design that simplified the 1930s "Cape Cod" stylistic mode offered two-, three-, or four-bedrooms and limited assortments of exterior wall finishes and colour combinations; it made the houses as easily recognizable to Canadians as the grain elevator or the chateau-style hotel (Figures 23, 24, 25, and 26). The site planning of war workers' homes along crescents and cul-de-sacs in Burkeville, parts of North Vancouver, and elsewhere represented a notable departure from customary gridiron patterns.

WHL also contributed to the evolution of Canadian housing management techniques. Based on a combination of paid personnel and local advisory committees, its management defrayed costs, presented an opportunity for a smooth entry into the neighbourhood, and won the assistance of community organizations. The Tenant Relations Department, which its contemporaries generally held in high regard, consciously exercised a subtle but systematic strategy of social control under Lionel Scott's direction. Guided by community counsellors and local organizations like the Vancouver Council of Social Agencies Group Work Division and supplied by WHL
Figure 23

Wartime Housing Limited subdivision in North Vancouver, ca. 1940s

Source: National Archives Canada, PA-111586
Figure 24

Wartime Housing Limited standard house types, 1942

Figure 25

Wartime Housing Limited H12 type homes on Tobruck Street,
North Vancouver, 1943

Source: National Archives Canada, PA-148471
Figure 26

Wartime Housing Limited house type H22,
North Vancouver, 1943

Source: National Archives Canada, PA-148472
with buildings, equipment, and even a monthly magazine, *Home Life*, the tenants and their families initiated social, health, recreational, and athletic programs that improved the quality of life in their developments and that also curtailed industrial disputes, maintained government property, reduced juvenile delinquency, and diminished discord among neighbourhoods. This form of social engineering emerged from the European and North American traditions of welfare capitalism in planned workers' communities. In the 1940s, a less heavily paternalistic WHL extended social control theory by shaping in its projects the democratic principles of community organization within the broader context of fighting World War II to preserve those very same values.

Finally, the WHL program introduced the principle of joint responsibility between governments in rental housing projects. While it carried the burden of building and managing the houses, the company co-operated with municipalities in the areas of land assembly, services, payments in lieu of taxes, and the final disposal of the property. As well, the provincial governments provided enabling legislation making possible the projects.

Criticism arose about WHL operations. To social activists, the homes did not represent widely available low-rental housing. Rather, they provided accommodation for war workers with stable, modest incomes. Rents, which the government did not subsidize, amounted to between $22 and
$30 per month, whereas, at that time, low-income house-
holds paid up to $20 per month for rent and could afford
possibly $12 per month. Since 44% of WHL tenants had
previously paid rents under $20, war industry had obviously
improved their financial situation and reduced their
affordability problem. In fact, WHL rents, which the
company calculated to recoup construction costs over ten
years, were slightly higher than National Housing Act
monthly payments covering a 20-year mortgage and taxes.

Criticism of WHL came from sources outside the Muni-
tions and Supply Department and the projects themselves.
Finance Department officials, particularly in the National
Housing Administration and the WPTB Rentals Administration
were highly suspicious of WHL owing to bureaucratic rivalry
and to fears of socialism. They suspected that Wartime
Housing would overstep its mandate, build permanent homes in
major centres, and compete with the National Housing Admini-
stration and private industry. Furthermore, although in
most cases, they later became smoother, initially WHL's
relations with municipal governments were "very trouble-
some." Concerns centred about the quality of housing, the
division of responsibility over services, and the loss of
tax revenue. In Greater Vancouver, civic officials re-
ferred to the North Vancouver homes as an "eyesore" and
"packing cases," but afterwards called the Burkeville units
a "big improvement." Although most municipalities came
to accept the standard WHL agreement, one in particular
never did. Richmond fought with Wartime Housing for several years over the responsibility for the costs of school facilities and services like the sewage system. Lending institutions, builders, suppliers, and property owners opposed WHL's operations because they feared that the crown company would become involved in building permanent housing, because its projects would reduce property values in surrounding neighbourhoods, because the units would deteriorate into slum housing if not removed after the war, and because the corporation received priorities on supplies unavailable to private industry and therefore delayed construction under the NHA. Opposition also came at first from the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. WHL's work competed with the CCF's drive for a planned public housing program undertaken jointly by federal, provincial, and municipal governments across Canada. As well, WHL, which had been created by order-in-council rather than legislation, remained largely unaccountable to Parliament. While it approved of the Tenant Relations Department's activities, the CCF feared that "these miserable little wartime houses... will become slums within a few years," that the nature of the company's management was dictatorial, especially with respect to its customary three day notice-to-vacate, and that tax exemptions burdened local taxpayers.

When the Economic Advisory Committee of Cabinet recommended WHL's establishment, it also debated the advantages and disadvantages of keeping the National Housing
Act program. In December 1939, the Finance Department discontinued loans on individual houses costing over $4,000 and on all loans for apartment blocks and duplexes. Almost a year later, the Economic Advisory Committee under Deputy Finance Minister W. C. Clark's influence was inclined to terminate the NHA plan altogether in order to release labour and material resources for the war effort and to build up a backlog of housing demand requiring an infusion of construction assistance to stimulate the economy, generate employment, and thwart a post-war depression. Nevertheless, David Mansur of the Central Mortgage Bank and F. W. Nicolls of the National Housing Administration argued that the government should apply the NHA program to congested areas like Vancouver badly in need of permanent housing.

With Cabinet on the verge of ending NHA loans, a powerful lobby made up of the National Construction Council, lending institutions, suppliers, builders, civic leaders, Members of Parliament, architects, realtors, and economists like C. A. Curtis of Queen's University developed to keep alive the program. In addition to reinforcing Mansur's and Nicolls' argument, the NHA's supporters pointed out the wisdom of constructing good quality permanent housing without a drain like WHL's on government funds, the possibility of high unemployment among older workers, and the advantages of home ownership in discouraging "fifth column penetration into the ranks of ordinary men and women." Officials connected with the Department of Munitions and Supply,
including the Controller of Construction and WHL's senior management recommended the discontinuation of NHA loans during the wartime emergency. They argued that the NHA program could not meet the urgency of the housing situation in major centres and that it diverted precious supplies away from the war effort. In the end, Cabinet compromised. It successfully sought Parliament's approval of an appropriation to continue with limited scope the government's share of the NHA joint loan program.

Another dimension to the story of the NHA's wartime role concerned its response to WHL's attempt to enter the permanent housing field. W. C. Clark and the forces that pressed for the continuation of NHA loans, including Nicolls, the WPTB Rentals Administrator, the lumber suppliers, and the lending institutions, urged the restriction of WHL's activities to the construction of temporary units in remote areas. However, in 1942, WHL negotiated an agreement with Hamilton's civic government to build badly needed permanent homes. Opponents called the proposal socialistic, rejected the extension of priorities to WHL to build permanent units, and decried the cost and the quality of its houses. Finally, a meeting of officials in Munitions and Supply, WHL, and Finance, including both C. D. Howe and J. L. Ilsley, resolved the controversy by restricting the crown company's activities to the construction of temporary units in remote areas. Indeed, after December 1942, a newly established Housing Coordination Committee
consisting of the WPTB Real Property Administrator, the chairman of the Wartime Industries Control Board, the National Housing Administration director, the Construction Controller, the Associate Deputy Minister of Labour, and the WHL president acted as a regulatory body to which Wartime Housing submitted its plans for approval before going to Privy Council. The Committee coordinated all government activities with respect to housing. For the next year and a half, permanent and temporary housing programs remained quite distinct. In Greater Vancouver, WHL maintained its operations in less populated areas of heavy wartime production like the North Shore and Sea Island, and the National Housing Administration, supervised by its regional director, Jocelyn Davidson, remained active in the City of Vancouver itself.

While the Economic Advisory Committee continued the NHA's joint loans, it terminated the Home Improvement Plan as of 31 October 1940. Still, officials in Finance and the WPTB recognized the value of a scheme like the HIP in expanding rental stock through conversions. A Home Extension Plan set up by Finance in 1942 promoted conversions using HIP as a model. It had minimal impact owing to Construction Control's limits on building activity and to scarcities of supplies. Subsequently, Real Property Administrator Russel Smart developed a House Conversion Plan under which Finance, acting through the National Housing Administration, leased large dwellings for five years and converted
them into rental units. With Housing Coordination Committee and Cabinet approval, the HCP resulted in 36 conversions in 1943, 1,209 in 1944, 778 in 1945, and 76 in 1946. In Vancouver, Jocelyn Davidson of the National Housing Administration introduced the Conversion Plan in June 1943 despite the reservations of the City Council, the Town Planning Commission, and the ratepayers' associations about federal power to over-ride civic by-laws. In addition, critics noted that the Plan displaced tenants, sheltered too few extra occupants, commanded high rents, catered to single people or couples rather than families, accommodated some non-essential workers, and consumed government funds, labour, and materials in a non-productive manner. Still, the Plan provided suites for 500 families between September 1943 and January 1945, when 125 more suites were under construction.

The federal government also turned to the problem of accommodating Canadians during reconstruction. In 1941, it assigned housing as a subject of enquiry to the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction which in turn entrusted it to the Subcommittee on Post-war Construction Projects. In 1943, the Advisory Committee established a full Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning chaired by Professor C. A. Curtis of Queen's University. Members included federal officials like Piggott and Nicolls, architects, planners, sociologists, economists, and representatives of municipal interest groups. The Subcommittee benefited
from the expertise of its research adviser, Leonard Marsh, the Dominion Statistician, H. F. Greenway, and a Finance Department economist, O. J. Firestone. The Subcommittee's mandate was to review existing legislation and administrative organization relating to housing and planning and to report upon changes in that legislation and organization "to ensure the most effective implementation of...an adequate housing program for Canada" in the post-war years. When it submitted its report (known as the Curtis report) to Parliament in March 1944, the Subcommittee recommended a comprehensive national strategy intended to provide better accommodation, stimulate the economy, furnish employment for those released from the forces and war industry, and deal with shelter "as a matter of welfare and social concern."

The Curtis report called for "an equitable and comprehensive plan" covering town planning, home ownership, renovation, slum clearance, low-rental projects, and rural and co-operative housing, involving public, private, and co-operative financing and operation of schemes and depending mainly on the private construction industry. Town planning with the involvement of all three governmental levels should form the basis of housing developments. As well, housing programs should depend upon distribution of financial responsibility and decentralization of administration among three governments. More specifically, the report promoted the extension of the NHA Part I to include prospective home owners of moderate income and the revision of Part II to introduce
a low-rental program with local housing authorities and federal subsidization of capital costs and rentals.

The National Housing Act passed by Parliament in the summer of 1944 did not adopt the Curtis report's recommendations. Rather, in shaping the legislation, Deputy Minister W. C. Clark followed the recommendations of a Dominion Mortgage and Investments Association brief and, without doubt, his own strong inclinations. Although it attempted to foster "pride of possession" among Canadians, Part I did not sufficiently expand accessibility to home ownership. The reduction in the borrower's interest rate was "less than most members of the Sub-committee had in mind." Moreover, while the Subcommittee proposed a 10% downpayment on all loans valued up to $6,000, the 1944 NHA brought in a percentage rising from about 10% on a $4,000 home to about 17% on a $6,000 one. In addition, the Act permitted the 30-year amortization period recommended by the Subcommittee only in areas with appropriate planning and zoning provisions. Part II of the new legislation retained the 1938 Act's joint loan plan for the construction of rental units. Despite the Curtis report's proposal for low-rental schemes operated by local housing authorities, the 1944 NHA fashioned by Clark offered a rental housing program through the agency of limited dividend companies and life insurance institutions with no federal subsidization for rent reduction. Even the Dominion Mortgage and Investments Association, which believed that favourable
lending conditions for private industry, full employment, and adequate social services reduced the need for subsidized shelter, could envisage the careful creation of public housing projects that Clark could not.

The federal government attempted to ease post-war accommodation shortages by implementing the section of the 1944 NHA that guaranteed life insurance companies a 2 1/2% return on funds invested in low- or moderate-cost rental projects. Although Finance Department officials, the companies, and the Dominion Mortgage and Investments Association worked out an agreement for this initiative following extensive discussions, the companies formed a holding company, Housing Enterprises of Canada Limited only under pressure from the government. Eventually, however, Housing Enterprises parented several subsidiaries that undertook projects in Montreal, Toronto, and other cities across the country using long-term federal loans at a 3% interest rate. In October 1945, Housing Enterprises organized a west coast subsidiary, Housing Enterprises of Vancouver Limited, the officials of which represented regional offices of the major life insurance companies. In 1946, the City of Vancouver and HEV closed a land deal involving city-owned lots on Fourth Avenue and Broadway. HEV commenced the construction of 349 moderate-cost apartment and terraced housing units for mainly veterans' households. The local architectural firm of Sharp and Thompson, Berwick, Pratt simplified and modernized the more traditional terrace
stylistic mode used by themselves in the 1930s and by Garden City, London County Council, and "homes for heroes" designers between 1900 and 1930 (Figure 27). Bennett and White Construction Company built the housing. HEV erected additional units in New Westminster and planned more for Vancouver. Nevertheless, despite federal priorities on building materials, Housing Enterprises of Canada was unable to handle rising building costs and to maintain moderate rentals. It finally abandoned its program in 1947 after completing several projects across the country.

In 1945-1946, the Finance Department devised an Integrated Housing Plan through consultation with representatives of the chartered banks and the National House Builders' Association and added it to the 1944 NHA. The plan allowed for agreements between the government and a builder in which the latter constructed veterans' homes conforming to NHA standards on a substantial area of subdivided land at an approved sales price with priority assistance on materials. If the builder failed to sell a house after six months, the government purchased it at a cost slightly below the agreed upon price. The plan's objective was "to promote the building of moderate and low-cost housing units of modest quality." In Greater Vancouver, the Integrated Housing Plan was responsible wholly or partly for several large subdivisions in New Westminster, North Vancouver, and Burnaby. In Vancouver itself, J. G. James and Son built a large integrated housing development
Figure 27

Housing Enterprises of Vancouver Limited apartments on Broadway Avenue, photographed ca. 1960

Source: G. Warrington/National Archives Canada, PA-154627
between 45th and 49th Avenues near Knight Road; Little, Maddock, and Meirte Limited undertook another sizeable project between 42nd and 44th Avenues and Manitoba and Columbia Streets; and Sinclair Homesites Limited with Harry Ablowitz Realty Limited erected "Dalkeith Place" near Grandview Highway and Renfrew Street.

In May 1945, the federal government replaced the Housing Coordination Committee with the Interdepartmental Housing Committee to initiate as well as to coordinate its many projects and programs. Late that year, it created another crown corporation, the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, that reported first to Finance Minister J. L. Ilsley and later to Reconstruction and Supply Minister C. D. Howe, that consolidated most of its housing programs, and that administered the operations of the 1944 NHA. Modelled on the Central Mortgage Bank, CMHC came into existence on 1 January 1946. Subsequently, it took over Wartime Housing Limited, the Home Conversion Plan, and the Housing Enterprises of Canada projects. In the fall of 1946, CMHC appointed J. A. Jones as British Columbia Regional Supervisor located in Vancouver and began to centralize its various activities in the local WHL office.

The federal government also assisted veterans in buying housing near major cities like Vancouver under the 1942 Veterans' Land Act. The Department of Veterans' Affairs initiated a subdivision plan under which it bought land and erected homes for sale to ex-servicemen. In
1945-1946, the DVA implemented its plan in the Greater Vancouver area with subdivisions of over 300 veterans' houses, including projects in Queensborough, New Westminster, and on Lulu Island, Richmond.

While, on one level, Ottawa's efforts to control rents and evictions and to increase supply proved beneficial, on another, its unilateral efforts to resolve the need for 17-25,000 units in the mid-1940s did not succeed in Vancouver. First, the NHA did not furnish sufficient units of owned housing quickly enough. While the number of new homes provided under the 1938 legislation during the war years was not large, officials approved loans for about 8,500 units between 1946 and 1950 under the 1944 Act. Yet rising costs and scarcities of supplies delayed completion of these homes and added to congestion. Secondly, the federal programs did not produce sufficient numbers of rental units. WHL built 1,050 homes in North Vancouver and Richmond; the National Housing Administration's conversions resulted in over 600 suites; and Housing Enterprises of Vancouver erected 349 apartments and terraced units. Private industry remained uninterested in building rental housing under the 1944 NHA. As a result, congestion worsened in the downtown area and its adjacent neighbourhoods. Little temporary shelter for stays by the day, week, or month was available until households could move into more permanent accommodation. Finally, the supply of low-cost housing decreased with the shortages and thus aggravated
the chronic need for low-income dwellings.

As conditions deteriorated in the 1940s, a variety of local groups, many of which had participated in the social housing movement of the 1930s, took action to resolve Vancouver's accommodation problem. No single formal structure united all the groups, although their memberships frequently overlapped, and two organizations bitterly opposed each other in the wider political context. The objectives of the various groups differentiated them. Some, like the veterans' organizations and the Citizens' Rehabilitation Council of Greater Vancouver, tended to seek remedies for the immediate emergency created by the war and reconstruction, while others, including the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the Labor Progressive Party (the Communist Party), and the Vancouver Housing Association, wanted a program to solve both the long- and short-range aspects of the shelter situation.

Pressing Ottawa for social innovations much as they had following World War I, veterans' organizations like the provincial command and the local branches of the Canadian Legion, the Army and Navy Veterans of Canada, the Canadian Corps Association, the War Amputations Association, and the coordinating Vancouver Veterans' Council, supported by women's auxiliaries to the various regiments and services, called for a quick resolution of the housing emergency. In 1944, these groups recommended imposition of an evictions
freeze for servicemen's families, use of vacant dwellings for temporary accommodation, provision of WHL houses for soldiers' dependents, construction of government-assisted housing projects by limited dividend companies, and conversion of the old Hotel Vancouver to a veterans' hostel.

Within two years, as the "rosy pictures painted to our boys overseas...[had] become nightmares," these organizations adopted other, often more far-reaching demands, including a federal housing ministry, a low-rental housing program, a low-cost homes scheme under DVA in urban rather than rural areas, a ceiling on real estate prices, a series of new controls and priorities on building materials, a training scheme for skilled tradesmen, a plan for non-profit accommodation for low-income World War I veterans, and a continuation of the national housing registry.

According to the veterans, the federal government was morally responsible for assisting in the rehabilitation of demobilized service personnel through the provision of housing as well as employment, health care, and education. Canadians, including elected members of government and bureaucrats, generally shared this view. To some extent the leaders of veterans' groups used the issue of moral responsibility to animate ex-service men and women on the housing question. Once aroused, veterans recently returned from active service overseas represented a social threat to some members of the Vancouver community, particularly after the widely reported V-E Day riots in Halifax.

As well,
some veterans took advantage of the housing controversy for their own political purposes. Jack Henderson, a president of the Canadian Legion's provincial command in the mid-1940s, ran as a Non-Partisan Association-endorsed candidate for school board in the 1944 civic elections and as a Liberal candidate in Vancouver East in the 1945 federal general election. James Sinclair was known as the Liberal "soldier M. P." for North Vancouver. Many LPP members also participated in veterans' organizations to pursue their party's political objectives.

The Citizens' Rehabilitation Council of Greater Vancouver also concerned itself with the immediate problem of re-establishing demobilized armed forces personnel. It represented a diversity of groups in the city – business, professional, social welfare, labour, government, veterans, and church. Not surprisingly, its membership overlapped with that of other groups like the veterans' organizations and the Vancouver Housing Association. In June 1944, Mrs. Laura Selman of the national housing registry described the veterans' shelter problem to the Rehabilitation Council, which then set up a housing committee chaired by former Conservative cabinet minister, H. H. Stevens. The Council endorsed rehabilitation not only out of "a sense of gratitude" to veterans but "because Canada's future stability and progress depended upon the combined effort of government and people in removing causes of dissatisfaction and unrest."

While warning the prime
minister and the public of the potential danger for social unrest in the city's housing situation, it assisted Vancouver City Council and the federal government in settling their differences over solutions to the short-term housing problem. Their anxiety about social disorder led the Rehabilitation Council members to think largely in terms of temporary remedies.

At its provincial and national conventions, in its election manifestos, and in its publications, the CCF committed itself to a long-range, comprehensive, planned, and need-oriented national housing program much as it had in the 1930s. Its program was very much like the one recommended by the Curtis report. It also drew upon the section of the British Columbia Post-War Rehabilitation Council report dedicated to planning and housing that called for a provincial authority responsible for these matters, enabling legislation for the authorities, federal subsidies or loans for municipal housing schemes, and adjustments to the NHA to subsidize low-rental projects. The CCF's program recognized the relationship between housing and planning, called for federal, provincial, and municipal housing authorities, required federal funding, advocated low-rental housing and slum clearance, supported private home ownership, co-operative housing, and home improvement, recommended priorities on supplies for low wage-earners, and proposed research into new materials and methods of construction. Moreover, the party typically advanced
its program with boldness: at its 13th provincial convention meeting in Vancouver, it delivered a "slashing attack" on the laxness of all three governments in failing to grapple with Canada's "number one emergency," the housing "famine."

In the 1940s, the CCF in Vancouver relied upon elected members at all three governmental levels to advance its housing program - Dorothy Steeves, Laura Jamieson, Grace MacInnis, Ernest Winch, Harold Winch, and Grant MacNeil in Victoria and Angus MacInnis in Ottawa. MacNeil, who had lived penniless in a waterfront shack in the early 1930s, argued for low-rental housing and appeared at eviction rallies, Angus MacInnis lobbied in Ottawa in aid of veterans' and public housing, and Ernest Winch promoted seniors' projects before many other individuals and groups. Carrying on the fight for social housing initiated by Helena Gutteridge, CCF women in particular vigorously promoted improvements in residential conditions. Beginning before the war, Steeves continually raised the shelter issue in the provincial legislature and later served as a member of the British Columbia Post-War Rehabilitation Council. Jamieson established co-operative houses for single working women during the war, and afterwards, as a City Council member, she urged establishment of a local housing authority. Grace MacInnis presented the party's housing policy in her writings and in her speeches to public meetings and debates and to the legislature.
The LPP advocated policies on housing not very much different from those of the CCF. In particular, it supported low-rental housing projects assisted by federal funding, local housing authorities, slum clearance, and a national housing ministry. Unlike the CCF, the LPP employed more aggressive, militant tactics, especially at the civic level. In 1944 and 1945, party members like John McPeake and Elgin Ruddell were instrumental in forming the "5000 Homes Now!" Committee and the Citizens' Emergency Housing Committee. Ruddell was later an energetic member of the Vancouver Housing Association. The LPP initiated public rallies and picket lines at scenes of eviction. As well, during the 1940s, its members gained positions of leadership in major British Columbia unions and the Vancouver Labor Council. All of these organizations agitated for improvements in housing conditions. Some union leaders, including McPeake of the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers and Harold Pritchett of the International Woodworkers of America, also led protest activities. As well, party members who were veterans joined the New Veterans', Hastings East, University, and other branches of the Canadian Legion, although a movement to expel them began late in 1946 in British Columbia.

Despite the similarity of LPP and CCF answers to the housing problem, the two political parties could not act together on the issue. At the national level, the LPP wished to form a popular left-wing front with the CCF, but the
democratic socialists rejected such a coalition. Hostility over this matter, as well as bitterness over struggles for control of the British Columbia unions, extended into the local housing controversy. For example, CCF member E. S. Scanlon withdrew from the "5000 Homes Now!" Committee because the LPP had infiltrated the organization and made it into a "political football," while McPeake denied Scanlon's charges and asserted that the group was "broadly representative" of the public; in addition, Angus MacInnis refused to participate in the "5000 Homes Now!" meetings.

Like the two left-wing political parties, the VHA directed its efforts toward resolving the long-term housing problem, although it certainly recommended immediate solutions for the post-war emergency. The group disbanded during the war, but the return of P. R. U. Stratton from overseas service resulted in its quiet revival in October 1945. By the following March, it hosted a conference for 100 delegates representing 54 local organizations. Thereafter, it maintained a constant, effective lobby with all levels of government and worked for the development of a national organization to press Ottawa for a federal low-rental scheme. While influenced by the Curtis report, the VHA tended to emphasize public housing and slum clearance more than the rest of the proposed comprehensive program. It demanded the consolidation of all housing and planning activities in one federal ministry, the creation of local authorities for the construction and the administration of low-income pro-
jects, and federal subsidization to reduce rental charges on units in schemes undertaken by local housing authorities and limited dividend corporations. As well, it advocated that, if Ottawa refused to take the initiative, the municipalities should approach provincial governments to request federal financial assistance. In March 1947, it launched a campaign for federal funding and legislation to create a local housing authority for a low-rental project. The VHA argued for appropriate accommodation for senior citizens and single working women as well as for low-income households in general. Although, on the whole, concerns about the need for low-cost housing motivated the VHA membership, the participation of some individual members furthered their professional or political interests. For politicians like Grace MacInnis or Elgin Ruddell, the VHA complemented and reinforced CCF and LPP positions on housing. Moreover, the VHA advanced the professional careers and interests of some of its members like Jocelyn Davidson, a regional National Housing Administration and CMHC official, and Leonard Marsh, a University of British Columbia professor following the war. Indeed, in the late 1940s, the VHA's objective of redeveloping Strathcona lay behind a major housing survey undertaken by Marsh and sponsored by the University.

A wide range of community groups and labour organizations that represented both working- and middle-class interests supported the drive for action led by the veterans, the Rehabilitation Council, the CCF, the LPP, and the VHA.
Many of these groups had sustained the 1930s social housing campaign. Labour organizations included the Vancouver and District Trades and Labor Council, the Vancouver Labor Council, and a long list of locals. Broad community support came from church, women's, service, professional, and welfare organizations. The groups participated in the housing campaign by independently lobbying all three governments and by supporting the Rehabilitation Council or the VHA.

Reporting by local and national newspapers and by journals brought the housing issue to public attention and cultivated a widespread sentiment for change. It also demanded and offered solutions. The Sun, the Daily Province, and the News-Herald in Vancouver published stories, editorials, and articles on all aspects of the residential situation. Similarly, articles in popular national magazines like Maclean's and Saturday Night, professional and business journals like Canadian Business and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal, and political and labour publications like the CCF News, the Pacific Advocate (Tribune), and the Trades and Labor Congress Journal covered housing conditions and very often suggested answers to difficulties. Some government officials blamed protests on inflammatory press coverage. In fact, the local press and popular and serious journals together increased public awareness of the shelter problem and generated constructive responses to it.
Public protests about the housing question went to federal, provincial, and municipal governments. The Prime Minister and the Ministers of Finance, Munitions (Reconstruction) and Supply, National Defence, and Pensions and National Health (Veterans Affairs), the Wartime Prices and Trade Board chairman, and the Interdepartmental Housing Committee received letters, resolutions, telegrams, and delegations of officials from Vancouver organizations. The same groups also sent letters and delegations to the provincial government and the City Council, which in turn exerted pressure upon the federal government. In addition, CCF Members made demands upon the British Columbia Legislative Assembly, and federal ministers requested action from each other. Moreover, internal reports went directly from local offices in Vancouver to top WPTB officials. Finally, federal officials and ministers directly confronted the regional housing issue by reading critical editorials in Vancouver newspapers. The protests ultimately reached federal Finance Minister J. L. Ilsley and Munitions and Supply Minister C. D. Howe for decision-making on emergency policy: Prime Minister W. L. M. King remained indifferent to the housing question and delegated responsibility to his two senior ministers.

At the municipal level, City Council felt pressure from within the civic bureaucracy to make changes in by-laws or policy affecting housing but often refused owing directly or indirectly to the shortages in accommodation. For exam-
ple, despite a drive by a special committee, the medical officer, and industry to remove waterfront shacks, Council imposed a moratorium on evictions because of the unavailability of alternate shelter. Similarly, it decided to wait until post-war congestion subsided before introducing a housing standards by-law that a special committee's considered necessary following the Chief Sanitary Officer's lodging house survey. As well, in response to the urging of the Town Planning Commission, building inspector, and chief fire warden, Council rejected a request from apartment owners and builders to make a by-law change that would augment the allowable amount of suite space in basements: the existence of Wartime Prices and Trade Board Order No. 200, which superseded all civic by-laws, made conversion possible in any case. Moreover, in 1943, on the Town Planning Commission's recommendation, the City followed the provincial and federal example and set up a post-war housing committee comprised of civic officials and community representatives to advise on reconstruction matters like low-cost accommodation, urban rehabilitation, new suburbs, housing standards, and construction.

Experiencing the full impact of controls on building materials, rents, and evictions and of competition from government in supplying homes, groups representing the housing industry's interests frequently opposed the efforts of local activists and advocated proposals for increased private sector construction operations. National organiza-
tions like the Canadian Construction Association, the National House Builders' Association, and the Dominion Mortgage and Investments Association and regional ones like the British Columbia Building Contractors' Association, the Mortgage and Trust Companies Association of British Columbia, the Associated Property Owners, and the Apartment and Rooming House Operators directed delegations, briefs, and resolutions to all three governments. As well, individual companies like Quality Homes Corporation and Vancouver Titles Limited petitioned the city and federal governments for assistance in building low-cost homes similar to that given to WHL with respect to tax sale lots, services, and priorities: their lack of success only heightened their hostility toward the crown company.

Following the housing campaign of the previous decade, activism faded between 1940 and 1943 but never actually died. The December 1939 civic election resulted in Helena Gutteridge's defeat and in a resounding Non-Partisan Association victory. Despite the efforts of A. J. Harrison, the civic secretary of zoning matters, to explain the special housing committee's function, the new right-wing Council did not re-appoint what it perceived to be a troublesome body in January 1941. Still, the activist forces, including Gutteridge and Harrison, regrouped in the Town Planning Commission's office in mid-April that year to continue the struggle for social housing as a committee of the Welfare Council of Greater Vancouver.
(previously the Council of Social Agencies). The Housewives' League and Consumers' Research Council, both communist organizations, continued to send delegations and letters to City Council about low-rental schemes and other issues. City Council ignored the shelter problem in its committee structure until 1943 when it created a post-war housing committee that for awhile remained the focus of its efforts to deal with declining residential conditions.

Beginning in 1944, several local committees and organizations emerged to press for action on the housing question. In March, the Consumers' Council sponsored the "5000 Homes Now!" Committee involving about 50 Vancouver organizations. Dominated by LPP members like the chair, John McPeake, the Committee injected energy into the new housing campaign by holding conferences and presenting briefs to Victoria and Ottawa until its disbandment in September. As the war ended in May 1945, the Welfare Council formed a Citizens' Emergency Housing Committee to coordinate the efforts of several community organizations. As well, the Citizens' Rehabilitation Council of Greater Vancouver embraced the housing cause in 1944 and took up the cry for the construction of 5,000 units. Finally, when the VHA regrouped late in 1945, it merged with the Citizens' Emergency Housing Committee to secure a strong social housing movement.

Between 1944 and 1949, Vancouver's activists initiated a series of protests to obtain from the federal government
suspension of evictions, construction of additional affordable veterans' housing units by WHL and CMHC, provision of temporary shelter for homeless ex-servicemen, and continuation of rent controls. They also supported independently devised veterans' and seniors' schemes, and many actively pursued a public housing project. Their struggles had an unmistakable impact on the civic and the senior governments, in particular Ottawa, and achieved many concrete results.

Although expulsions actually started before 1944, the threat of mass evictions under Wartime Prices and Trade Board regulations ignited agitation about the local housing situation early that year. Because the Board had banned winter evictions, huge numbers of notices-to-vacate beginning 1 May 1944 accumulated in Vancouver and in other major cities. More than half of the notices involved servicemen's families. Tenants faced with eviction could find little alternative shelter. MPs in the House of Commons brought the problem to the government's attention but to no avail: the WPTB especially believed that the press and the politicians of other parties had inflamed and distorted the situation. In Vancouver (and elsewhere), a militant campaign for an evictions suspension commenced in the summer of 1944. At first, the Rehabilitation Council, labour and veterans' organizations, and City Council sent resolutions requesting an evictions freeze to the federal government. As the evictions grew in number and as the government failed to react to representations, the
LPP and the veterans adopted more aggressive tactics. In mid-July, the LPP organized a street rally outside the home of an evicted serviceman's wife. Shortly afterwards, picketing Legion members halted the eviction of a widow whose son was serving overseas. An LPP delegation visited British Columbia Attorney-General R. L. Maitland in Victoria to protest the situation of an evicted Vancouver family forced to live in a tent. Despite representations for action on expulsions to itself and J. L. Ilsley from Maitland, the WPTB refused to respond and suggested amendments to provincial legislation to give tenants greater security of tenure.

As congestion increased and as tension began to build about evictions expected to occur in 1945, the WPTB considered ways of defusing a potentially disorderly situation. In December 1944 and February 1945, two orders-in-council extended the Board's powers and imposed emergency shelter regulations previously used for Halifax on congested areas like Vancouver, New Westminster, Victoria, Ottawa, Toronto, Hull, and Hamilton. Under the regulations, the Board appointed an administrator with sweeping powers to take possession of residential premises for use as emergency shelter, to forbid the unnecessary migration of servicemen's families, to centralize the work of national housing registries in the administrator's office, to prohibit demolitions of dwellings, to carry out surveys of local housing conditions, to launch publicity campaigns to locate additional
housing, and to issue permits to rent within congested areas. Upon its institution in January 1946, CMHC absorbed the Emergency Shelter Administration. Ottawa revoked the regulations late in 1948.

In Vancouver, the Board appointed retired Air Vice-
161 Marshal Leigh F. Stevenson as Emergency Housing "czar."
City Council reluctantly supported the imposition of regulations. Owners of large homes unwilling to share groaned, the civic housing committee approved, and disheartened house hunters "cheered" the new controls. In mid-February 1945, the Administration opened its doors in downtown Vancouver. A "happy appointment to a difficult position," Stevenson immediately began to press for conversion of unoccupied army barracks and the old Hotel Vancouver into temporary shelter for service personnel families, but the Emergency Shelter Administration in Ottawa initially refused to accept his recommendations. However, Stevenson succeeded in taking over Sea Island Camp No. 1, which WHL and the Pacific Command had transformed into housing for servicemen's families. Stevenson remained as Administrator until November 1945 when his aide, J. G. Walker, replaced him.

Despite emergency shelter regulations, the evictions increased. When about 2,000 Vancouver households received notices-to-vacate between May and October 1945, protesters used the street rally and the picket line with greater effectiveness. Both the LPP and the CCF organized rallies frequently attended by two or three hundred neighbours,
activists, and MLAs like Grace MacInnis and Grant MacNeil. For two weeks in July 1945, an Anti-Evictions Committee stopped all expulsions by posting eight picketers at five houses for nine or twelve hours a day. As social tension mounted in Vancouver and in other cities faced with the same problem, the WPTB held an emergency meeting. On 25 July 1945, it issued Order No. 537 applicable to congested areas across Canada that suspended notices-to-vacate in self-contained dwellings, stayed eviction proceedings, and prevented the issue of further notices. Although evictions seriously affected other cities like Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal, and Hamilton, information appended to the order noted that the Board took protest wires from Vancouver into special consideration before implementing the freeze. Unfortunately, the suspension order had its faults. For example, it kept some property owners with large families in congested quarters because they could not reoccupy homes let to tenants. As well, some evictions following successful appeals by landlords did occur, and the LPP, the groups and unions that it dominated, and some veterans' organizations continued to disrupt or to prevent some expulsions.

In May 1944, the federal government initially responded to the evictions situation and the protests not by altering the rental regulations but by expanding WHL's operations to furnish housing for soldiers' families. It directed the crown company to build additional, permanent, better quality houses. Acting Prime Minister J. L. Ralston,
the Minister of National Defence, hinted at the new program on April 27 in the House of Commons. At a 2 May meeting, representatives of WHL, the Finance Department, and the Munitions and Supply Department finally decided to initiate a program of permanent housing for servicemen. Between 1944 and 1946, WHL completed 10,144 additional units. Later, after the January 1947 integration of WHL and CMHC, a fully developed program continued to build houses across Canada. By 1949, the total number of veterans' dwellings completed by CMHC amounted to 20,159 units. According to John Bacher, the impact of the agitation over evictions also contributed to the creation of CMHC, the initiation of Housing Enterprises projects, the stimulation of the production of house building supplies, and the extension in August 1945 of Emergency Shelter Administration to the whole country.

In Vancouver in 1944-1945, protests over evictions procured 1,200 WHL houses. Fearful of social unrest, Rehabilitation Council representatives attended negotiations between City Council and WHL for the construction of 200 permanent dwellings on solid foundations and convinced the City to conclude two separate agreements with the crown company despite unfavourable financial terms with respect to the eventual sale of the houses, the loss of tax revenue, and the transfer of lots to the crown for a nominal price. According to one Council member, the WHL project was a "Santa Claus scheme from which the city would get nothing back."
The City argued that it was losing thousands of dollars in tax revenue on WHL housing: it received $24-30 a year for each unit in lieu of taxes. In addition, it held that inadequate compensation for the future sale of lots and houses would jeopardize its sinking fund. The Building Contractors' Association, which later called the WHL operation a "shack-town rehabilitation scheme" with top priorities in supplies that provided rental homes without basements to ex-servicemen who did not want them, opposed the scheme, but labour and veterans' organizations, church representatives, and community groups exerted pressure on Council for adoption of the agreement. Agreeably surprised with the construction standard and general appearance of the new WHL homes, the Rehabilitation Council subsequently pressed City Council and Ottawa for more units. Impelled by increasingly militant eviction protests, C. D. Howe offered an additional 1,000 WHL units to Vancouver's mayor on the very day of the WPTB's freeze announcement, and City Council had little choice but to agree to the offer.

WHL's architects, McCarter and Nairne, supervised the construction of these Burkeville-type houses built on solid foundations and situated on serviced lots scattered between Main and Fraser Streets, Broadway Avenue, and Marine Drive (Figure 28). On 22 May 1945, a veteran's family moved into the first completed home of WHL's permanent housing program at 5149 Elgin Street.

In addition, the federal government eventually
Figure 28
Wartime Housing Limited house type H21, Vancouver,
photographed ca. 1947

Source: City of Vancouver Archives, 150-1
introduced to Vancouver (and other cities across Canada) temporary accommodation for households threatened with eviction. The Emergency Shelter Administration took over Sea Island Camp No. 1 following its establishment in 1945. In July, the gravity of the evictions situation caused Emergency Shelter to request Vancouver City Council to operate Camp No. 2. Under pressure, Council reluctantly took over the camp in August and administered it for evicted families through the Social Services Committee and Social Services Administrator J. Chambers. The conversion and the operation of the camp was a financial and managerial headache for the City. The camp needed expensive renovations, commanded low rents, required the provision of services, and constantly encountered landlord-tenant problems like rental arrears. Moreover, arrangements relating to services, schools, and social allowance payments had to be worked out with a testy Richmond municipal government. The City finally hired a realty company, Boultbee, Sweet, and Company Limited, to look after the camp’s management. It attempted to extricate itself from the Sea Island operation in the fall of 1946 but did not succeed in doing so for another year: it returned the camp to Emergency Shelter, which by then had become a division of CMHC and which operated Camp No. 2 until early in 1949. Its unhappy experience discouraged the City from buying other Sea Island camps offered to it by Emergency Shelter.

In 1945-1946, agitation centred around the use of
the old Hotel Vancouver as a temporary shelter for homeless Vancouverites. Protesters realized that the elegant building that graced the corner of Georgia and Granville Streets would soon stand empty after wartime use by the Department of National Defence. The present Hotel Vancouver at Georgia and Burrard had replaced the original building in 1939, and the owners, the Canadian National Railway and the Canadian Pacific Railway, contemplated selling and demolishing the old hotel. In March 1945, Leigh Stevenson officially recommended the hostel plan to the Wartime Prices and Trade Board. Thereafter, discussions about the fate of the hotel involved the Finance Department and the Emergency Shelter Administration in Ottawa, the Victoria MP, R. H. Mayhew, the Mayor, J. W. Cornett, the special civic committee set up to consider the issue, the Rehabilitation Council, and the president of the CPR. Issues in the debate included the allocation of responsibility for leasing, refurbishing, financing, and managing the hotel, the municipal property tax revenue, and the building's suitability as family accommodation. However, no solution seemed possible after endless negotiations. Neither the City nor Ottawa wanted the burden of the proposed hostel, and local organizations, WHL, and the army did not offer their services.

As the termination date of the federal government's lease for the old hotel approached, public agitation mushroomed. Representations to the government from com-
munity groups, veterans' organizations, trade unions, several British Columbia MPs, and the Rehabilitation Council met with no success, and finally the LPP began to adopt the more militant tactics of a veterans' picket around the old hotel at New Year's and a campsite and information picket on the nearby courthouse lawn (Figure 29). At last, on 26 January, LPP member and veteran Bob McEwen led an "occupying force" from the Canadian Legion's New Veterans' Branch into the lobby of the old hotel. Over the next few days, about 1,400 people "registered" at the hotel, although the majority did not stay there. A committee, the members of which came from all political persuasions, maintained a military-style discipline. "Vancouver [had] seen nothing like the veterans' occupation since the famous sit-down strike in the post office during the depression era. But this time there was no violence, no cracked heads."

As Vancouver MP and Veterans' Affairs Minister Ian Mackenzie pointed out to Finance Minister J. L. Ilsley, public opinion sided with the veterans, and federal officials made no attempt to eject them. The occupation forced a quick resolution of the issue. Mackenzie travelled to Vancouver to negotiate with the veterans, the City Council, the Rehabilitation Council, and the CPR. By 31 January, the CPR and the Rehabilitation Council had signed an agreement endorsed by all parties under which contributions from the City and the federal government, as well as the release of civil defence money, made possible the financial operation of the
Figure 29
Picket line outside the old Hotel Vancouver, 1946

Source: Pacific Tribune, 4 January 1946.
old hotel as a temporary hostel. With the financial risk minimized, the Rehabilitation Council agreed to lease the building and operate the hostel. The veterans vacated the premises on 1 February. The Rehabilitation Council opened the shelter two weeks later and managed it for between 1,000 and 1,200 members of veterans' families until 1948. By then, the railway companies had sold the property to the T. Eaton Company Limited. In 1949, Eaton's demolished the old hotel despite a campaign by some of the city's architects to preserve the heritage building.

In the fall of 1946, the Citizens' Rehabilitation Council followed up its move to operate the old Hotel Vancouver by indicating to Ottawa its willingness to run the Dunsmuir Hotel on the same basis. The Dunsmuir provided 52 family units and 57 singles ones for about 212 people. It remained a veterans' hostel until 1949 when the Salvation Army bought the building to shelter hard-up men.

The militancy of the occupation of the old Hotel Vancouver never completely deserted its tenants. Whenever the lease expiry date approached, they and the New Veterans' Branch resisted attempts to close the hostel. Furthermore, as early as May and June 1946, the tenants, supported by the New Veterans' Branch, protested to the Rehabilitation Council's management about rent increases of $2.50 per room per month. A year later, when another 10% raise occurred, some tenants staged a rent strike.
Thus, pressure to construct permanent housing for the old hotel's veterans quickly developed. In June 1947, their representatives insisted that they should not be thrown onto the streets of Vancouver when the Rehabilitation Council's lease finally expired in April 1948. They pressed City Council for more WHL housing, and, standing on downtown sidewalks, they circulated petitions demanding homes. Warning civic and federal authorities that eviction of the veterans from the old hotel would be impossible, the Rehabilitation Council, backed by the VHA and a variety of community, veterans, and labour organizations, interceded on behalf of the tenants and urged City Council and C. D. Howe to build additional WHL homes.

In fact, given the volatile social situation in Vancouver, both the City and Howe were prepared to enter into another agreement. However, in the first half of 1947, a deadlock developed between the two parties over agreement terms. Knowing that the federal government planned to sell WHL units to their occupants, Council desired a new, more favourable arrangement. At first, Howe and CMHC insisted on retaining the standard agreement used for other Canadian cities. In April, three Vancouver MPs, Angus MacInnis (CCF), James Sinclair (Liberal), and Cecil Merritt (Conservative), met with Howe and CMHC President David Mansur in Ottawa. Howe intimated at that time that he would consider a low-cost housing scheme for the old hotel veterans to be worked out following the 1 June deadline. Howe and
Mansur also had face-to-face discussions in Ottawa with Vancouver's ailing Mayor, Gerry McGeer, and later with Council member George Miller. Miller communicated a concrete proposal from CMHC to Council, which set up a special committee to negotiate with federal officials in Vancouver. Rejecting a City counter-proposal, David Mansur and CMHC preferred a revised agreement for building veterans' rental housing projects that gave the City a purchase price of $92 per 40 foot lot or $77 per 33 foot lot and an annual payment of $70-80 per unit in lieu of taxes. If the property were sold, the City could tax it at the normal rate, and unsold lots would return to it. The City was to hold a vested share of up to $600 in each sold house and a half of any accrued profit. As well, the City provided services to the project's limits, and CMHC supplied on-site services. Rents ranged from $27 to $37 per month for four-to six-room units. Encouraged by the Rehabilitation Council, City Council approved the development in principle in October, and CMHC received authority to enter the site on 1 December. The agreement worked out between Vancouver and CMHC later became the model for revised agreements with other municipalities across the country.

The project, called "Renfrew Heights," was located south and east of Grandview Highway and Renfrew Street on a site envisioned by City Council since 1945 for veterans' rental housing. The new subdivision consisted of about 600 one- or one-and-a-half-storey houses of eight
standard types of two-, three-, and four-bedroom designed under the direction of CMHC's chief architect, Sam Gitterman (Figures 30 and 31). Although the homes bore a strong resemblance to earlier war workers' and veterans' housing, in fact their high standard of design showed a marked improvement. The units rented from between $33 and $45. Most of the old hotel veterans moved directly into their new homes in the summer of 1948.

In September 1946, a squatting tactic copied from communist-led squatters' campaigns in Britain spread to Vancouver. About 1,500 people comprised mostly of war veterans and their families had moved into empty buildings in Kensington in London, and about 12,000 squatters had taken over army camps around the country. When Vancouver City Council refused to shoulder the responsibility for making available the Little Mountain barracks as veterans' emergency shelter, a Council member warned that ex-servicemen might squat in the camp much as they had occupied the old Hotel Vancouver. In response, the New Veterans' Branch claimed that it would take no direct action until all options were exhausted and until the buildings were threatened by demolition. At the same time, the Rehabilitation Council offered to operate Little Mountain as temporary shelter. In mid-September, the Vancouver Sun carried a story and a photograph of a protest march in London's Oxford Street by squatters demanding the authorized seizure of empty flats for living space. The next
Figure 30
Aerial view of Renfrew Heights, 1948

Source: Aero Surveys Limited/National Archives Canada, PA-148474
Figure 31

Renfrew Heights under construction, 1948

Source: Artray Limited/National Archives Canada,
PA-148473
day, two families, who had been living in cheap lodgings on Cordova Street, followed the example of the British squatters and occupied the Little Mountain huts without opposition from the army and with considerable public sympathy. A Sun editorial writer reflected that "the corporal who told Little Mountain squatters that he was glad to see them will not, we trust, be confined to barracks for saying what a lot of other Vancouver people had in mind." Additional support came from the Canadian Legion and the Fairview LPP Club, although the South Little Mountain Community Association worried that the squatters might "change the outlook of this residential district."

However, the federal government turned the Little Mountain huts over to the University of British Columbia for married veterans' student housing. Still, as squatters in Ottawa moved into empty barracks at Lansdowne Park (others later occupied vacant buildings in Montreal), the number of occupying Little Mountain families increased to eight and then to thirteen. The army cut off services and unsuccessfully banned further squatter households. When, by the end of September, the University took possession of the huts, it also reached an agreement with the squatters for sharing the premises until they found accommodation elsewhere. The University operated the camp until the crisis in veterans' student housing had passed despite disputes between the camp council and the city over rent increases due to higher assessments and inadequate services.
By September 1946, the University of British Columbia had taken advantage of federal funds available through the Emergency Shelter Administration to develop other camps as student veterans' housing. Acadia Camp, the former relief and military camp, accommodated 1,000 veterans and their families in three-room suites at $30 per month. Some sections at Acadia also provided for over 200 single students in dormitories, for many faculty families, including President Larry MacKenzie's, and for a group of seven households in trailers. Lulu Island Camp sheltered 32 married veterans, and 350 single men lived at Fort Camp on the university campus.

In May 1947, the Rehabilitation Council approached City Council with an offer to operate the huts lying behind Seaforth Armories as emergency shelter for veterans and their families. It received two $15,000 grants from the civic and federal governments to convert the huts into living space renting at about $25 per month per unit. With additional funding, the Rehabilitation Council gradually renovated more huts and increased the number of suites to 97. CMHC took over active management of Seaforth Village in June 1948.

Although they fulfilled a real need for housing, suites in the huts were not well-built. Late in 1948, poor wiring and inadequate fire precautions resulted in a series of fires. A tenants' union, supported by the New Veterans' Branch, submitted demands to CMHC for repairs and
for the allocation of Renfrew Heights homes to Seaforth households. As well, many observers, including the CCF's MP Rod Young and its civic candidate Grace MacInnis, publicly attributed a tragedy in which a young mother from the Village attempted to drown her two children partly to the living conditions in the huts and generally to the housing shortages. Consequently, by January 1949, CMHC started to move the Village's households with children into Renfrew Heights. It also fireproofed the huts.

In May 1948, still under pressure to provide more housing, City Council approached CMHC for another agreement to build more veterans' units similar to the ones in Renfrew Heights. It was prepared to furnish city-owned land near Fraserview Golf Course in South Vancouver between Marine Drive, Boundary Road, 54th Avenue, and Argyle Street. With a more favourable agreement in place and with a co-operative planning process involving CMHC representatives and city officials, the development of the new subdivision known as Fraserview proceeded smoothly in the fall of 1948. All parties approved in principle a plan that owed much to the work of an architect/planner originally from Britain, Alan Crossley, and signed an agreement in November. CMHC paid the City $175,000 for the property made up of tax sale land, part of Fraserview Golf Course, and purchased or expropriated privately held lots. This "workingman's Shaughnessy Heights" would supply 1,100 new rental homes for veterans.
However, events took a turn for the worse over the expropriation of property from owners who had not already sold to the City. Expropriation occurred with the understanding that the property would revert back to most owners when the site was resurveyed. Unfortunately, CMHC started work before completion of the expropriation process. Charges of high-handedness were both common and deserved. Some property owners fought expropriation by enlisting the support of five Vancouver MPs, by protesting through the Fraserview Property Owners Association, and by blocking the path of the bulldozers. CMHC responded by sending out a representative from Ottawa to settle the issue. By June 1949, it had let a contract to Biltmore Construction Company for the first 74 dwellings.

As Fraserview took shape, some residents, a few members of Council, and several Architectural Institute of British Columbia and Vancouver Builders' and Contractors' Association officials complained bitterly about the construction of a "future slum" and a "chicken coop project," about the "waste of public money," and about the strangling of private enterprise. Mayor Charles E. Thompson "barked" a reply that reminded them of the acute need for housing. He warned them of the "great injustice" that they did to CMHC by using Fraserview as "a cat's paw for the building trades to the discredit" of the crown corporation.

In January 1950, the first family moved in to their Fraserview bungalow from a one-room walk-up at Gore and
Hastings. Many observers saw the landscaped, fully-serviced project with its view south to the Fraser River as the largest and finest veterans' rental project in Canada. With a wide selection in exterior finishing, roof materials, and plans, the housing offered 238 variations on 34 bungalow types designed once again under CMHC's direction (Figure 32). Almost two-thirds of the units had basements. Homes rented between $33 and $45 a month.

In 1950, the City and CMHC initiated a second phase of development with additional homes, but work came to a halt early in 1951 when building costs rose 20%-30% owing to the Korean War. With only half of the projected 1,100 units built, City Council, the VHA supported by labour and veterans' organizations, the Vancouver Council of Women, and Members of Parliament Donald Fleming and Arthur Laing pressured Ottawa to complete Fraserview. The minister responsible for housing, Robert Winters, asserted that the project would be finished, and, beginning in late 1951 and continuing into 1952, CMHC called tenders and let contracts for blocks of the remaining houses. The "no vacancy" sign for the "largest veterans' housing subdivision in Canada" finally went up in October 1953 when the last five families moved into their homes.

In 1947, two local promoters proposed a private scheme to accommodate the veterans lodged in the old Hotel Vancouver and the Dunsmuir Hotel. G. K. Gosling and E. J. Barrie, both Royal Canadian Air Force veterans, offered
Figure 32

Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation

small house design used in Fraserview, ca. 1949

to purchase, transport, and situate as permanent rental housing on city land near Boundary Road some hutments from Bremerton, Washington State, that the United States government had put up for sale to non-profit organizations. They asked City Council for a property lease at a rental sufficient to cover taxes, and they approached C. D. Howe for some federal financial aid and for assistance with custom duties. The plan also required a loan from a lending institution and advance payments from tenants.

Despite support from the old Hotel Vancouver veterans, the Dominion and Provincial Commands of the Canadian Legion, the LPP, a City Council member, the CCF provincial leader, Harold Winch, and three Vancouver MPs, the promoters of the Bremerton plan met with a negative response from Howe, from Mayor Gerry McGeer, and from other Council members who pointed out that the City's charter gave it no power to import and rent houses and who remembered the financial misadventures of the Better Housing Scheme. Howe and CMHC's David Mansur unsuccessfully offered Emergency Shelter funds if the City or the Rehabilitation Council agreed to operate the housing project. In reality, Howe believed that WHL/CMHC could build better temporary housing for a lower price. He was also waiting to negotiate a new agreement with the City for the Renfrew Heights veterans' rental homes.

Although Howe turned "thumbs down" on the Bremerton scheme, some hutments eventually arrived in British Columbia under other sponsorship. A few huts went by barge to Port
Alberni, to H. R. Macmillan's logging interests on Vancouver Island, and to a senior citizens' project in Vancouver at 254 East 5th Avenue and Cassiar Street.

By the end of the war, many housing activists recognized the plight of senior citizens in finding affordable, adequate accommodation. In 1944, Burnaby's CCF MLA, E. E. Winch, suggested two types of residences: cottage units for those caring for themselves and community living for others requiring some degree of non-institutional care. However, Winch's ideas were not immediately put into practice. In 1947, the New Vista Society, an organization which sheltered women recently discharged from the provincial mental institution at Essondale and one in which Winch played a major role, sold its halfway house to the British Columbia government and used its capital to inaugurate a seniors' housing scheme in Burnaby with the help of provincial grants, CMHC loans, and a municipal land grant. Winch, a bricklayer and carpenter-builder, assisted in the construction of a cottage development that opened in 1949. New Vista later added more bungalows and apartments. As well, the Danish Community opened Dania Home in North Burnaby in 1945 with private funds. It later extended the development using provincial grants and loans. Under Hugh Dobson's influence, the British Columbia Conference of the United Church of Canada began to wrestle in 1946 with the seniors' housing problem and worked diligently to open its Fair Haven project in South Burnaby in 1951 with
privately raised funds and provincial grants. Finally, under the guidance of New Westminster City Council, a seniors' scheme opened early in 1948 near Royal Columbian Hospital.

Seniors themselves began to take action. Between 1945 and 1947, the Old Age Pensioners' Organization Foundation Branch No. 1 formed a Senior Citizens' Homes Association to take advantage of low-rental provisions in the 1944 NHA and requested the City Council, the British Columbia government, the National Housing Administration, and CMHC for assistance in implementing a project. The City's coolness towards the proposal forced the Association to turn for help to the Lions Club of Vancouver. The Lions raised money on tag days, purchased land in the Renfrew area for seniors' housing, and began construction in May 1947.

In 1949, the proposed removal of rent controls generated another strong public reaction. After the war, owing to acute shortages in rental accommodation, the federal government transferred controls from the jurisdiction of the War Measures Act to the Transitional Powers Act and initiated a policy of "gradual and orderly decontrol." Property owners pressed for and received increases in rents, but they failed to obtain the withdrawal of controls. Late in 1948, the federal government offered to keep controls for another year and then turn them over to individual provinces willing to assume responsibility for them. As 1949 drew to a close, the CCF administration
in Saskatchewan was the only provincial government eager to take over controls. Moreover, when Ontario landlords took to court the issue of the constitutionality of federal controls, Ottawa decided to refer the question to the Supreme Court of Canada. There, the federal and Ontario governments, the Canadian Congress of Labor, the Canadian Legion, and a counsel for tenants stated the case in favour of the continuation of controls, and the Quebec government and the counsel for property owners argued the position in support of removal. Thereafter, a debate between the supporters of the tenants and of the landlords broke out across the country. In British Columbia, landlords and realtors belonging to groups like the Associated Property Owners of Vancouver, the Apartment and Rooming House Operators' Association, and the Vancouver Real Estate Board faced opposition from organizations like the VHA, the Vancouver Council of Women, the Canadian Legion, the Salvation Army, the LPP, the CCF, and various labour, tenants', church, women's, and pensioners' groups. Because the province could take over controls, the Premier was flooded with representations from individuals and organizations on both sides of the issue. However, the British Columbia government was not initially prepared to introduce rent control legislation. On 1 March 1950, a Supreme Court decision approved federal controls, and Ottawa announced that it would keep them until 30 April 1951. Still under pressure from the public, Premier Byron Johnson
assumed responsibility for rent controls on 1 May 1951
under the "Leasehold Regulations Act" and delegated their
administration to the Rentals Control Branch, Department of Labour. The Social Credit government of W. A. C. Bennett finally terminated provincial controls on 31 March 1955. By the mid-1950s, although they expressed concern about tenants with low fixed incomes, the VHA and other groups no longer opposed their removal because "in their present form controls are inequitable in their incidence." Instead, they unsuccessfully proposed a civic rent "tribunal" for appeals.

Throughout all the agitation over rent controls, evictions, emergency shelter, and veterans' rental housing, the VHA, the CCF, and the LPP kept alive the goal of achieving a permanent low-income housing program fostered in the depression years. The arrival in 1946 of Leonard Marsh, "Canada's most outstanding authority on housing problems," to teach at the University of British Columbia and his subsequent demonstration survey of Strathcona reinforced the drive to correct the degenerating housing conditions in the downtown core. Following his work with the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in Europe, Marsh joined the University of British Columbia's Department of Architecture recently set up by Fred Lassere, and he later moved to the School of Social Work and the Faculty of Education. He was one of the bright, dynamic scholars
brought to the University under Larry MacKenzie's able administration during post-war expansion. Marsh began speaking publicly on the housing issue, became active as a VHA director in the company of Grace MacInnis, P. R. U. Stratton, and others, and participated in the newly formed Community Planning Association of Canada together with Lasserre, Stratton, and local architects N. E. Pratt and C. B. K. Van Norman. His wife, Betty Marsh, a journalist, became the VHA's secretary.

Marsh began his housing survey in the summer of 1947 with the help of UBC students and of CMHC and civic funding. The survey, based on extensive questionnaire distribution and data assembly and analysis, represented the most scientific Vancouver housing study to date. UBC published the results and the recommendations in a 1950 report. Marsh proposed the gradual clearance of the area lying between Gore, Campbell, Hastings, and Prior Avenues and the construction of public housing for displaced households; he believed that Strathcona was still a healthy community, not a slum, and that redevelopment at that time would preserve the neighbourhood. He suggested that the cheap hotels of the area north of Hastings were beyond improvement, that the area should be made into an industrial zone, and that the tenants could be accommodated in the new public housing. However, Strathcona residents reacted angrily to distorted press coverage calling their neighbourhood a "square mile of vice" and firmly rejected any suggestion of
wholesale redevelopment. Eventually, public housing was built on city land on Campbell Avenue and on cleared land between Pender and Keefer Streets.

Members of political parties other than the CCF and the LPP increasingly became advocates of public housing. Although it refused to renew the special housing committee a few years earlier, by March 1945, the Non-Partisan Association-dominated Vancouver City Council had endorsed a Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities proposal for low-rental housing built and operated by a local authority and subsidized by municipalities (20%) and senior governments (80%). As long as the City did not have to carry a heavy financial burden, it was prepared to participate in social housing projects. Council members like Halford D. Wilson and George C. Miller and Mayors like Gerry McGeer and Charles E. Thompson, all NPA members, supported the notion of low-rental schemes with senior government assistance.

Furthermore, at the provincial level, the new Liberal Party leader, Byron Johnson, once enthusiastic about only mortgage-assisted home ownership schemes, finally drew the Province into a public housing program in 1949-1950. The shift in thinking may be attributed to a recognition of the need for such housing during the acute wartime and post-war shortages and to the prospect of the removal of risk-taking through federal financial participation. For Johnson, and possibly for the others, another, more overtly political reason existed. Dividing British Columbia politics into two polarized
camps representing "free enterprise" and "individual freedom" on the part of the governing coalition of Liberals and Conservatives and "socialism with all its regimentation" on the part of the CCF, Johnson attempted to garner electoral support in the middle ground by depicting himself as a social reformer in a free market economy and by threatening voters with a "red scare." He claimed that "what is wanted in this province is free enterprise with a high degree of social security rather than an experiment in socialism."

By 1947, the pressure at the national level and in cities like Toronto and Vancouver for low-rental housing became more intense. The Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities submitted a request for federally subsidized public housing to C. D. Howe, who asked the Federation to draft a plan for such a program. Howe later decided that the proper time to introduce such a plan still had not arrived. In Vancouver in 1948, at the urging of the VHA, the Town Planning Commission, a wide variety of community organizations, and the CCF member of City Council, Laura Jamieson, the City decided to establish a local housing authority if the senior governments instituted a low-rental scheme as the CFMM proposed. In December, following discussions with the provincial Cabinet and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities executive, Council began to consider the legal steps necessary to obtain a charter amendment to create an authority. In 1949, despite the opposition of the British Columbia Building Contractors' Association
and the Associated Property Owners of Vancouver but with provincial approval, Council appointed a temporary local housing authority until Ottawa and Victoria devised a 284 public housing scheme. Members of this authority included two activists, the Rehabilitation Council's Major Oscar Erickson and the VHA's P. R. U. Stratton, as well as a Council member as chair and two civic officials. The authority soon recommended two sites for future developments, 285 including one at Ontario Street and 33rd Avenue.

Still under pressure from the CFMM in 1949, CMHC's Mansur and the new Minister responsible for housing, Robert H. Winters, considered a variety of options for producing more low-cost homes including a second mortgage scheme and 286 a public housing program. They finally opted for the latter. In September, they introduced an amendment to the 1944 NHA for a 75%-25% federal-provincial partnership in subsidizing the construction and the deficits of public housing projects. Although at first he apparently preferred a mortgage reduction program to stimulate low-cost home ownership, the British Columbia Premier, Byron Johnson, adopted the proposal for low-rental housing after discussions with Winters and Mansur in Ottawa and Victoria. In mid-December, Johnson, Mansur, several provincial Cabinet ministers and deputy ministers, and J. A. Jones, CMHC's Regional Manager in Vancouver, conducted discussions about housing conditions with delegations from various municipalities in- 290 cluding one from Vancouver headed by Charles Thompson.
On 12 December, as the wartime decade ended, the City of Vancouver and the British Columbia government had agreed in principle on a public housing scheme.

By late 1949, Vancouver's social housing movement had thus achieved the promise of a low-rental project. Early in 1950, the City initiated such a scheme under the new federal legislation for a seven-acre Little Mountain site between 33rd and 37th Avenues and Main and Ontario Streets immediately east of Queen Elizabeth Park. It approached Everett Brown, the recently appointed provincial housing commissioner reporting to the Minister of Finance in Victoria, and CMHC. The three parties involved in the federal-provincial partnership worked out plans and an agreement in the following months. A final agreement was ready by 1 November. It provided for the conveyance of land and the provision of services by the City, the payment for land and services by CMHC, the sharing of capital costs by Ottawa and British Columbia, the creation of a local housing authority to manage the housing project, and the federal, provincial, and municipal contributions towards operating costs on a 75-12 1/2-12 1/2 % basis.

Unfortunately, soaring prices owing to the Korean War delivered a "death blow" to these initial plans.

Still, work on the Little Mountain project continued. CMHC decided that maximum income levels allowable in the project and rents would have to be raised to meet capital and operating costs and that therefore households of lowest
income would not be accepted. Regional Director T. B. Pickersgill also suggested that in order to cut costs the architects of Little Mountain housing, Sharp and Thompson, Berwick, Pratt, should redesign the original masonry structures to resemble the Housing Enterprises frame and stucco apartments and row houses on West Broadway and West Fourth Avenues. The proposal for the project had the support of the VHA, labour, most Council members, CMHC, and the new British Columbia Premier, W. A. C. Bennett, and his Finance Minister, Einar Gunderson. Yet it met with vigorous opposition from the developers C. B. Balfour and N. W. Hullah, the builder J. S. Wood, a few City Council members, the Associated Property Owners, the Vancouver Real Estate Board, the Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce, the Vancouver Building Contractors' Association, the Suburban Property Owners' Association, and, in an about-face, the editors of the Sun and the Province. They attacked Little Mountain in the Building and Town Planning Committee and in City Council because it represented "socialized, subsidized housing," because it would not serve the lowest income households supported by social allowances or old age pensions, because it asked citizens to subsidize the rents of other moderately well-off citizens, because it had not passed through the referendum process, because private enterprise could provide low-rental housing under the NHA, and because it would depreciate the value of surrounding properties. The conflict continued well into 1953 despite the letting of
a contract to Pyke and White Construction Limited.

When Council gave Little Mountain its final approval in June 1953, bulldozers moved onto the site, and construction of 40 one-bedroom apartments, 92 two-bedroom apartments, 44 three-bedroom apartments, and 48 three-bedroom row houses started in earnest (Figures 33 and 34). After consultation with the City and CMHC, the Province appointed the members of the Vancouver Housing Authority, including three activists from the 1940s housing movement - Oscar Erickson, Laura Selman, and P. R. U. Stratton. Sixteen families moved into Little Mountain on 1 April 1954, and the remainder had settled into their apartments and row houses by Hallowe'en. Subsequently, the anti-public housing forces continued to oppose all proposals for additional low-rental schemes.

In the end, Little Mountain started off its existence as a mixed income project. Of its 224 households, 10% received under $150 a month; 35% ranged between $150 and $225, and 60% had incomes between $225 and $275. CMHC permitted minimum family incomes of $115-155 and maximum ones of $290-325. Indeed, the Corporation and its president, Stewart Bates, who replaced David Mansur in 1954, approved of the mixed income approach as it tended not to ghettoize the project's poorest tenants. Rents averaged $45 and spread from $25 to $80. When in the mid-1950s the City increased its social allowance for rentals, welfare recipients began to move into the housing. Pensioners of
Figure 33
Apartments in Little Mountain Public Housing,
completed 1954

Source: National Archives of Canada, PA-154628
Figure 34

Townhouses in Little Mountain Public Housing,
completed 1954

Source: National Archives of Canada, PA-154632
lowest income lived in Little Mountain from the beginning.

Thus, by the early 1950s, Vancouver's housing activists had obtained an evictions freeze, emergency shelter, continuation of rent controls, hundreds of veterans' rental units, and the Little Mountain public housing project. These initiatives came about through the application of pressure on the federal government in conjunction with similar campaigns in other major cities like Montreal and Toronto and with national lobby groups like the CFMM. Yet the force of protests in Vancouver over the local housing situation had a singular impact on Ottawa particularly demonstrable in the imposition of an evictions freeze, the occupation of the old Hotel Vancouver, and in the construction of thousands of rental units.

Why were the activists able to apply pressure so successfully? First, the public felt an enormous, genuine sympathy for the housing predicament faced by servicemen, veterans, and their families, particularly if the men had been stationed overseas, to the extent that they tolerated and even supported incidents of occupation or squatting. Secondly, for some elements in the community like the Rehabilitation Council members, who remembered events following the Great War or others arising from the depression, the veterans represented a potential threat to the social order, especially as their militancy increased during the 1940s housing crisis. However, despite the arguments of historians who explain reform using social control theory,
attempts to defuse protests usually brought more agitation: squatting, rent strikes, and other tactics continued long after the old hotel's conversion into emergency shelter.

Thirdly, the campaign to make improvements in the local accommodation situation came from both major classes. Groups and individuals representing the working and middle classes endeavoured to resolve the shelter problem although their motives varied from a sincere humanitarianism to social control to political or professional interest. Thus, the intense class struggle over housing found in Glasgow in the early 1900s did not occur in Vancouver in the 1940s, although conflict raged in the workplace. At the same time, divisions within classes developed: the housing industry's opposition to the activists' proposals split the middle class, and political parties representing the working class quarrelled about other issues.

Fourthly, the pressure applied to government from Vancouver's activists was highly political in nature. It came from the left-wing parties that were stronger and better organized than in the 1930s. In addition, individuals in the NPA, Liberal, and Progressive Conservative parties like Wilson, Thompson, McGeer, Sinclair, Henderson, Stevens, and Laing eventually promoted the resolution of the accommodation question. Leigh Stevenson, the first Emergency Shelter Administrator and a Progressive Conservative, later ran successfully for the provincial Coalition government. Of course, the shrewder electoral objective of outflanking
the CCF motivated a politician like Johnson.

Lastly, the pressure exerted on behalf of the immediate crisis of the 1940s also worked towards the relief of the chronic shortage of low-income housing. Public awareness of the problem's temporary element spread to its chronic aspect. Unfortunately, once the crisis passed, the drive for permanent social housing programs diminished.

Indeed, the activists’ achievements tended to be short-lived or limited in scope. For example, the disbandment of emergency shelter occurred by 1949. Rent controls lasted until 1955 under both federal and provincial governments. Probably the biggest blow to the implementation of a national social housing program came with CMHC's decision in 1946 to sell off war workers' and veterans' rental homes. It started to dispose of the Sea Island houses in 1947 by offering them to tenants, and, a year later, it began to make available the Vancouver housing. Between 1947 and 1950, CMHC sold over 1,000 units in Vancouver. In North Vancouver, tenants decided to buy their units when faced with increased rentals to meet higher tax levels. The Renfrew Heights and Fraserview homes went on the block in the late 1950s and the 1960s. The last Fraserview and WHL units sold in 1966, and owners occupied the remaining Renfrew Heights houses in 1967. In general, tenants had the opportunity to buy houses with a downpayment of 10% of
the selling price as calculated by CMHC. Although residents in Renfrew Heights and Fraserview had more time to prepare financially for home ownership, tenants of the early WHL projects had less opportunity to put together the capital necessary to purchase their units and had little voice even when organized in the formulation of conditions of sale. According to CMHC itself, tenants in 1947 probably preferred to rent rather than to purchase the houses. Moreover, social housing advocates like Humphrey Carver have questioned the wisdom of divesting the "all too successful" veterans' rental program. A bureaucratic dispute between the Departments of Finance and of Reconstruction and Supply, the policy position assumed by W. C. Clark that emphasized market over social housing programs, and a fear of and distaste for socialism among federal officials apparently frightened Ottawa into ridding itself of war workers' and veterans' houses. Finally, the Little Mountain public housing complex made possible under the 1949 NHA amendment eventually produced too few units to satisfy the chronic needs of hundreds of low-income households.

Yet much of the housing resulting from this activism survives today in Renfrew Heights, Fraserview, the east side, Little Mountain, and elsewhere, and some of it is still publicly owned and managed. In this sense, the achievements of the activists were permanent. A politicized, broadly based housing movement thus obtained both short- and long-term improvements in residential conditions. Local acti-
vists and the federal government together eased Vancouver's wartime and post-war shelter problem.
Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, Subcommittee on Housing and Community Planning [chaired by C. A. Curtis], Final Report of the Subcommittee, March 24, 1944 (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1944) [hereafter the Curtis report], p. 37. For rent controls, see, ibid., pp. 37-40, 255-61; and National Archives of Canada [hereafter NAC], Records of the Wartime Prices and Trade Board, RG 64, vol. 29, "Canadian Rental and Eviction Controls, World War II and the Post War Years," 1 December 1947.

City of Vancouver Archives [hereafter CVA], Records of the City Clerk, ser. 1, 17-E-3, file 6, Clipping from Vancouver Province, 13 December 1940. See also, Wartime Prices and Trade Board Order no. 23, "Order Respecting Vancouver Rentals Committee," 13 December 1940.

Vancouver Sun, 13 August 1943, p. 9, and 17 August 1943, p. 2.

Curtis report, p. 256.

Ibid., p. 38, n1.

Ibid., pp. 259-60.

C. DeMara to D. Gordon, 4 July 1942.

Ibid., J. L. Ilsley to D. Gordon, 13 July 1942.

WPTB Order no. 200, "Respecting Housing Accommodation in Congested Areas," 20 October 1942.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-2, 10 August 1943; ibid., Records of the Town Planning Commission, ser. 3, 61-F-5, file 1, Minutes of the Zoning Committee, 17 November 1942 and 29 January 1943; and Sun, 5 November 1942, p. 17.


Sun, 7 October 1942, p. 17, and 19 October 1942, p. 17.
Ibid., 19 December 1942, p. 3; and NAC, RG 64, ser. 1020, vol. 215, file G.05.02, WPTB Press Release no. 0502.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-2, 29 January 1943 and 6 March 1943.

Ibid., 6 May 1943.

Taken over by the Emergency Shelter Administration and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the registry closed down by 30 September 1946; see, Sun, 1 October 1946, p. 8. For the registry's reports, see, United Church Archives, Vancouver School of Theology (hereafter UCA), Papers of Hugh Dobson, B7, file R, "Monthly Report, National Housing Registry," April 1944; CVA, Town Planning Commission papers, 77-B-5, file 8, "Monthly Report," May 1944; and NAC, RG 64, ser. 1020, vol. 215, file G.05.02, "Weekly Statistical Report," 24 June 1943.

J. de N. Kennedy, History of the Department of Munitions and Supply: Canada in the Second World War (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1950), vol. 2, pp. 80-87. For the impact of these controls on house construction in Vancouver, see above, pp. 223-24.


For Pigott's biography, see, The Canadian Who's Who, vol. 5 (Toronto: Trans-Canada Press, 1951), pp. 806-807. WHL's first board of directors included: W. L. Somerville, architect, Toronto; Charles David, architect, Montreal; William E. Tibbs, administrator, Halifax Relief Commission; R. J. Gourley, president, Beaver Lumber Company, Winnipeg; H. C. Wilson, general manager and director,


26 Sun, 16 June 1941, p. 22; Province, 21 June 1941, p. 36, and 28 June 1941, p. 18; and NAC, RG 83, vol. 70, Minutes, vol. 1, Minutes of WHL Executive Committee Meeting, 24 June 1941, pp. 4, 7-8.

27 P. C. 7535, 25 September 1941; P. C. 9362, 2 December 1941; P. C. 3234, 23 April 1942; and P. C. 8726, 25 September 1942. See also, Sun, 12 January 1942, p. 18, 1 April 1942, p. 3, and 14 April 1942, p. 13.

28 See the following in the records of the city clerk's office of the City and the District of North Vancouver: Agreement between the City and H. M. the King in right of Canada respecting the sale of land, 1 December 1941; Agreement between the City and WHL, 1 December 1941; Indenture between the City and H. M. the King in right of Canada respecting the lease of land, 1 December 1941; City By-law no. 1631, 1943 (WHL's Collateral Agreement By-law); City By-law no. 1632, 1943 (WHL Tax Sale Lands Purchase By-law); District By-law no. 1241, 1943 (WHL Collateral Agreement By-law); and District By-law no. 1242, 1943 (WHL Tax Sale Lands Purchase By-law).

29 In the records of the city clerk's office, City of North Vancouver, see, Indenture between WHL, H. M. the King in right of Canada, and the Board of School Trustees, 25 May 1943.
30 Sun, 13 August 1941, p. 2.
31 P. C. 10862, 1 December 1942. See also, Sun, 10 May 1943, p. 19, and 28 May 1943, p. 1.
32 Province, 27 March 1943, p. 5. In the records of the clerk's department, Township of Richmond, see, Agreement between H. M. the King in right of Canada and the Township respecting water supply, 1 December 1943. WHL named the subdivision after Stanley Burke, Sr., the president of Boeing Aircraft of Canada, Limited.
idem, "War Housing Boom," *Canadian Business* 14, 8 (August 1941): 16-24, 68, 70; Somerville, "Planned Homes for Our Munitions Workers;" and C. Stevenson, "New Homes for Canada [Homes in Centres of War Industry]," *Canadian Home Journal* 38 (February 1942): 12-13. See also the documentary film "Wartime Housing" for a visual record of WHL's construction methods. For building techniques in North Vancouver and Richmond, see, *Province*, 14 August 1941, p. 23. See, NAC, National Film, TV, and Sound Archives, "Canadian Army Newsreel #40," a documentary film produced by the Canadian Army Film Unit, 1944, 16 mm., black and white print, for "Post-War Homes for Canada's Warriors" in which 72 workers assembled a factory-made bungalow on site in eight hours at "wartime speed."

36 See Coon's article and Somerville's "Planned Homes for Munitions Workers," as well as CVA, Photograph Collection, 150-1, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation's album of photographs and plans of WHL housing in Vancouver and Victoria, [1947]; and the documentary film "Wartime Housing." For more about WHL design, see Wade, "Wartime Housing" (1986), p. 48.

37 H. Peter Oberlander, "Canada's Planning Experience in Housing Her War Veterans," American Society of Planning Officials *Planning* (1949): 198-201; and Somerville, "Planned Wartime Communities" and "Site Planning for Wartime Housing."


40 See the documentary film "Community Organization" for Tenant Relations' emphasis upon democratic principles.


Curtis report, pp. 107, 113.

Ibid., p. 263, table 62.


Wade, "Wartime Housing" (1986), pp. 50-51.

NAC, RG 83, vol. 70, Minutes, vol. 2, Minutes of the annual meeting of WHL shareholders, 29 May 1945, p. 5.

Wade, "Wartime Housing" (1986), pp. 51-52.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M8453, 14 April 1943, and M4289-2, 24 April 1943; and ibid., City Clerk's papers, 28-A-1, file entitled "Wartime Housing, 1944," "WHL: Agreement re Houses for Returned Men," 12 September 1944.

Township of Richmond, Records of the Clerk's Department, file 2216, Correspondence re: Burkeville school issue; and Sun, 29 June 1945, p. 4. See also, NAC, RG 83, vol. 70, Minutes, vol. 2, Minutes of the annual meeting of WHL shareholders, 29 May 1945, p. 5.


Ibid., pp. 52-53.


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61
NAC, RG 19, vol. 3980, file H-1-15, G. K. Shiels to Secretary, Treasury Board, 1 October 1942. For debate on the question, see correspondence located in this file.

62
Ibid., Clark to D. Gordon, 9 November 1942.

63
P. C. 10797, 26 November 1942. According to Bacher, Clark had clearly gained the upper hand in the bureaucratic struggle between WHL and Finance Department forces; see, "W. C. Clark and the Politics of Canadian Housing Policy," pp. 9-10.
The plan evolved through the passage of a series of orders-in council; see, for example, P. C. 4579, 4 June 1943, which applied to Vancouver, Victoria, and Ottawa. See also, Firestone, p. 490. For documents relevant to the plan's emergence, see, NAC, RG 19, vol. 728, file 203 CP. In addition, see Bacher's "Keeping to the Private Market," pp. 320-23.

Firestone, p. 491, table 112.


Sun, 27 January 1945, p. 2.

Curtis report, p. 4.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 9.

Ibid. For the growing perception in the 1940s of the importance of the town planning function, see, NAC, National Film, TV, and Sound Archives, "A Tale of New Cities," a documentary film produced by Crawley Films Limited, 1947, 16 mm., colour print, which revived the planner Hippodamus to explain the fundamentals of community planning in relation to ancient Greece and modern Stratford, Ontario. With respect to the housing crisis in 5th century B. C. Athens, this fantasized Hippodamus exclaimed, "Am I to house my family in a tent on the Acropolis?" The co-operative housing movement had started in Canada by the late 1930s; for the Cape Breton example, see, Mary Ellicott Arnold, The Story of Tompkinsville (New York: Cooperative League, 1940).


"Pride of Possession" was the title of a CMHC film describing the financing of a home under the 1944 NHA; see, NAC, National Film, TV, and Sound Archives, "Pride of Possession," a documentary film produced by Crawley Films Limited, directed by Peter Cook, and hosted by Kate Aitken,
1951, 16 mm., colour print. For the legislation, see, Canada, Laws, Statutes, etc., An Act to Promote the Construction of New Houses, the Repair and Modernization of Existing Houses, the Improvement of Housing and Living Conditions, and the Expansion of Employment in the Postwar Period, 1944 (National Housing Act, 1944), 8 Geo. 6, ch. 46.

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Sun, 6 October 1945, p. 17, and 6 November 1945, p. 5.

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Sun, 1 February 1947, p. 15, 4 February 1947, p. 9, 14 February 1947, p. 12, 17 March 1947, p. 1, 18 March 1947,
p. 3, and 19 April 1947, p. 17.

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84
NAC, RG 19, vol. 3539, file entitled "Housing, 1945," W. A. Mackintosh to [Builders from the National House Builders' Association], 13 July 1945, and A. W. Rogers to W. C. Clark, 14 May 1945, with attached note, "Housing: Extracts from Replies of the Banks."

85
CMHC, Annual Report, 1946, pp. 5-6.

86

87
See above, p. 231. These subdivisions included Victory Heights in New Westminster, Willingdon Heights in Burnaby, and Capilano Properties in North Vancouver.

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90
Canada, Laws, Statutes, etc., An Act to Incorporate the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1945 (The Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act), 9 & 10 Geo. 6, c. 15. See also, NAC, RG 64, ser. 1030, box 700, file 25-1-4, Mansur to Mackintosh, 30 July 1945; and Ibid., RG 19, vol. 3539, "Memorandum to the Cabinet Re: Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation Bill," 2 October 1945.

91

92
CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-D-7, file 4, Howe to O. Erickson, 30 October 1946.

93
Firestone, p. 487.

94

95
See above, pp. 223-25.

See above, pp. 277, 278, 294, and 297.


Sun, 4 August 1944, p. 17.


CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-3, 25 August 1944.

Sun, 16 May 1945, p. 10, and 28 May 1945, p. 4.

Ibid., 22 November 1944, p. 10, and 27 October 1944, p. 15.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-3, 28 July 1944.

Sun, 31 December 1945, p. 3.

Special Collections Division [SCD], University of British Columbia Library, Papers of Frank E. Buck, U87, box 11, file 13, Meeting of the Rehabilitation Section of the Coordinating Council for War Work and Civilian Services, 22 February 1944; and ibid., file 15, "The Citizens' Rehabilitation Council of Greater Vancouver: Summary of Activities, 1940–1948."

For example, Jack Henderson of the Canadian Legion and Major O. L. Erickson and A. W. Cowley of the Rehabilitation Council belonged to the Vancouver Housing Association. Moreover, organizations like the Local Council of Women, Vancouver Labour Council, and Town Planning Commission were represented in both the VHA and the Rehabilitation Council; see, SCD, U87, box 11, file 13, Meeting of the Rehabilitation Section of the Coordinating Council; and British Columbia Archives and Records Service [hereafter BCARS], Records of the Premier, GR 1222, box 205, file 7, "Summary of Vancouver Housing Association Activities during 1948."


CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-3, 1 August 1944.


Sun, 27 August 1946, p. 15.

Morton and Wright, p. 201; and Sun, 11 March 1944, p. 5, and 11 July 1945, p. 13. See also, CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, E. E. Winch to F. Buck, 16 October 1944; and ibid., Mayor's records, 34-C-7, file entitled "Housing (2), 1947," H. Green to G. Miller, 12 May 1947. As well, see, SCD, M397, box 40B, file 10, A. MacInnis to H. E. Winch, 2 December 1949.


Laura E. Jamieson, "Co-op Living in Vancouver," *Canadian Forum* 23, 267 (April 1943): 18-19; Federationist, 1 July 1943, p. 3; and Sun, 20 January 1948, p. 2. For more on Jamieson, see, Sangster, passim; and Walsh, pp. 122-52.


Ivan Avakumovic, *The Communist Party in Canada:*
A History (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1975), pp. 103, 135, 176, 273. After the Communist Party was made illegal in 1940, it regrouped as the Labor Progressive Party.

120 Pacific Advocate, 25 November 1944, p. 4, and 18 January 1946, pp. 1, 3.


123 CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-3, 19 August 1944.


125 Ibid., 31 March 1944, p. 15, and 13 April 1944, p. 11.

126 CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-5, file 8, Minutes of meeting of Citizens' Emergency Housing Committee, 1 October 1945. During the war, Stratton, a Seaforth Highlander, had spent six years both in the active services and in the intelligence branch; ibid., City Clerk's records, 19-A-3, file 12, A. T. R. Campbell to City Clerk, 17 January 1947; and interview with Stratton, Vancouver, 14 January 1990.

127 Sun, 2 March 1946, p. 15.


130 VHA, Housing for Our Older Citizens (Vancouver, 1949); and idem, "We, Too, Need Housing!" A Survey of the Housing Needs of Single Girls Employed in Downtown Vancouver.
These were the locals of the Marine Workers and Boilermakers' Industrial Union, IWA, United Steelworkers of America, Aeronautical Mechanics' Lodge 756, Dock and Shipyard Workers' Union of Vancouver and District, Retail Clerks' Union, Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, Stenographers, Typists, Bookkeepers, and Assistants' Local Union, Sheet Metal Workers' International Association, Boilermakers and Iron Shipbuilders' Union, and Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway and Motor Coach Employees of America Pioneer Division. See, BCARS, GR 1222, box 205, file 7, "Summary of Vancouver Housing Association Activities during 1948;" SCD, 087, box 11, file 13, Minutes of meeting of the Rehabilitation Section of the Co-ordinating Council for War Work and Civilian Services in Greater Vancouver;" CVA, City Clerk's records, 26A, vol. 10, 8 August 1945, p. 6, and 24 February 1947, p. 149. See also, ibid., 18-D-3, file 17 [Representations re. low-rental housing program]; ibid., file 18, C. W. Caron to C. Jones, 6 July 1945, G. M. Morrison to R. Thompson, 10 July 1945, and E. Tallmann to J. W. Cornett, 25 July 1945; ibid., 19-A-6, file 1, M. MacLeod to City Clerk, 21 May 1947; and ibid., 19-A-7, file 14, Resolution from 11th Annual Convention of District Council no. 1, IWA-CIO, [March 1948].

Trade. BCARS, GR 1222, box 205, file 7, "Summary of Vancouver Housing Association Activities during 1948;"
ibid., file 4, "Organizations Represented on the Vancouver Housing Association (as of October 1949);"
CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-D-2, file 6, A. M. Morrison to City Clerk, 2 July 1945; ibid., 18-E-7, file 1, [Resolutions from various groups supporting a low-rental housing program according to the Curtis report]; ibid., 26A, vol. 9, 6 March 1945, pp. 375-76, vol. 10, 11 June 1946, p. 78, and 10 June 1947, p. 189; NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203-17, [Representations from these groups]; and Sun, 14 July 1943, p. 1, and 21 August 1943, p. 20.


NAC, RG 64, ser. 1030, box 708, file 25-14-17-1, "Responsibility for Shelter," memorandum from D. Gordon, 7 December 1944.

For example, see, NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17, and vol. 2730, file 200-2; and Sun, 29 July 1944, p. 7, 1 June 1945, p. 3, 13 June 1945, p. 1, and 25 June 1945, p. 10.

For representations to the Province, see, Sun, 10 March 1944, p. 1, 27 June 1945, p. 1, 2 March 1946, p. 14, 19 March 1946, p. 5, and 10 April 1946, p. 2. For representations to the City, see, CVA, City Clerk's records, 26A, vol. 9, 6 March 1945, pp. 375-76; and Sun, 10 March 1944, p. 1, 6 June 1944, p. 5, 4 August 1944, p. 17, and 1 December 1944, p. 1. For representations from the Province to Ottawa, see, Sun, 26 July 1944, p. 13, and 10 July 1945, p. 7; and NAC, RG 64, ser. 1030, box 701, file 25-2, vol. 1, R. L. Maitland to D. Gordon, 20 July 1944.


For housing registry reports, see, NAC, RG 64, ser. 1040, box 215, file G.05.02. See also, ibid., RG 19, ser. E3, vol. 4017, "Memorandum Respecting the Housing Situation in Vancouver."

For Donald Gordon's encounter with a critical
Vancouver Sun editorial, see, NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17.

141

NAC, RG 64, ser. 1030, box 700, file 25-1-3, Minutes of a special WPTB meeting, 23 July 1945; Sun, 27 July 1945, p. 1; and Bacher, "Keeping to the Private Market," p. 400.

142

CVA, City Clerk's records, 17-E-7, file 1, G. Buscombe to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 27 August 1941; and ibid., 27-D-7, file 28, [file on foreshore shacks]. See also, ibid., Records of the City Solicitor, ser. 3, 115-C-3, file 13, [file on foreshore shacks]; and Sun, 29 June 1944, p. 15.

143

CVA, Records of the Health Department, 146-B-3, file 8, Minutes of meeting on special committee on minimum of housing standards by-law, 26 October 1948; and Sun, 6 January 1948, p. 2, and 22 March 1949, p. 13.

144

CVA, City Clerk's records, 17-E-7, file 1, A. Haggart to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 5 November 1941; ibid., 28-B-7, file 6, Special Committee re Requested Amendments Respecting Suites in Apartment Houses to Building, Civic Planning, and Parks Committee, 15 February 1945; ibid., 28-C-2, file 10, [file on basement areas in apartments, 1946]; and Sun, 25 February 1947, p. 3.

145

For the post-war housing committee, see, CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, files 13, 14, and 16, and 77-B-5, files 8 and 9.

146


CVA, City Solicitor's records, 115-C-3, file 9, "A Plan to Build 1000 Low Cost Homes in Vancouver Annually," [1942]; and ibid., Photograph Collection, 163-1.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 77-B-5, file 7, "Memo re Housing Committee," [January 1941], A. J. Harrison to G. Buscombe, 8 January 1941, and Minutes of Meeting to consider housing conditions held in Town Planning Commission office, 15 April 1941; and ibid., 77-B-6, file 4, Minutes of meeting of the Housing Committee [of Vancouver Council of Social Agencies] held at 1675 West 10th Avenue," 25 September 1941.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 17-F-3, file 1, M. Jackson to City Clerk, 9 April 1941; ibid., 18-A-4, file 16, B. Friesen to City Council, 31 August 1942 and 2 November 1942; and ibid., 77-B-6, file 4, F. Howlett to Harrison, 2 February 1942. See also, Sangster, pp. 139, 173, 178-79, 185-88.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 26A, vol. 9, 6 March 1944, p. 328, and 20 March 1944, p. 329; Sun, 1 March 1944, p. 13, 6 March 1944, p. 11, 7 March 1944, p. 13, 16 March 1944, p. 13, 21 March 1944, p. 13, 24 March 1944, p. 17, 11 April 1944, p. 13, 13 April 1944, p. 11, and 20 September 1944, p. 15; SCD, M397, box 40B, file 9, J. McPeake to [A. MacInnis], 13 March 1944, and Minutes of executive meeting "5000 Homes Now!" Committee, 23 March 1944; and NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17, McPeake to W. L. M. King, 19 April 1944, with attached "Submissions on behalf of the "5000 Homes Now!" Committee.


Sun, 1 June 1945, p. 3.
CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-5, file 8, Minutes of the Citizens' Emergency Housing Committee, 1 October 1945.

By 1 May, about 300 notices had accumulated; between July and October, there were 704; see, NAC, RG 64, vol. 29, "Canadian Rental and Eviction Controls, World War II and the Post War Years," pp. 43, 49-50; UCA, Dobson papers, B7, file R, "Monthly Report, National Housing Registry," April 1944; and Sun, 25 August 1944, p. 17.

NAC, RG 64, vol. 29, "Canadian Rental and Eviction Controls, World War II and the Post-War Years," pp. 43, 45-46, 47.


Ibid., 18 August 1944, p. 1, and 19 August 1944, p. 17.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-3, 25 and 28 August 1944.


Sun, 9 January 1945, p. 1.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-3, 23 December 1944; and Ibid., M4289-4, 5 January 1945 and 15 February 1945.

Sun, 16 February 1945, p. 5.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-4, 10 January 1945; NAC, Records of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, RG 56, vol. 17, file 105-10, vol. 2, L. F. Stevenson to D. G. Mackenzie, 7 April 1945, with attached letter, Stevenson to Air Officer Commanding, Western Air Command, 7 April 1945.
Sun, 26 August 1944, p. 15.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M8921, 28 September 1945.


NAC, RG 64, ser. 1030, box 700, file 25-1-3, "Minutes of special meeting of July 23, 1945."

Canada, Wartime Prices and Trade Board, Canadian War Orders and Regulations, vol. 7 (1945), order no. 537.


NAC, RG 83, vol. 70, Minutes, vol. 1, Minutes of the meeting of the WHL Board of Directors, 10 May 1944; and ibid., RG 2, ser. 18, vol. 9, file H-13, "Report for Interdepartmental Housing Committee by Mr. Jas. A. Hall Representing Wartime Housing Ltd."


Ibid.


Sun, 11 July 1944, p. 1, 1 August 1944, p. 13, 3 August 1944, p. 19, 4 August 1944, p. 17, 5 December 1944, p. 11, 20 March 1945, p. 9, and 8 June 1945, p. 1. See also the agreements between the City of Vancouver, H. M. the King in right of Canada, and WHL, 25 September 1944 and 1 July 1945, located in the City Clerk's Department, City of Vancouver; CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-A-1, file 52, Minutes of meeting of special committee for wartime housing, 2 August 1944; and ibid., 28-B-7, file
42, City Clerk to C. D. Howe, 18 August 1945.


181 Sun, 1 December 1944, p. 1, 5 December 1944, p. 11, 20 March 1945, p. 1, 29 May 1945, p. 9, and 1 June 1945, p. 3.

182 CVA, Records of the Finance Department, 98-C-6, file 3, telegram from C. D. Howe to W. L. Woodford, 26 July 1945; ibid., City Clerk's records, 24 A, vol. 48, 26 July 1945, p. 805; and the agreement between the City, H. M. the King in right of Canada, and WHL, 1 September 1945, located in the City Clerk's Department, City of Vancouver. See also, Sun, 25 July 1945, p. 1, 26 July 1945, p. 2, 7 August 1945, p. 11, and 14 August 1945, p. 9.

183 Sun, 7 September 1944, p. 5.

184 CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-5, 22 May 1945.

185 CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-B-7, file 28, L. Stevenson to Mayor, 20 June 1945.

186 Ibid., Stevenson to Mayor, 16 July 1945. For conditions at this shelter and others, see NAC, RG 19, vol. 728, file 203-CMHC-1, "Report on a Survey of Emergency Shelter Tenants (November 1946 - February 1947)."

187 CVA, Records of the Social Service Department, 106-A-6, file 3, City Clerk to J. I. Chambers, 9 August 1945. For the administration of Camp no. 2, see the records of file 3. See also, Sun, 4 September 1946, pp. 1-2.


190 NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17, vol. 1, L. F. Stevenson to D. G. Mackenzie, 16 March 1945, and memorandum
For the negotiations, see, NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17, and CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-C-1, file 4, and 28-C-4, file 18.

For the representations, see, NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17. See also, Sun, 31 December 1945, p. 3, and 5 January 1946, pp. 1-2; and BCARS, GR 1222, box 113, file 17 for representations to the provincial government during the occupation of the old hotel.

For accounts of the occupation, see the Sun, the Province, and the News-Herald from 28 January to 1 February 1946; and the Pacific Advocate, 1 February 1946. See also, Paddy Sherman, Bennett (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), p. 51; and Barry Broadfoot, The Veterans' Years: Coming Home from the War (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985), pp. 66-68.

Sun, 28 January 1946, p. 1. The committee's members were aligned with the Liberals (2), the Conservatives (2), the CCF (2), the LPP (1), and the Social Credit (1).

Ibid., pp. 1, 2.


CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-C-3, file 14, Minutes of the Air Raid Precaution Committee for the City of Vancouver, 29 January 1946.


Sun, 25 September 1946, p. 6, 2 October 1946, p. 2, and 7 November 1946, p. 11; and CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-E-7, file 2, A. W. Cowley to City Clerk, 5 October 1946. The hostel is located on Dunsmuir Street.


Ibid., 30 May 1946, p. 9, 31 May 1946, p. 9, and 1 June 1946, p. 9.


Sun, 7 May 1947, p. 26, 14 May 1947, p. 6; CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-C-6, file 16, Minutes of special Council meeting, 18 September 1946; and ibid., 28-D-4, file 44, J. A. Jones to G. McGeer, 8 April 1947. For the lengthy negotiations between the City, Howe, and CMHC over the construction of more veterans' rental units in Vancouver and for the final agreement, see CVA, Mayor's records, 34-C-7, files entitled "Housing, 1947."

Sun, 19 April 1947, p. 1; and CVA, Mayor's records, 34-C-7, file entitled "Housing (2), 1947," H. Green to G. Miller, 12 May 1947.


CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-D-3, file 6, City Clerk to Special Committee re Housing, 25 November 1947.


Sun, 12 July 1948, p. 9, and 21 July 1948, p. 17.
At the time, Bob McEwen, a leader in the old hotel occupation, asserted that Vancouver's veterans had set a pattern for squatters' movements around the world; see, ibid., 31 December 1946, p. 11.


Ibid., 10 September 1946, p. 3.

Ibid., 13 September 1946, p. 3.

Ibid., 14 September 1946, p. 2.

Ibid., 18 September 1946, p. 1.

Ibid., 19 September 1946, p. 1.

Ibid., 20 September 1946, p. 4.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-E-7, file 2, A. Morison to City Council, 30 October 1946, H. Rush to City Clerk, 27 September 1946, and R. McNicol to Mayor and Council, 14 September 1946.

Sun, 23 September 1946, p. 3.


Sun, 28 September 1946, p. 30, and 1 October 1946, p. 9.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-E-3, file 29, R. Young to City Council, 15 March 1949, B. Marsh to R. Thompson, 3 May 1949, Minutes of meeting of special committee re taxes, Little Mountain Camp, 8 April 1949, and "Increased Taxation at Little Mountain Camp," 1949. See also, NAC, RG 19, file 728, file 203-CMHC-1, "Report on a Survey of Emergency Shelter Tenants (November 1946 - February 1947)."


229 CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-D-6, file 1, and 28-D-7, file 11, for records of the funding arrangements for Seaforth Village.


235 Ibid., 7 May 1948, p. 1.

236 For the development process, see CVA, Finance Department records, 93-F-7, file 6.

237 CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 20 September 1948.

238 Ibid., 16 November 1948.

239 Sun, 11 February 1949, p. 1.

240 Ibid., 19 May 1949, pp. 1, 3, 21 May 1949, p. 3, and 3 June 1949, p. 21; and CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 11 February 1949.

241 Sun, 15 February 1949, p. 1, and 18 February 1949, p. 9. See also, CVA, Finance Department records, 93-B-2, file 1, T. Flanagan to chairperson and members of personnel committee, 25 February 1949; and ibid., Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 15 February 1949 and 18 February 1949.

242 CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 17 June 1949. Other companies subsequently received contracts; see, ibid.,
29 September 1950.

Ibid., 17 December 1949 and 19 December 1949; and Sun, 19 December 1949, p. 27.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 20 December 1949.

Ibid., 12 January 1950.

Ibid., 29 September 1950. See also, Canada, Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Small House Designs, 3 vols. (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1949); and Kalman, p. 212, H28.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 4 April 1951; and Sun, 3 April 1951, p. 1.


Ibid., 8 June 1951, p. 16, 29 October 1951, p. 17, 9 July 1952, p. 15.

CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M3335-1, 9 July 1952; and Sun, 10 October 1953, p. 11.

Sun, 14 February 1947, pp. 1, 2, 10 March 1947, p. 1, and 27 May 1949, p. 9. See also, CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-D-3, file 8, for negotiations over the Bremerton scheme.


Sun, 9 October 1947, p. 7.

Ibid., 13 February 1948, p. 17, 4 September 1947, p. 3, and 21 July 1948, p. 3.

CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 14, E. E. Winch to F. Buck, 16 October 1944.

CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-A-1, file 54, [records re. New Vista Society's proposed boarding house], 1944; SCD, Papers of E. E. Winch, Angus MacInnis Memorial...

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See, UCA, Dobson papers, box 15, files 9 and 11B for the United Church's work and Fair Haven project. See also, Sharp, pp. 14-17; Sun, 14 January 1954, p. 15, and 21 January 1955, p. 15; and CVA, Town Planning Commission records, 61-C-6, file 15, "The Fair Haven United Church Homes for Senior Citizens" (1951).

259

Sun, 18 February 1947, p. 9, 20 May 1947, p. 9, and 9 January 1948, p. 17.

260

CVA, City Clerk's records, 18-D-2, file 6, G. V. Pelton to City Council, 7 December 1945; ibid., 18-E-7, file 1, R. Knox to Mayor and Council, 25 February 1946, and J. V. Anderson to R. Thompson, 13 February 1946; ibid., 19-B-4, file 11, J. Davidson to Chairperson, Social Services Committee, 22 April 1948; ibid., 28-C-1, file 24, [Communications with Senior Citizens' Homes Association], 1945-1947; and Sun, 29 May 1947, p. 26.

261

Sun, 6 November 1946, p. 24.

BCARS, GR 1222, box 114, file 6, D. C. Abbott to Premier, 23 October 1948.

Sun, 25 November 1949, p. 1, and 9 December 1949, p. 27.


Sun, 21 May 1947, p. 9.


See, SCD, Papers of Leonard C. Marsh, U184, box 12, file entitled "[United Nations] - UNRRA: London, 1945 - Scrapbook" for more on the Marshs' time abroad and, in particular, for a corny Valentine's Day card enscribed, "You've got my Number Valentine, You're all the SOCIAL
SECURITY I need..."!

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The report is Marsh's Rebuilding a Neighbourhood.

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UCA, Dobson papers, box 7, file S, Clipping from Province, 4 November 1948.

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NAC, RG 19, vol. 716, file 203C-17, R. Thompson to J. L. Ilsley, 10 January 1946.

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CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M4289-1, 17 February 1938.

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BCARS, GR 1222, box 259, file 2, Radio speech by Johnson on "Provincial Affairs," 16 February 1948.

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Sun, 23 March 1949, p. 4, 4 May 1949, p. 17, 18


287  BCARS, GR 1222, box 115, file 11, Winters to Johnson, 13 September 1949.

288  Sun, 21 September 1949, p. 1, and 1 November 1949, p. 32.


293  CVA, Finance Department records, 93-F-7, file 5, [Agreement between the City of Vancouver, H. M. the King in right of British Columbia, and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1 November 1950]. See also Sun, 15 November 1950, p. 9, and 30 November 1950, p. 21.

294  Sun, 8 August 1951, p. 17.


296  CVA, City Clerk's records, 28-F-5, file 33, T. B. Pickersgill to A. Proctor, 4 June 1952, and Minutes of the Building and Town Planning Committee, 13 November 1952.

297  Sun, 5 September 1952, p. 3, 26 September 1952, p. 25, 4 November 1952, p. 19, 21 November 1952, p. 17, 4


Province, 14 August 1953, p. 2.

Sun, 1 April 1954, p. 26; and SCD, Papers of the Vancouver Council of Women, M657, box 4, file 11, Vancouver Housing Authority, Report, 1954.

Sun, 20 May 1955, p. 2.

Wheeler, pp. 81-83.

Ibid., Appendix A.


Wheeler, Appendix A.

Ibid., p. 98; CVA, City Clerk's records, 20-D-6, file 11, J. I. Chambers to A. Sprott, 12 April 1954; and BCARS, GR 1000, box 1, file 4, Vancouver Housing Authority, Report, 1959, p. 3.

Wheeler, Appendix A.

For example, see, Choko's Crises du logement à Montréal, app. B, pp. 165-81; and Merrily Weisbold, The Strangest Dream: Canadian Communists, the Spy Trials, and the Cold War (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Denys, 1983), pp. 179-80.

For example, see, Roy Lubove, The Progressives and


313 CVA, Newspaper Clippings, M8921, passim.


318 CVA, Finance Department records, 98-C-6, file 2, R. S. Wells to T. Trent, 5 December 1968, and Wells to Trent, 6 July 1967.


320 Ibid., p. 19.


CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the first half of the twentieth century, Vancouver experienced the development of a housing problem to which both governments and local activists responded. What was the nature of this problem, and what was the reaction of these governments and "citizens in action"? Moreover, is this past experience instructive in finding answers to Vancouver's present housing crisis? Finally, will an analysis of the pre-1950 problem and its resolution offer any significant contributions to Canadian, British, and American housing historiography?

By the early 1950s, the nature of Vancouver's housing problem had defined itself. Despite the city's generally satisfactory supply of homes for middle- and high-income households, it suffered from a continuing, worsening scarcity of adequate, low-income rental accommodation. At the same time, occasional crises in availability and affordability presented serious difficulties for many middle-income residents and increased hardships for the poor. Contrary to Holdsworth's assertions, both aspects of the problem, which were not unique to Vancouver, had appeared before the depression of the 1930s.
As in Canada as a whole, the housing statistics for Vancouver to 1951 have revealed an overall good quality stock of urban residential space with rising rates of home ownership. Holdsworth has described a pre-1929 city with detached houses widely accessible and largely owned in middle- and working-class suburbs like Point Grey and South Vancouver. By 1931, 51.0% of dwellings across the entire, amalgamated city were owner-occupied. The proportion of owners remained about the same (50.1%) in 1941 and climbed to 63.0% in 1951. Moreover, the figures with respect to overcrowding, external disrepair, sanitary facilities, and basic conveniences compared favourably in 1931, 1941, and 1951 with those of other major Canadian cities.

Yet the decade-by-decade aggregated Census statistics applicable to Vancouver at large obscured the long-term need for good quality residential space for low-income individuals and families in the downtown area and in parts of its immediately adjacent neighbourhoods. They also hid periodic crises in housing affordability and availability. Before 1930, those of small income like the elderly, single working women, relief families, and seasonally or fully unemployed workers who could not afford more expensive rental accommodation in apartment blocks or single houses lived in lodgings, cheap hotels, cabins, bachelor houses, or waterfront shacks. Homelessness was common in times of depression. Moreover, critical housing shortages after World War I aggravated living conditions in downtown lodgings.
In the 1930s, the "chronic shortage of low rental housing" grew worse with high unemployment. Overcrowding intensified as destitute households doubled up or occupied smaller units, and standards of rented accommodation fell as owners and operators failed to make improvements or circumvented civic building and zoning by-laws. Homelessness plagued single, transient, unemployed men in the city. As well, drastic reductions in new construction, foreclosures on mortgages, and loss of property through inability to pay local taxes produced a severe housing crisis for ordinarily stable working- and middle-class families that only heightened the persistent lack of inexpensive rental dwellings. Slow recovery later in the decade failed to bring substantial improvement in conditions.

In the 1940s, war and reconstruction generated a short supply of housing and an expanded demand for homes for moderate- and middle-income groups, particularly for war workers, servicemen's families, and veterans. The shortages, which persisted into the early 1950s, exacerbated the scarcity and the adequacy of less costly rental units required by low-income households residing in the downtown area and in sections of adjacent districts like Kitsilano and Fairview. If more fortunate families moved into government-built subdivisions like Fraserview and Renfrew Heights or privately developed suburbs in North Vancouver and Burnaby, the elderly poor, single female workers, families on social assistance, and seasonal wage-earners continued to
live in cheap, substandard accommodation in the downtown core.

Although the housing situation had improved in many ways by the early 1950s, the continuing need for decent low- and moderate-income rental units and the still unresolved post-war shortages of middle-income owned and rented accommodation afflicted Vancouver. Thus, the city's housing problem up to 1950, consisted of two elements: the long-standing, unfulfilled requirement for satisfactory low-rental dwellings; and the intermittent crises brought on by economic depression, war, and reconstruction.

What is the historiographical significance of this analysis of Vancouver's housing problem before 1950? Unlike Holdsworth's study of Vancouver's pre-1929 homes, it asserts that the origins of the problem occurred long before the depression. In addition, it is relevant to discussions among historians and historical geographers about living standards, and tenure issues. Furthermore, it contributes to the newly developing area of the social history of domestic architecture.

With its inception in early nineteenth-century Britain and its renewal in the 1920s, the standard of living debate is a very old historiographical chestnut. Pessimists and optimists have heatedly divided over whether industrial capitalism has improved workers' living standards and over whether material factors or qualitative ones or both should measure those standards. Since 1963, under E. P. Thompson's
influence, emphasis has shifted from statistical to impressionistic evidence and from economic to social history. In addition, more recent studies have stressed local or regional conditions and issues like housing, diet, and specific occupations. In the 1970s, the debate came to Canada with Terry Copp's *The Anatomy of Poverty* (1974) and Michael Piva's *The Condition of the Working Class in Toronto* (1979).

Both pessimists, Copp and Piva used housing as one of several qualitative factors in concluding that between 1900 and 1929 a capitalist economy deprived Montreal and Toronto workers of their fair share of the national income. Subsequently, while other Canadian historians have utilized real wages and nutrition as the basis of measurement, John Belshaw has employed a range of qualitative and quantitative factors in comparing rather pessimistically the living standards of British and Vancouver Island's coal miners but argued more optimistically that west coast accommodation was "in some ways undeniably superior to what had been left behind."

In the past, Census figures for later decades and Holdsworth's account of pre-1929 housing have presented an optimistic picture of workers' residential conditions in Vancouver. Although only the Census manuscripts will probably confirm the gravity of the housing problem up to 1950, impressionistic and statistical evidence now available suggests a gloomier side to that depiction. Low-and sometimes moderate-income families living downtown experienced a constant shortage of adequate, affordable dwelling space, and
housing crises troubled more affluent households during depression, war, and reconstruction. In addition, in support of the work of Bettina Bradbury and others, the evidence discloses the methods used by some Vancouver households to meet lower living standards in the 1930s and 1940s, including family economy strategies, home conversion, boarding, shared or communal accommodation, occupation of jungles or waterfront shacks, separation of parents and children, and squatting.

The members of the working class who were less stable in income or employment and who most experienced the more inadequate living standards of the downtown district might be fully or seasonally employed white men with or without families, single working women, or senior citizens. They might also be bachelor Asian men. Thus, this examination of Vancouver's housing problem reinforces the work of Paul Yee or Kay Anderson, both of whom have described the concentration of Chinese in the Chinatown and Strathcona areas. More research focused wholly on Asian quarters is necessary to determine, for example, how immigration affected social behaviour or if this dwelling space facilitated as a slum or thwarted as a ghetto the social mobility of its residents.

The present investigation of Vancouver's housing problem also contributes to Canadian work on tenure begun in the 1960s by Michael B. Katz and continued subsequently by Michael J. Doucet, Marc H. Choko, and Richard Harris. At first, their time-consuming quantitative analyses linked
tenure, class, and social mobility in cities like Hamilton, Kingston, Toronto, and Montreal. More recently, following the publication of Kenneth T. Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontier*, Harris has begun to speculate that working-class suburbs were widespread in North American cities by the 1910s and 1920s. Holdsworth's portrayal of working-class South Vancouver, with its emphasis upon uniqueness removed, adds to Harris's hypothesis. This assessment of Vancouver's housing problem, which separates the downtown district with its higher proportion of low-income rental accommodation for seasonal workers from the skilled working- and middle-class suburbs with their greater percentages of home ownership also confirms Harris's theory. As well, it offers an impressionistic, partial answer to R. A. J. McDonald's recently posed question about "the domestic circumstances of seasonal migrants and that of more stable urban workers."

Finally, this study looks at Vancouver's housing from the perspective of Canadian social architectural history rather than traditional architectural history. It provides information about residential types like cabins, waterfront shacks, cheap hotels, lodgings, and Chinese bachelor houses with which architectural historians ordinarily have not concerned themselves. As well, in describing the homes of the transient or seasonal workers of British Columbia's resource industries, the unemployed, the elderly, the poor, the single working woman, and the Asian wage-earner, it deals with the accommodation of persons of a class, gender, age, and
ethnicity not normally addressed by architectural historians. In addition, the study furnishes a dimension in time for Vancouver housing unknown in architectural history. It shows the transformation over the years of residential structures built in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The West End mansions of the city's elite and the Kitsilano bungalows of its middle class became the lodging houses written up in reports by civic health inspectors. As medical officers predicted before the First World War, the once new cabins and hotels along Cordova or Powell Streets declined into the blighted buildings disdained by redevelopment studies after the Second War. Foreshore shacks appeared, disappeared, and reappeared throughout the first half of the century, and they remained a popular form of accommodation with their 13 occupants into the second half.

This description of Vancouver's pre-1950 residential problem leads to several observations relevant to today's housing and heritage situations. First, the study chronicles the long history of certain types of accommodation in the city not normally credited with much importance. Yet cabins, bachelor houses, lodgings, and shacks played significant roles in British Columbia's social history and deserve greater consideration in the depiction of our material history and in the preservation of our heritage buildings. Secondly, despite its substandard character, the less expensive rental housing of the downtown district has sheltered into the 1990s households that could not afford to live elsewhere.
During the shortages of the 1940s, city building inspectors refused to permit demolition of structures unless unsafe and unsound because they knew that the displaced occupants had no other place to go. Today, Vancouver has a large stock of substandard downtown eastside housing owing in part to that refusal. The existence of such accommodation has kept the level of homelessness lower than that of other North American cities. Yet the need for renovation of the old structures (many with heritage value) or for replacement with social housing projects has now reached emergency proportions. Finally, today's observers may very well conclude that our own housing difficulties are in essence the same as earlier in the century. Although factors leading to the present problem may have changed, the chronic shortage of satisfactory low-rental dwellings and the occasional serious crisis in middle-income rented and owned homes remain with us.

Over the decades, both governments and local activists responded to Vancouver's pre-1950 housing problem. In reaction to nation-wide crises in accommodation brought on by war and depression, the federal government developed strategies that applied to Vancouver as well as elsewhere in Canada. Although the Province of British Columbia, the City, and the activists played no real part in initiating legislation and plans, they afterwards became instrumental in implementing and continuing them. Furthermore, the federal government also encountered intense pressure for change from below. The activists directly addressed their
demands to the City Council, the Province, and the federal government. Vancouver and Victoria in turn urged Ottawa to act, and other governments, organizations, and activists across the country similarly challenged federal politicians and bureaucrats. In response, Ottawa created additional programs to meet local and national emergencies. Community activists and municipal and provincial governments recognized the national scope of the housing issue, and, consequently, they expected the federal government to take an active role in resolving the problem. Thus, although unilateral decision-making in Ottawa produced some nation-wide schemes, pressure from activists and governments across Canada and in Vancouver also contributed to the introduction, implementation, and continuation of other federal programs.

Between 1919 and 1949, the national government developed several plans intended to stimulate or stabilize the economy and to generate employment across Canada and in Vancouver. These initiatives included the 1919 federal plan, known as the Better Housing Scheme in British Columbia, the Dominion Housing Act and National Housing Act programs, the Home Improvement Plan, and the wartime and reconstruction measures like rent and construction controls, war workers' projects, home conversion, and Department of Veterans' Affairs houses. During peacetime, these programs relied heavily on private sector involvement, and, in wartime, the federal government intervened in a more direct manner.
businessmen later demanded implementation or continuation of the programs, Ottawa initiated the measures largely owing to the influence of powerful officials like Clifford Clark or energetic ministers like C. D. Howe.

Public pressure for improvements in Vancouver's housing conditions emerged in the 1910s and 1920s, mounted in the 1930s, and peaked in the 1940s. Local activists usually demanded intervention from all three governments, and the City and the Province in turn pressed Ottawa to act. Initially, the activists entreated federal authorities to make available more funds for the Better Housing Scheme. Later, their drive to obtain public housing, which began in earnest in the late 1930s, met with success in 1949 with a National Housing Act amendment and in 1954 with the completion of the Little Mountain project. During and after the war, activists agitated for evictions relief, additional rental housing built by federal crown corporations, emergency shelters, and continuation of rent controls. In the beginning, the movement towards socially oriented housing programs consisted of representatives of women's, veterans', and labour organizations and of civic bureaucrats and professionals. In the 1930s and 1940s, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Communist Party politicized the campaign when they joined with those organizations and other groups like the Vancouver Housing Association, Citizens' Rehabilitation Council, unemployed workers' leagues, or First United Church in the drive towards social housing. The "reform" of earlier
years became the "activism" of the depression and wartime decades.

Although activists applied pressure to the Vancouver City Council and to the British Columbia government, both were reluctant to intervene in the housing issue despite the fact that constitutional responsibility lay with the Province. After the Better Housing Scheme experiment, neither the City nor the provincial government would become involved in any program with the potential for financial risk. Both Vancouver and Victoria regarded the housing problem as national in scope and in remedy. In the 1940s and the early 1950s, their perspectives on intervention began to alter as conditions deteriorated, as activists' pressure increased, as the political threat of the CCF grew, as the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties became more committed to housing reforms, and as the federal government offered shared responsibilities in implementing and operating projects. In the end, a majority on City Council supported large-scale schemes like Fraserview and Little Mountain, and the Byron Johnson and W. A. C. Bennett administrations approved public housing in Vancouver.

At the same time, an opposition to the activists emerged and exerted pressure on all three governments. Beginning in the late 1930s, elements in the property, lending, and building industries enthusiastically promoted state initiatives that stimulated housing construction in the private sector and increasingly rejected measures like sub-
sidized public housing and rent controls. Opposition became most strident and forceful in the early and mid-1950s with the development of the Little Mountain public housing complex and with proposals to build additional projects.

This story of the response to Vancouver's housing problem is historiographically significant in several ways: in its integration of national and local viewpoints on the housing issue; in its "activist" theme; in its depiction of the complexity of class relations; in its attitude to social control; and in its rejection of the liberal-progressive perspective on state intervention in the housing industry. As well, it adds to or contrasts with other approaches to housing history based on the inequalities of capitalist society, gender, suburbanization, and architectural history.

The description of the response to the shelter problem from governments and activists alike requires the integration of national and local occurrences and the examination of evidence at federal, provincial, and civic levels. The influence of the federal government, the mortgage industry, and national figures like Howe or Clark merges with the impact of the maturing social housing movement, the left-wing political parties, and local personalities like Gutteridge or Stratton. The study extends the work of historians who have focused on federal decision-making or studied local events or begun already to combine local and national perspectives. In the future, others will likely broaden the content of this work by investigating the housing
problems and responses in other major Canadian cities, by
describing the activities of national organizations like the
Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, and by
comparing Canadian policy and activist reactions to those in
other nations. In fusing local and national dimensions,
this study also combines the two major historiographical
trends in post-war Canada, the old political history and the
"new social history." Consequently, it merges the social and
political, the ordinary Canadian and federal elite, and the
historiographical context and narrative.

In its integration of the local and national, this
work portrays the role of community agitation in the formu-
lation of national housing policy and adds to recent British,
American, and Canadian literature with the same "activist"
theme. In both Britain and the United States, historians
have described the impact of local activism in shaping
government housing initiatives. Although their work varies
in emphasis and scope, Martin J. Daunton, David Englander,
Joseph Melling, and Séan Damer have connected the tension of
landlord-tenant relations and the introduction of rent con-
trols and council housing in early twentieth-century Britain.
In the United States, Peter Marcuse, Thomas S. Hines, Rosalie
Genevro, Ann L. Buttenweiser, and Neil H. Lebowitz have
examined the effect of local interest group competition on
federal programs like rent controls and public housing;
Robert B. Fairbanks has reported on the growth and achieve-
ments of Cincinnati's low-cost housing movement; and Robert
Lawson, Joel Schwartz and others have revealed the success of New York's tenant activists in forcing concessions from landlords and government. However, the approach used in this Vancouver study differs from both the British and American "activist" historiography. Like the British work and like the Lawson and Schwartz analyses, this account argues from the viewpoint of class relations rather than from the American perspective of interest group interaction. Yet unlike the Melling and Damer examples it depicts the complexity of class relations over the housing issue in Vancouver rather than a clear-cut class struggle or mass movement of the working class on the Clydeside. Within the context of Canadian housing historiography, the "activist" explanation of Vancouver's experience reveals the politicization of reform efforts in this city and in the country during the 1930s and 1940s. In its emphasis upon left-wing political influence, it therefore differs from earlier writing about pre-depression housing reform. Moreover, unlike more recent histories of Canada written from the national perspective, it argues that local activism as well as federal initiative contributed to the development of Canadian housing programs and to the emergence of the country's welfare state.

When this study takes note of the complexity of relations between and within Vancouver's two major classes, it contributes to recent discussions about class in British Columbia. As in Britain and the United States, elements of
both working and middle classes participated in the drive towards improved housing conditions. Working-class representatives looked for better accommodation and employment for working people, and middle-class participants desired a business recovery. Some members of both classes pursued social stability and professional or political advancement, and all sought relief for the less fortunate. At the same time, divisions occurred within each of those two classes. For example, although the CCF and the Labor Progressive Party put forth similar positions on the housing issue, they remained in conflict owing to animosities aroused over other matters. As well, some middle-class players worked for or supported improvements in residential conditions, and yet lenders, realtors, suppliers, property owners, builders, and landlords opposed many initiatives proposed by governments and activists. In the 1940s, the social housing movement included participants from both the two major classes at a time when workers' militancy peaked in the workplace. Apparently, in obtaining their goals, working people chose to fight employers in the workplace and to act with the middle class in the drive for better housing. This depiction of the complexity of class relations and of the collectivist sentiment for social housing among many workers thus offers another dimension to British Columbia research stressing the "community" of classes over specific social issues like education or the force of materialistic, individualistic values in the working class.
By contrast to this "activist" interpretation, writers in the 1970s like Enid Gauldie, Anthony S. Wohl, John Burnett, and John N. Tarn took a liberal-progressive approach to housing history. They described a natural progression from a laissez-faire situation towards a state role in housing in Britain once authorities clearly perceived the problem of working-class shelter. The prime actors who presented this issue to government were middle-class philanthropists and politicians rather than working people, and their motives consisted of humanitarian impulses, political and economic considerations, and social control. However, Vancouver's experience demonstrates that no natural progression led to government intervention in its housing. Instead, crises in shelter brought on by depression, war, and reconstruction precipitated direct or indirect state involvement to stabilize the economy or to generate employment, and local pressure compelled Ottawa to develop more socially oriented initiatives to meet the long- and short-term aspects of the accommodation problem. Activists included both working- and middle-class citizens with a variety of motives.

In stressing the participation of both the working- and the middle-classes, the "activist" perspective differs markedly from American interpretations of reform based upon humanitarianism/liberal-progressivism, consensus/status, or organization. All of those attitudes to reform eliminate or de-emphasize the part of working-class representatives in
obtaining improvements in society. Instead, they assign the role to the middle class and its humanitarianism, its imposition of moral and social order, its maintenance of the capitalist system and middle-class status, or its professional and scientific efforts to control a disordered society.

The "activist" approach to Vancouver's experience also differs from the "social control" perspective found in both the American and British housing literature. In 1962, Roy Lubove regarded housing reform in New York City during the Progressive era as an instrument of social control. Almost a decade later, Gareth Stedman Jones viewed both philanthropic and new suburban housing as upper- and middle-class strategies to control London's working class. By comparison, an "activist" history takes into account the role of working people and their representatives in obtaining the amelioration of residential conditions. Still, it does not discard social control theory. Some "citizens in action" apparently believed in introducing housing improvements to minimize social unrest after both world wars and during the depression. Moreover, in bringing in a soldiers' housing program or an evictions freeze, the federal government also seemingly adhered to the social control theory.

The "activist" historiographical perspective extends or contrasts with other approaches in housing history. For instance, it is in general agreement with the assertions of many historians of Canadian housing who have argued that the reforms of the first half of the twentieth century have not
fundamentally altered the inequalities of capitalist societ-

ty. Terry Copp and Michael Piva made this assertion about philan
thropic and regulative reforms in Montreal and Toronto before 1921-1929. Alan Moscovitch and Albert Rose have noted that government has attended to the residual residential construction that the private sector cannot profitably handle. John Bacher, David Hulchanski, Alvin Finkel, and myself have remarked on the interconnected role of government and business in the reform process and on federal emphasis upon the welfare of the housing market rather than the welfare of the disadvantaged in accommodation. As the aggregate census figures and the information specific to the downtown area show, improvements in Vancouver housing under federal legislation benefited middle-income families more than low-income households.

In demonstrating the significant role played by local women in the social housing movement, this "activist" study also contributes to housing literature based on gender by taking the story of their involvement beyond philanthropical reform to social and political activism. Although they did not invent a "grand domestic revolution in women's material conditions" or lead rent strikes like their militant Clydeside counterparts, they promoted the housing cause on City Council and in the Legislative Assembly, attended and spoke at eviction rallies, and organized demonstrations for shelter relief, in addition to setting up and running registries, supporting women's, church, community, professional,
housing, planning, veterans', and labour groups that urged improvements, and sitting on the Vancouver Housing Authority. Initiatives like war workers' homes, veterans' projects, emergency shelter, or public housing that their efforts made possible benefited other women and their families. As well, the co-operative houses established by Laura Jamieson and the Vancouver Housing Association's study of single working women's accommodation assisted unmarried female workers. This activism did not alter the unequal status of women in Canada's patriarchal society and emerged from maternal as well as socialist feminism.

Furthermore, the "activist" viewpoint discloses marked dissimilarities between Canada and the United States in post-war suburbanization and in public housing developments as described by Kenneth T. Jackson in Crabgrass Frontier. Although in both countries federal housing legislation generated the construction of vast middle-class suburbs on a city's edge or in surrounding municipalities, the Canadian government under pressure from local activists built and operated huge working-class subdivisions of veterans' rental housing like Renfrew Heights and Fraserview and eventually sold the homes to its tenants. According to Peter Oberlander, by 1949 federal crown corporations had built about 30,000 units in 375 projects in fringe areas and on random lots in four years. In fact, the federal government was the biggest landlord in the country at the end of World War II. At the same time, Canadian suburbs, including the veterans'
subdivisions, resembled American ones in peripheral location, in low density, in architectural style, and in social homogeneity. Thus, in response to a question recently posed by Paul-André Linteau, the border did make a difference in the nature of post-war suburbanization in Canada through the impact of citizens' activism.

Moreover, in contrast to American projects, the city's first public housing complexes were located outside the downtown area in Little Mountain and South Vancouver. Two projects later went up in Strathcona. Because the projects accommodated both low-and moderate-income white families, the widespread ghettoization of poor, mainly non-white households in American inner cities that Jackson documents in Crabgrass Frontier did not happen in this country. Curiously, Vancouver's original public housing came about through the long-term efforts of local activists who wanted the first project built on cleared land in Strathcona. However, the City preferred to use vacant land away from the downtown area. Subsequently, the resistance of the Strathcona community kept clearances and redevelopment at a lower level than Leonard Marsh called for in his 1950 report.

Finally, this "activist" study furnishes added dimensions to current architectural writing. Although it stylistically resembled the contemporary American home, the housing obtained by Vancouver's "citizens in action" carried a message other than the one detailed by Clifford Edward Clark in The American Family Home, 1800-1960 or by Gwendolyn Wright.
in Moralism and the Model Home. According to both Clark and Wright, the model home of middle- and skilled working-class owner occupants, whether a bungalow, a Cape Cod house, or a ranch-style home, served to stabilize American democratic society and to reinforce a market economy and the capitalist system, as well as to protect and to support the family.

For governments and for the Citizens' Rehabilitation Council, houses built under the Better Housing Scheme or the war workers' and veterans' rental programs in bungalow, Cape Cod, or ranch styles played a part in stabilizing Vancouver's society during times of unrest, and they nurtured the city's families. Nevertheless, the role played by government in developing (and even in designing) the housing carried a different political message: although their actions never fundamentally altered the capitalist system, Vancouver's activists could pressure the state into providing adequate, affordable skilled working-class homes.

An "activist" history of Vancouver housing also contrasts with the more traditional stylistic orientation of the work of Sherry McKay and others now researching west coast modern houses. The architect-made veterans' units in Renfrew Heights and Fraserview represented a simplified Cape Cod revival and ranch design and accommodated working-class tenants, whereas the west coast modern homes showed the International Style's influence and housed middle-class owners. Nevertheless, the veterans' dwellings are significant in the development of Canadian (and North American)
architectural styles. They reflected the gradual minimalization in traditional design that occurred in early twentieth-century domestic architecture and that expressed a simplification in ornamentation and outline, a reduction in size, and an opening up of the plan. The first Wartime Housing Limited homes, which derived from the Cape Cod styles of the 1920s and 1930s through the National Housing Administration's "Design No. 501," displayed the greatest minimalization in interior and exterior design. After the early 1940s, elaboration replaced reduction, and the veterans' homes later in the decade offered a less simplified appearance and plan. Like the west coast modern houses, both the war workers' and the veterans' units contributed to the introduction to Canadian homes of advanced building technology and of modern kitchen, bathroom, laundry, and heating facilities.

These war workers' and veterans' houses represent as historically important a type of domestic architecture as the examples of the west coast modern style still extant on the west side of the city or on the North Shore of Burrard Inlet. Both deserve consideration from preservationists who now are beginning to fight to keep the first and the best examples of Vancouver's post-war architecture. Unfortunately, developers have already started to demolish and replace the Renfrew Heights and Fraserview homes.

What other historical lessons may we learn from
the story of Vancouver's early social housing movement?

First, local activism worked in the past, and it can still work today. However, in the 1930s and 1940s, the housing problem was national in scope and in remedy, and Ottawa felt pressure from groups in other major cities across the country. Now, although the low-income aspect of the housing problem is widespread in Canada, only Toronto and Vancouver experience the crisis in middle-income accommodation. For this (and other ideological reasons), the current federal government is less disposed to act today than it was in earlier decades. Activists in Vancouver presently have to look to the civic and the provincial governments for a response. If past experience is any indication, their efforts will meet with most success in a situation in which both working- and middle-class citizens participate in the drive for improvements - the wider the problem and the broader the support, the more chance for success.

Secondly, many of the solutions proposed by the activists and/or by the federal government in the 1930s and 1940s, including temporary and permanent programs for home ownership, rehabilitation, conversion, rent control, public housing, registries, co-operative projects, and privately and publicly owned rental accommodation, are still applicable today. In fact, the origins of some recent creative approaches to housing problems lie in the initial, fertile period of national policy development. For example, the idea for the so-called "third sector" in which community-based orga-
nizations build social housing was present in the 1944 Curtis report. Its author, Leonard Marsh, envisaged housing constructed by public, private, and co-operative sectors. Moreover, the wide range of approaches used in the 1940s met the dual nature of the accommodation problem: this experience suggests that a variety of solutions to meet both low- and middle-income needs is necessary even now.

In the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, social activists took on the housing problem in Vancouver. At first, these "citizens in action" contributed individually and organizationally to the introduction, implementation, and continuation of national housing programs. In the 1950s and 1960s, they would stop redevelopment having effects detrimental to their homes and community. Later, they would participate in the actual planning and design of projects like Strathcona's rehabilitation and False Creek's co-operative housing complexes. As well, they would organize to improve tenants' living conditions in the downtown eastside and to fight the current housing crisis. Over the years, the activists have indeed come to grasp the concept of housing as a human right first sensed by Humphrey Carver in the late 1940s.

Many housing activists, especially those who belonged to left-wing political parties, trade unions, socially oriented churches, progressive community organizations, and women's groups, have been part of a wider thrust for social change in Vancouver. This larger movement extends back in time to the late 1800s and forward to the 1980s with
Solidarity Coalition and the annual Peace Marches. Not unexpectedly, the activists have employed the wider movement's tactics and gathered in the same streets and similar meeting places. As participants in this broader drive for change, today's "citizens in action" for better housing have heard and embraced its fundamental message - organize and initiate change.
Anthony Sutcliffe, "Why Planning History?" *Built Environment* 7, 2 (1981): 65. According to Sutcliffe, "history allows the planner (and housing specialist) to take his bearings, to establish new objectives and to map out routes towards them."

2 United Church Archives, Vancouver School of Theology, Papers of Hugh Dobson, B7, file S, "Housing Vancouver: A Survey of the Housing Position in Vancouver by the Vancouver Housing Association," August 1939.


8 Donna R. Gabaccia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change among Italian Immigrants, 1880-


13 Sheryl Salloum, Malcolm Lowry: Vancouver Days (Madeira Park, B. C.: Harbour Publishing, 1987), passim. Lowry and his wife spent their summers and often their winters as well in shacks at Dollarton on Burrard Inlet's north shore; the shacks occupied a healthier, more rural environment than the ones in False Creek.


15

For an example of this conflict, the 1946 strike of the International Woodworkers' of America, see, Stephen Gray, "Woodworkers and Legitimacy: The IWA in Canada, 1937-1957" (Ph. D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1989), pp. 210-55.


21


26 See the books by Copp and Piva mentioned in n4; see also, Moscovitch and Drover's Inequality, Rose's Canadian Housing Policies, Bacher's "Canadian Housing 'Policy' in Perspective," Hulchanski's "The 1935 Dominion Housing Act," Wade's "Wartime Housing Limited," and Finkel's Business and Social Reform in the Thirties.

27 For the literature on gender and housing, see, Dolores Hayden, The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs in American Homes, Neighbourhoods, and


32 See, Jackson, pp. 190-230; and Peter Dreier and J. David Hulchanski, "Affordable Housing: Lessons from Canada," The American Prospect 1 (Spring 1990): 120.

33 Clark, xi-xvi, 237-43; and Wright, Moralism, pp. 1-6, 294.
"Third-sector" housing consists of accommodation built by three types of organizations: "public nonprofits" (housing companies created by local government); "private nonprofits" (church groups, unions, community organizations); and non-profit, non-equity housing co-operatives. Of course, co-operative housing was built on Cape Breton Island before the Curtis report; see, Mary Elliott Arnold, *The Story of Tompkinsville* (New York: Co-operative League, 1940).


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427
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