PUBLIC POLICY AND COMMUNITY

PUBLIC POLICY AND COMMUNITY:

THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ON PELHAM, ONTARIO

By

DAVID CHARLES WALKER, B.A., M.A.

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AUTHOR: David Charles Walker, B.A. (Carleton University)
M.A. (Queen's University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Marshall N. Goldstein

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Abstract

The focus of this study is the impact of Ontario's regional government schemes on the small town of Pelham where the writer lived as a participant-observer for two years. The argument is made that, while some benefits have been achieved in the provision of certain services, regional government is more of a failure than a success. Pelhamites have found that the new local and regional governments are quite antithetical to what they knew and valued in local politics. Consequently, as a group, these citizens are more antagonistic to their government than they remembered having been prior to the structural reform. This antagonism is felt more intensely among the traditionalists living in the rural areas than among the newly arrived village commuters. The departure from the past is symbolized by planning, a policy framework significantly different from the political style of the old councils. The conflict between local citizens and the new organizations is best illustrated by two public decisions, the implementation of land planning and the closure of schools. These two policies are examined in detail to point out the difficulties that have arisen because of provincial efforts to reform local government institutions without taking into account community values. It is apparent that Pelhamites are not satisfied that the new governments are concerned about their town nor are they confident of their own ability to influence major policy outcomes. The most damaging impact is that it is widely accepted in the town that provincial authorities have not created new communities as promised but have destroyed what community had existed for the people of Pelham.

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Chapter One

Pelham and the Problem of Community

The thesis deals with local government reform in Ontario by studying its impact on Pelham, a small town in the Niagara region. Although Ontario regional government reform had its genesis in Toronto in the early fifties, much of what has happened since has taken place outside the metropolitan areas. The Ontario government has reorganized the municipal structure in and around medium sized cities such as Sudbury, Kitchener, Oakville, Brampton, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls as well as the metropolitan regions of Hamilton and Ottawa. Little is yet known about the political life of these smaller centres and the surrounding countryside.

The thesis follows an intellectual tradition which has largely been concerned about how communities have been affected by major institutional changes. Researchers have used community studies to bring wider societal issues into the context of everyday life. For example, Vidich and Bensman explained in the introduction of their study that their research was "an attempt to explore the foundations of social life in a community which lacks the power to control the institutions that regulate and determine its existence. It is in this sense that the community is viewed as a stage on which major issues and problems typical of the society are played out."[1] Margaret Stacey's remarks in her study of Banbury

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[1] Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community (Garden City, 1960), p. x.

are also helpful: "in studying the town an attempt was made to relate the parts to the whole . . . the various situations of family life, or the ingredients in social and political problems, are so much matters of everyday experience that we have long ceased to notice them."[2] As a final example, small towns of the Canadian prairies were recently investigated by a journalist, Heather Robertson, who sought to show the effects of a disintegrating social environment on the habitants. "This book is about the people who have stayed. They are the hard core-tough, reactionary, archetypical people whose lives have been determined by the scramble to survive in an alien land and a cruel society . . . . The style of contemporary rural society has been set by diminution--of people, money, power, youth--and its rules are the rigid routines of energetic people hoarding a diminishing stock of political and cultural currency."[3] Given this tradition of investigating communities to find out the impact of societal changes, it is appropriate at this time to look at a town to find out the effects of the newly conceived Ontario regional government schemes.

The basic pattern of local government has been well established in this country for over one hundred years. Indeed, the real significance of the Ontario government's acceptance of the concept of regional government is that it was the first change in the structure and purposes of local government since Confederation. What follows here is an account of

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[2] Margaret Stacey, Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury (Oxford, 1970), p. v. The quotation is taken from Barbara Wootton, Testament for Social Science (London, 1950).

[3] Heather Robertson, Grass Roots (Toronto, 1971), pp. 96-97.

one such change and its impact on Pelham. The central focus is not so much with matters of administration and services as with the impact on community life, particularly community participation and involvement.[4] Nor is this written as a comprehensive or holistic study of Pelham. The objective is to study the effects of the regional governments on the political life of the townspeople. Other aspects of community life are included to give context to the meaning of the new governments.

A particularistic study such as this is useful to further our knowledge of Canadian politics. Can we assume that there is a similar political culture in our Canadian metropolitan regions (which are generally better researched) as in our small towns? Our ignorance of small town politics is due, in part, to the fact that there has not been a long tradition of community (political) research in Canada although local settlements have been studied for a number of other purposes.[5] Where carried out, political studies have either dealt with the problem of reforming local government structures or maintaining an acceptable neigh-

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[4] Community participation is one of the central concepts used to analyze the impact of regional government. This term applies to those situations in which citizens are involved in communal social and political spheres such as political parties, elections, council work, education, recreation, church and voluntary associations. As it is normally used, participation is an active idea, meaning attending meetings, lobbying, contributing money, etc. and does not include simple membership in an organization. Robert Pranger, The Eclipse of Citizenship Power and Participation in Contemporary Politics (New York, 1968), chapter 5, pp. 87-102.

[5] See, for example, Everett Hughes, "French Canada: The Natural History of a Research Project," in Arthur J. Vidich, Joseph Bensman and Maurice R. Stein, eds., Reflections on Community Studies (New York, 1964), pp. 71-83. A more recent publication has been Rex Lucas' study of Canadian one industry towns. Rex. A. Lucas, Minetown, Milltown, Railtown, Life in Canadian Communities of Single Industry (Toronto, 1971), pp. 4-11.

bourhood environment.[6] Both types of studies have been concerned primarily with metropolitan phenomenon. Because of the apparent lack of analysis of smaller centres, this study of Pelham represents a conscious effort to carry out a research project outside the major cities.

The question of how to proceed in such a study is a difficult one. It was decided, however, that since the major concern was with community political life and not with administrative efficiency, it would be best to concentrate on the structure and activities of one town. Pelham, located within the Regional Municipality of Niagara, was chosen because of its size (ten thousand), its people (farmers, villagers, and commuters) and its problems (the closure of its schools and the development of its farmland). Participant observation was selected as the most suitable research technique because it would facilitate an intimacy with local political and social activity that could not be achieved except through direct and continuous exposure to Pelham society. The conclusions, which are described and justified throughout this study, were reached in the course of participating in, and observing, as many aspects of Pelham's formal and informal social and political life as was possible during two years.

The project grew out of a personal conviction that community politics is valued by citizens, perhaps much more than has been previously indicated by social scientists.[7] The intrusion of regional government pro-

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[6] See, for example, J. L. Granatstein, Marlborough Marathon One Street against a Developer (Toronto, 1971), and James Lorimer, A Citizen's Guide to City Politics (Toronto, 1972).

[7] An assumption also challenged by Dilys M. Hill, Participating in Local Affairs (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 191.

vided an opportunity to assess this assumption and to explain what Pelham's citizens expected from their local government institutions. Community studies, therefore, can be a most fruitful way of looking at Canadian politics and are a useful technique for testing ideas about community and local government. There is a need for a stronger notion of the reality and nature of community and some clues as to what local political life means to the citizenry. This study begins with the problem of community, an investigation of the structure and activity in Pelham, and then proceeds to evaluate the impact of local government reorganization.

What has happened in Pelham is important and is of consequence. First, it is essential, as policy makers continue to reorganize Canadian local governments, that we understand the consequences of these actions for local communities. Secondly, it is not of little importance that we understand more about the local political culture of smaller Canadian settlements, surely one of the obvious gaps in field research.[8] Thirdly, to know more about the consequences of public decisions necessarily causes one to stop and ponder about possible alternative actions. If one set of institutions must be destroyed, are we knowledgeable about what we are creating? In this respect the study has not been guided entirely by an

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[8] The concept of political culture is used here to connect attitudes and beliefs about politics to local factors. There are differences in the sense of efficacy, in citizen trust in governments, and "in the degree and type of involvement in political matters." These variations may be accounted for in the "ethos or community norms of an area deriving from particular historical forces and events." Richard Simeon and David J. Elkins, "Regional Political Cultures in Canada," Canadian Journal of Political Science, (September, 1974), p. 397. See also John Wilson, "The Canadian Political Cultures: Towards a Redefinition of the Nature of the Canadian Political System," Canadian Journal of Political Science, (September, 1974), pp. 439-447 and Robert J. Pranger, The Eclipse of Community, pp. 53-55.

academic problem but by a personal curiosity as to what has been happening in communities which policy makers have been intent on improving. The solution is by no means easy, as each public decision obviously requires trade-offs, involving losses and gains in complex and sometimes unforeseen ways. Recently, Ontario politics has been guided by policies chosen by officials seeking to channel changes in the hope of creating better conditions for some others, mostly be devising comprehensive developmental schemes. Yet, the lack of local support for, and, in some instances, firm resistance to, these initiatives, causes one to reconsider whether or not this is the most satisfactory course of action. This concern is what led to this community study: a presentiment that regional government was being rejected because it was antithetical to the character of the Pelham community. This could only be analyzed once that community life had been studied, including its political, social and economic spheres. Knowledge of the 'ordinary' life of everyday Pelham has led to a much more comprehensive analysis. The strategy applied for learning about regional government was first to study the town. In 1972-74 the writer resided, participated, observed, listened and interviewed in order to record and analyze the salient characteristics of the people, their politics and the rhythm of life in Pelham.

Community

If the basis of this evaluation of regional government is its impact on community life, then it is critical that the concept of community be clarified. Because it is a term which has long been used by social scientists, its meanings have proliferated until there is no longer any consensus as to its proper application. Writing in 1955, George A. Hillery

could count ninety-four different definitions of community and since then others have added their own ideas.[9] One tradition (and the one accepted here) has been to use the community concept to describe a local settlement; however, there has been little agreement beyond that as to what are the common characteristics of a community. It is possible, nevertheless, to contrast the two important traditions which are of consequence to this study. On the one hand, community has come to mean any group of people living together within recognizable boundaries. On the other hand, the idea of community is used to describe a group of citizens who are conscious of their shared life situation and admit to a common perspective on the world about them.

For example, a stated purpose of regional government, as expressed by provincial authorities, is to encourage and maintain a pattern of identifiable communities.[10] This goal indicates that the planners are cognizant of a special relationship between groups of people living together and local government and that these units of government are intended, in part, to establish and foster community values. A central question around which this research project was pursued is whether or not residents in the new Town of Pelham believe that they are now a part of a new community. When citizens answer questions about their community, it is very evident that their notion of community is not altogether the

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[9] George A. Hillery, "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement", Rural Sociology, XX, (1955), pp. 111-123.

[10] See, for example, a speech by the then Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs, W. Darcy McKeough, "Ontario Reshapes Local Government to Meet the Challenges of Rapid Urbanization," mimeo, (n.p., February 1971).

same as that of the provincial officials. The fact that this difference in approach to the meaning of community exists is critical to understanding the impact that the Regional Municipality of Niagara and the Niagara South Board of Education has had for the citizens of Pelham.

Even though they restructured local government, mostly because of provincially sought administrative reforms, Ontario authorities recognized that local sentiment and attachment to individual communities prevented their destroying completely the old set of municipalities. Yet, as bureaucrats and politicians responsible for Ontario municipal structures, they were faced with the need to build a municipal system which would minimize public expenditures in the efficient delivery of a wide range of services, especially those necessary for development. The question became not what is a community, but community for what? Thus, the planning of any new communities would necessarily incorporate criteria of services and functions. A community has come to represent a unit in which a set of officials employed by a municipal government under the direction of a council and in co-operation with other sets of authorities in regional, provincial and, on occasion, federal governments, provide designated services such as fire protection, local roads, sewers, water, tax collection and recreation facilities on as economical scale as any other organizational structure. Values which are espoused in these institutions are rationality, expertise, and practicality; communities are chosen because they are the optimum format available to achieve the developmental and administrative goals that have been set by the central authorities.

Accepting the idea of a service state as an ideal type has been a long tradition in both the practice and the analysis of the relationship

between the citizen and his government. Tönnies' idea of gescellschaft parallels this characterization of the image of the service state explained here.[11] Social science researchers, carrying out their work in communities, have typically accepted the legal boundaries of a municipality or a group of municipalities as the boundaries of their research community. By readily accepting these boundaries, they have assumed that a community is a group of people living together and being serviced by a particular set of authorities; that is, their idea of community could adequately be described as a township, village, town, city, region, province or nation-state instead of simply 'community'.

The justification for insisting on a more precise use of the concept of community is that there exists a second use of the term which is all too often confused with the first. This second notion implies that a community is a group of citizens living together who have a shared past and expect a shared fate. Because the participants recognize that they are in the same life situation, there is a commonality in beliefs, values and lifestyles. This idea of community is subjective as the people themselves are aware that they are involved members of a community. Because it is subjective, it can best be understood through participant observation, a research technique which makes it possible to share the communal experience. Community is more than activity. It is internalized and determines the ways in which members of the community view the world about them.

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[11] Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society (Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft) (New York, 1957).

This second construct is similar to that suggested by Tönnies in his notion gemeinschaft, the ideal type traditional community. One tradition in social science has been to rework Tönnies' dichotomies as to the differences between pre-industrial and industrial society, village and city, rural and urban, formal and informal and so forth.[12] These analyses and ideal types have been developed to illustrate that, as far as several researchers could determine, the ways of villagers in an agricultural economy are somehow unique and different from that experienced in twentieth century urban-industrial complexes. More commonly, these ideas have become romanticized. For instance, part of the Canadian mythology is the belief that the villages and farms of the past were part of a more ideal culture than what we experience in our modern cities. Despite evidence that early settlers were hardly idealists as they hacked farms out of the forest or built small businesses in bleak and isolated villages, these very settlements are now shrouded in a mystique of happiness, community spirit and a sense of good will and commitment among family, friends, and neighbours. The citizens of this type of community are said to have interacted in the intimacy of knowing each other's past and acknowledging the similarity in life situation and fate of fellow citizens.

The first concept of community, based as it is on government created boundaries, is frequently confused with the second, an organic, natural organization. Researchers have confused a sense of commun-

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[12] John C. McKinney, "The Application of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft as Related to other Typologies," in Tönnies, pp. 12-29.

ity (which, in fact, is usually an individual's description of the town as a 'nice place to live alongside of good neighbours') with the second concept which has a more complicated meaning than 'sense of place'. The latter involves the concept that the community is a solidarity group, not an aggregation, and has a particular status among its members who will commit themselves to common projects in face of communal problems. The communal solidarity is particularly evident when the accepted security of local life is disrupted by an outside threat, whether that be an institution, such as regional government, or an idea, such as socialism, or a new drug, such as hashish. The Town of Pelham, for instance, might have been a new community from the perspective of regional and provincial planners but for the citizens living in Fenwick the governmental restructuring represents a nightmarish destruction of their community. Yet, for the villagers of Fonthill, another settlement within the new town, regionalism has no such meaning because there has been no community in Fonthill, only people living close together.

These two ideas of community are useful in searching out the impact of regional organizations on Pelham. Part of the town is made up of families who view themselves as being members of a traditional community inasmuch as they have a shared history, they recognize their mutual commitment to each other and they view themselves as having a common future. They feel that "they are in this together." However, they are a dying lot: their children almost always leave, farms are difficult to work under present conditions and small stores have a tough time competing with the large chain operations. If the notion of community has any sub-

jective meaning it is among these citizens who are very conscious of what they are losing. Most of the townspeople do not see themselves as being within a single community such as Pelham. Some even feel excluded by the traditionalists who guard their past and their dwindling circle of friends. This does not imply that other Pelhamites are alienated or without companionship because they do not see themselves to be part of the Pelham community. Many have extensive friendships with those they meet through businesses, schools, voluntary associations, recreation and so on. In other words, many have interests outside of Pelham to the extent that it really does not matter what happens in the town. They are able to move around and find other interests. These citizens do not have an extensive stake in the Pelham community. Thus, while one purpose of this thesis is to show that the province has failed to create a new community, members of the old community had no idea of how to protect themselves or how to be creative on their own. If a community is to survive it needs the capacity to protect itself from outside threats or to adjust to new circumstances about it. In having neither, traditional Pelham was doomed to failure.

Impact Analysis

Impact analysts, while they are involved in one of the newer fields of investigation in policy research, have produced a number of complex explanations for the study of decision outcomes.[13] Unfortunately,

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[13] Cost-benefit analysis and planning-programming-budgeting systems were both developed to help bureaucrats evaluate the successes and shortcomings of their administrative structures and policies. One effort to estimate the impact of policy decisions on politics and other spheres of activity was made by Theodore J. Lowi, in "American Business, Public Policy, Case Studies and Political Theory," World Politics, (July, 1964), especially pp. 690-691.

it was found that, for the purposes of this project, these models were designed primarily to find out the impact of policy structures and decisions on specific institutions, mostly public bureaucracies. Little work has been carried out on impact research on the citizenry, that is on government-citizen relationships. A community study such as this is designed not so much to find out the impact that regional policies and structures have had on the politicians and the bureaucrats or on the costs involved in following a certain budgetary programme as it is to evaluate how new institutions functioning in ways different from the old routines have affected the citizens of a small town.

The major purpose of regional government is to expand the capacity of municipalities to facilitate private development and to minimize public costs in delivering services. The designers intended to improve communities through expansion of the size of the local government and to preserve the individuality of each unit through land use planning. It is too early at this time to assess the full impact of these policy objectives. Have costs been reduced? Has there been good comprehensive planning? Has development been achieved more readily? This is a task which can be left to the numerous interested parties - such as regional officials, provincial authorities, the federal Ministry of State for Urban Affairs, etc. - who will surely be studying the impact of this service programme in a more comprehensive framework.[14]

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[14] There was evidence that this was beginning to happen after this study was completed. In the fall of 1974 Regional Niagara Council requested an impact study and the province was planning to begin it in 1975.

What is required at this time is witness to the process whereby citizens absorbed the newly emerging structures and the elimination of familiar structures into their own understanding of their images of local political life. It was this task that was timely - indeed which had to be done immediately. In order to be understood, it needs to be understood as a process not as a consequent, that is, a structural polity. Although this new meaning of community was not a major factor in the minds of those who re-structured Regional Niagara, it had, nevertheless, as we shall show and as we felt then, a major affect on the citizens. The concept of community being applied here demands a research technique which is more comprehensive and subjective than that offered in the more routine impact analysis of the service functions of government.

This study is also different from other impact studies insofar as the views and opinions of provincial and regional public officials are only a backdrop to the ideas expressed by citizens in Pelham. While the critical interpretations offered by officials of their organizations are helpful in understanding how regional governments operate, the meaning to the community is quite a separate question. There is no reason to assume that municipal reorganization is having the effect that officials had intended. One way of proceeding to find out how others are interpreting these events is to live among them and to ask about their experiences, in other words, to let them tell their own story. In choosing between an administrative impact analysis and a community evaluation study the decision in favour of a community project was taken because

only this research style made possible the understanding of the subjective reaction of the citizens to the regional reorganization. The central problem is how the people of Pelham, including the elected officials, the municipal employees, the involved and the non-involved citizens, are now reacting to local politics and education since the regional bodies began to function. The method used, participant--observation, is chosen because it facilitated a unique opportunity to be involved with these citizens which was necessary to discover the meaning that these institutions had in their lives.

In constructing a framework for the analysis of the impact of regionalism on Pelham, information has been collected from both outside and inside the town. One of the first tasks was to discover why regional government was conceived and implemented. How are the planners and politicians intending to change Pelham? The question is answered by examining a series of public documents--research reports, provincial legislation, briefs and speeches--that were circulated during the policy formation time period and available to the citizens of Pelham. This initial research revealed that there were two separate problems which would require more detailed investigation. First, there are the changes in the structure of local government in the Pelham area. What is the impact of these structural changes? Secondly, officials intended that the policy outcomes would be different for communities like Pelham. What has been the impact of policy initiatives such as changes in the size of Pelham schools? Thus, this impact analysis is a twofold study of the implications, for Pelhamites, of the new structures of government and of the policy outcomes, or substan-

tive decisions, made within these new structures. For example, one interesting contrast is between the provincial intention to use regional bodies to create new communities and the opinions of citizens who a few years later argued that the impact of regionalism has been to destroy whatever vestiges that there were of their community.

Participant Observation

The decision to study the impact that regionalization has on Pelham raises questions as to what method is best suited for such an investigation. It was clear very early in the project that the more typical approaches for impact analysis, those dealing with an estimation of the new economic costs as a result of policy innovations, were not nearly as interesting to the citizens of Pelham as questions about the new regional style of politics and administration, and how they perceived these institutions to be affecting life in their community. The criteria for selecting an appropriate method were not so much those of objectivity as they were of subjectivity: how best to learn about how Pelham citizens were experiencing and evaluating these political changes. The choice of participant observation also reflects a personal concern that the research not be pursued in a removed or laboratory atmosphere. It was most important that I be involved with a group of citizens in order to overcome what I believe to be a 'gap', almost an antagonism, between social scientists and citizens not involved with the university. Similarly, I perceived that it would be useful to attempt to involve myself for a couple of years in a social environment where I might gain the confidence of local residents, where I might be able to research without major conflicts and where I might be of some use because of my university training and my earlier

experiences with citizen groups. The intention is that the conclusions of this study will not only be of value to those with similar intellectual concerns but also will be of some assistance to the people of Pelham. If they somehow better understand their town and their government because of this work, then this would be as satisfying as adding to the debate among social scientists as to the nature of politics in Canadian communities.

Participant observation is a research technique which offers just such an opportunity to become involved in local life in a way which would reveal a maximum of detailed observations about the impact of regionalization. While not a method commonly applied in political science research, participant observation has been used extensively in other fields of social science, particularly sociology and anthropology.[15] The participant observer makes an effort to gain a richness in detail which otherwise might be missed. While retaining the scientific criteria of relevance, internal consistency and replicability, he seeks to remove the distance between himself and the objects of enquiry. The anthropologist as participant observer might, for example, study an entire community by living there for an extended period of time, participating in local events, learning the local language, interviewing, constantly observing and making notes. The success of a project depends upon the field worker's physical proximity to the people he is studying, his learning of their language and their ways and his psychological involvement. It is also a method well

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[15] Two examples are Hortense Powdermaker, Stranger and Friend (New York, 1966) and Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers Group and Class in the Life of Italian America (New York, 1962).

suited to research in a small Ontario town where life might be as equally unfamiliar to the academic researcher. One need not travel to a foreign land to find people with different customs, traditions and language.

When this style of research was adopted, it was intended that the events in Pelham, the political drama, would be explained more fully if the socio-economic context was appreciated. The subjective environment is necessary background for explaining specific problems. If a researcher can involve himself with the citizens of a community, the chances are that he will be able to apprehend their life situation: "by taking the role of his subjects he recreates in his own imagination and experience the thoughts and feelings in the minds of those he studies."[16] To accomplish this recreation of the thoughts and experiences of others, the researcher must share in the life activities and sentiments of people in face-to-face relationships. The role of the participant-observer requires both detachment and personal involvement, a sensitive approach aptly described as sympathetic identification. Secondly, the participant observer should be a normal part of the culture and life of the people under observation; the scientific role is interdependent with the social role. Eventually the problem of entry is replaced by the problem of withdrawing, of regaining the independence to analyze the information and thoughts recorded during the study. The researcher, depending on his personality and the community, may choose any degree of involvement ranging from near-complete participant to near-complete observer. The criti-

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[16] Severyn Bruyn, The Human Perspective in Sociology The Method of Participant Observation (Englewood Cliffs, 1966), p. 12.

cal mode of operation is to become so much a part of the community as to not disturb the usual way of life.

If regional government was to be examined and analyzed as to its meaning for local citizens, it was apparent that the most appropriate method would be participant-observation in a community which had been subjected to regionalization. As the Regional Municipality of Niagara is one of the original regional structures, and as its date of inception was only 1970, or two and a half years before this study was initiated, it was thought that there would be a fair chance to talk with people about their experiences in local politics both before and after the inception of regional government. In addition there was an intriguing conflict in the education sphere over the Niagara South Board of Education's decisions to close down two secondary and five elementary schools.[17] Pelham's population, it was found, is an interesting mixture of farmers, working a variety of crops (including the tender fruit orchards around which there has been a great deal of debate as to their future in face of developmental pressures), and commuters, travelling daily to offices and factories in the surrounding municipalities. The town's population of ten thousand is of such a size that it was possible to learn about the citizenry through participation in and observation of events, especially those of significance for education and politics. Also, my role of participant-observer was aided greatly by the fact that my wife taught primary school at two different locations, in Fonthill (Fonthill Public School) in

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[17] Since the province introduced regional education bodies in 1969 in all parts of the province, this change would be the same for every area in Ontario.

the first year of the study and in Fenwick (E. W. Farr Memorial School) during the second.[18] As the character of the two villages is somewhat different, Fenwick being more 'rural' in character, we decided to move to Fenwick from Fonthill at the end of the first year of the study to observe differences in the life-styles within the two settlements.

The town of Pelham, then, represented a chance to study the impact of regionalization on citizens living somewhat different styles of life, where the population was not too large, where there was some controversy involving regional institutions and where there would be some assistance in entering into the community and in gathering information through informers. Seven individual techniques were combined to investigate the political life of Pelham: (1) use of local facilities, (2) attendance at meetings, gatherings and public places, (3) informal visiting with neighbours and friends, (4) formal and informal interviewing of community functionaries, (5) use of informants, (6) interviewing of officials outside of Pelham and (7) observation.[19] Unlike anthropological community studies, this one was not designed to be comprehensive but to

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[18] A brother (Brian) taught at Pelham Secondary School which the Board of Education was trying to close down. Both are keen observers of local life and were extremely helpful during the project. Brian, for instance, had moved to Fenwick three years before we moved into Fonthill and, as someone who had watched life closely since he arrived, he was able to compare notes with us as to ease of entry and so forth. Interestingly enough, at the same time that we moved Brian and his family bought a house, a significant change in status for a villager, and moved into Fonthill so that we were again able to notice differences in neighbourhoods from our individual perspectives.

[19] This is similar to the techniques used by Herbert Gans, The Urban Villagers, p. 337.

be a study of the impact of a particular set of public institutions, the Niagara South Board of Education and the Regional Municipality of Niagara, on the local political life.

The study was begun in August 1972 and completed two years later in July 1974. The first year was spent in an apartment complex in Fonthill while for the last twelve months we rented a duplex in Fenwick. My involvement in the community ranged from that of complete observer to complete participant; an example of high degree of participation was my association with those trying to keep Pelham Secondary School open. This school was the focal point of a dispute between the townspeople and the Niagara South Board of Education concerning its policy of consolidating schools within Pelham. The Board's decision to close Pelham Secondary School was intensely opposed for three years, 1971-1974. During the two years of this study, I was called in as a supply teacher regularly, providing a number of opportunities for my asking the involved and uninvolved staff and students questions about the Board and their thoughts about its political and administrative responsiveness.[20] For the last year, the principal at Pelham Secondary adopted me as an 'aide-de-camp' in his battle over the closing of the school, a participation situation which led to direct access to meetings, documents and decisions as I spent about six to ten hours a week with him over a thirty week period.

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[20] Additional supply teaching was carried out at other schools in Pelham and Welland allowing an opportunity to compare ideas noted at Pelham Secondary School about the Board in more routine teaching situations. Although I was very close to the principal during the last eight months, I had managed previous to this to interview a number of people who were at odds with the school's supporters.

Part of this time was passed away driving about the countryside on pleasant afternoons with his explaining the situation of farms we were viewing and answering my endless questions about families, politics and local history. In another citizens' organization, Community Concerns of Pelham, originally a church sponsored group which lasted only a few months, I became a committee chairman and participated in a number of small meetings held to plot ways that the leaders might keep people interested and involved in this community group. Several other town meetings were attended but, in these, the role of the observer was more appropriate. Public meetings such as local government candidate night, planning sessions and transportation talks were watched as citizens debated personal and group interests with public officials. Other situations, such as the bi-monthly town council meetings, as well as the Niagara South Board of Education and the Niagara Regional Government meetings, were structured to consider formally what had been decided privately so that one could only sit and observe public officials record their decisions with minimal discussion. Finally a number of social events including carnivals, beer festivals, baptisms, teacher get togethers and hockey games were attended to see how the political life was a part of the total community experience.

The role of participant observer was supplemented by a series of interviews covering (1) aspects of local politics relevant to the impact fo regional institutions, (2) local history, and (3) notions of citizen action in the community. The first series of interviews, conducted April-June 1973 involved all those who were holding an elected or appointed public position and dealing with regional institutions including regional officials, former school officials and politicians, citizens involved with

the two major citizen organizations, Community Concerns and the Concerned Parents of Pelham and intensive conversations with a few who were involved in local town life. The second series of interviews, January-February 1974, covered similar groups again but featured more selective questions probing the ideas gained from the first interviews and thought about during preliminary writing of this research report. Thus, individuals were chosen who should have had greater detail of the town than the average citizen and included among others the Fenwick 'historian', a newspaper reporter of twelve years' experience, and two officials who were available for repeated questioning. Only two interviews were refused, an alderman claiming to be too busy, and a former township official simply not wanting to be interviewed.

The New Regional Organizations

The regional institutions were implemented in two stages in the Niagara peninsula: the regional boards of education were formed in 1968 and 1969 followed by regional municipal government in 1970. The changes in the structure of school boards in Ontario are the result of a strategy designed within the Department of Education in order to implement provincially sought reforms in curriculum and administration without adding major costs to the central government. The old school boards were special purpose bodies elected at the same time as local councils, independent in matters of curriculum and personnel (but 'supervised' by provincial officials) and dependent on councils for budget approval and the collecting of the tax revenue. The provincial government first reorganized the Roman Catholic separate school boards effective January 1, 1968, into units which usually followed the county boundaries. The Welland County Roman Catholic

Separate School Board controlled the one separate elementary school in the village of Fonthill (St. Alexander) and one in Fenwick (St. Ann).[21] The legislation providing for the new public boards of education followed the next year, effective January 1, 1969. This special purpose body (first named the Welland County Board of Education and changed on January 1, 1970 to the Niagara South Board of Education) has been given more independence from local councils and the provincial governments in matters of budgeting, curriculum development and staffing.[22]

After nine years of political discussion and bargaining, the Ontario government passed legislation in 1969 forming the Regional Municipality of Niagara (Bill 174) effective January 1, 1970, making it the third such reorganization, after Metropolitan Toronto (1953) and

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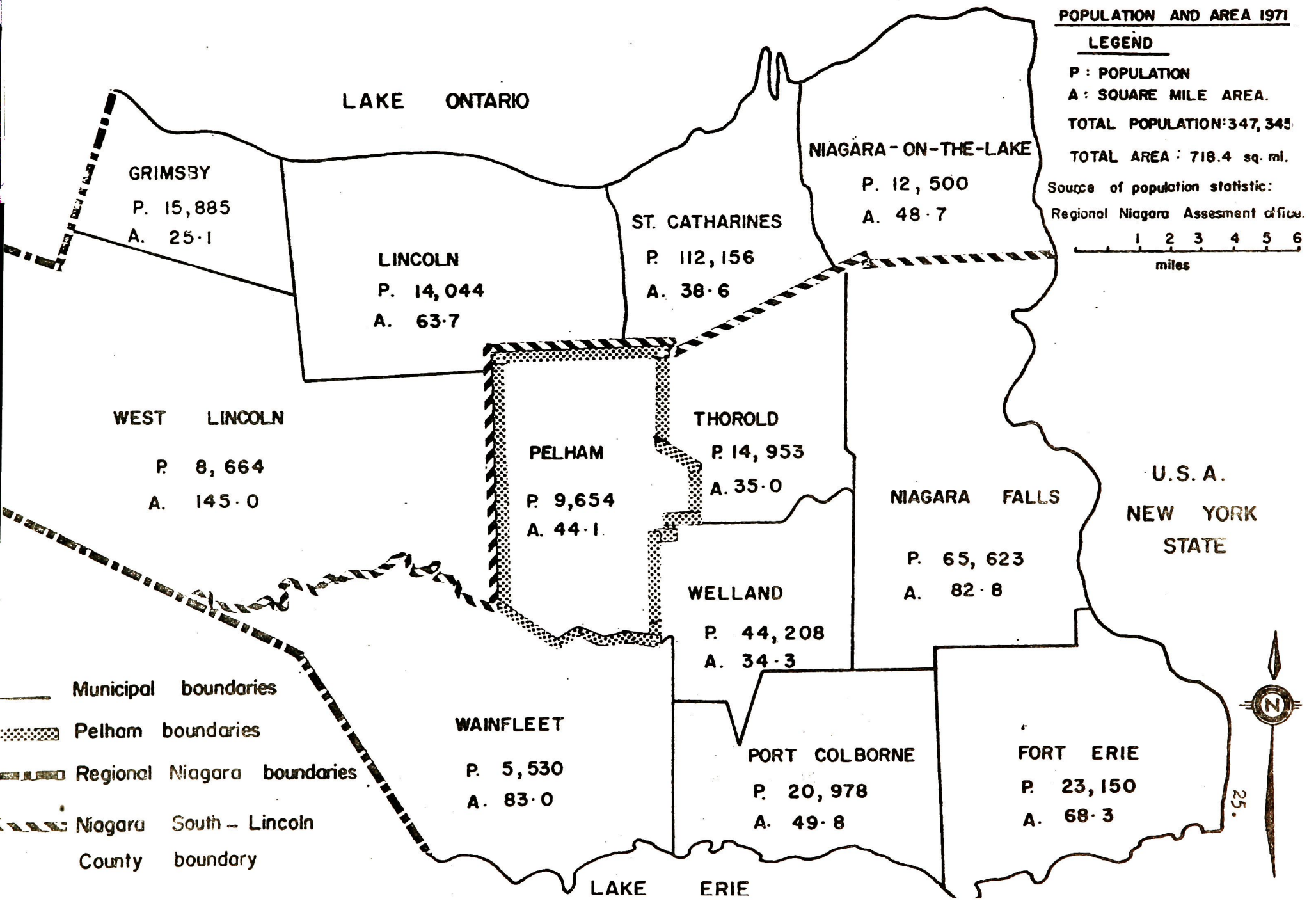
[21] Research was not carried out in any detail concerning the operations of the Separate School Board in Pelham. The public Board of Education was chosen because its policy objectives were controversial and the subject of much debate. The Welland County Roman Catholic School Board was, however, educating 118 pupils at St. Ann and 304 at St. Alexander with a combined staff of twenty-three. The total budget for the board was $7,349,320 in 1972. Sources: Correspondence from Alex Kuska, superintendent of Education and Secretary-Treasurer, Welland County Separate School Board, May 29, 1974 and the Board's Annual Report 1972 (Welland, 1973), p. 36.

[22] The Niagara South Board of Education, after regional government legislation became law in 1970, now contains the municipalities of Pelham, Wainfleet, Welland, Fort Erie, Thorold and Niagara Falls; Pelham is allowed one regular trustee and shares a separate school representative with Wainfleet and Thorold. There are twenty trustees on the Board. Five trustees are elected by separate school ratepayers on the Niagara South Board of Education in matters dealing with the administration of the secondary schools.

MAP ONE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA.



POPULATION AND AREA 1971

LEGEND

P : POPULATION
A : SQUARE MILE AREA.

TOTAL POPULATION: 347,345

TOTAL AREA : 718.4 sq. mi.

Source of population statistic:
Regional Niagara Assesment office.

1 2 3 4 5 6
miles

Ottawa-Carleton (1969). The new structure of twelve local governments[23] and one regional government replaces one of twenty-six municipalities and two counties. The Town of Pelham was created in this municipal reorganization, combining the large farming Township of Pelham with the compact and developed Fonthill Village and with a small parcel, on the eastern border of Fonthill, of Thorold Township.[24]

The area of Regional Niagara, 719 square miles, contained a population of 351,519 growing at a slow rate of 1.68 percent between 1966-71.[25]

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[23] The new local municipal governments are Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby, Lincoln, St. Catharines, West Lincoln, Thorold, Niagara Falls, Welland, Pelham, Wainfleet, Port Colborne and Fort Erie. Unlike previous regional governments, this one incorporated four cities (Welland, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and St. Catharines). Others had been centred around a single city.

[24] Regional Niagara is responsible for waterworks, sewage disposal, regional roads, planning (shared with local municipalities), health, welfare, police, regional parks and conservation, regional tax levy and capital borrowing. The local municipality is responsible for water distribution, sewage collection, local parks and recreation, local roads, planning, fire protection, tax collection, sidewalks, garbage collection, street lighting.

[25] Population of Regional Niagara: Actual and Forecast

	1951	1961	1966	1971	1981	1991	2001
Regional Niagara	212,599	291,315	324,917	351,519	497,709	469,567	525,067
Average Annual Rate of Growth		3.2%	2.2%	1.6%	1.5%	1.4%	1.1%
Ontario	4,597,542	6,236,092	6,960,870	7,582,487	8,871,918	10,320,616	11,655,403
Regional Niagara as a percentage of Ontario	4.6%	4.7%	4.7%	4.6%	4.6%	4.5%	4.5%

Equitable Securities Canada Ltd., The Regional Municipality of Niagara Economic and Financial Survey (Toronto 1970), p. 18. Sources: Census of Canada and Ontario Department of Treasury and Economic Forecasts, March 1970.

The land itself is dominated by the Niagara Escarpment, a two and three hundred foot ridge extending in an east west direction across the peninsula and is bounded by the Great Lakes: Lake Erie to the south, Lake Ontario to the north and the Niagara River--Niagara Falls water system on the east, joining the two lakes and separating Canada from the United States. Also joining the two bodies of water is the famous Welland Canal, for over one hundred and twenty years a major link in the Canadian-central United States industrial and commercial transportation system. The land of the peninsula had traditionally been one of the best agricultural areas in Canada as fruit crops have been grown both below and above the escarpment as have been cereal crops and market produce. Its location also has attracted industries, urban dwellers and tourists so that by the seventies much of the good farmland was being transformed to non-agricultural land uses, causing intense political battles between those who were anxious to develop the lands for more profitable industrial, commercial, and residential uses and those who wanted to slow down the rate of development.

The Town of Pelham

(a) Geography

The Town of Pelham is located within Regional Niagara, seventy-five road miles south of Toronto, thirty-five miles east of Hamilton via the provincial highway #20, ten miles west of Niagara Falls, via the same highway, and immediately borders the cities of St. Catharines to the north-east and Welland to the south-east. The location of Pelham has greatly affected its growth pattern for many services such as shopping, entertainment and government offices have been developed on a large scale in St. Catharines, Welland and Niagara Falls; for those seeking more specialized

goods and services, the metropolitan complexes of Hamilton, Toronto and Buffalo, New York can easily be reached by auto in an hour and a half's drive. For these reasons, Pelham's population growth has featured an expansion of residential land use but little development in commercial, industrial and public sectors; these have traditionally been concentrated in the more populated industrial centres.[26]

The general topography of Pelham is dominated by the Niagara Escarpment which cuts across the town on an east-west axis. The escarpment, which runs between the Niagara River on the south-east and Lake Huron, over two hundred miles to the north-west, is a valued land formation in this urbanized region as it represents one of the largest, and one of the last, undeveloped land areas in southern Ontario. Despite the long standing arguments of conservationists that the escarpment needed to be protected by the provincial government, it was only in 1973 that the Niagara Escarpment Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature with the stated intention of protecting that environment.[27] Nowhere are non-compatible land uses on the escarpment more apparent than in Pelham. Here there are fruit farms alongside gravel pits which are bordered by individual homes, which are bordered by a string of commercial operations, which, in turn, are located near communication towers and, in the midst of

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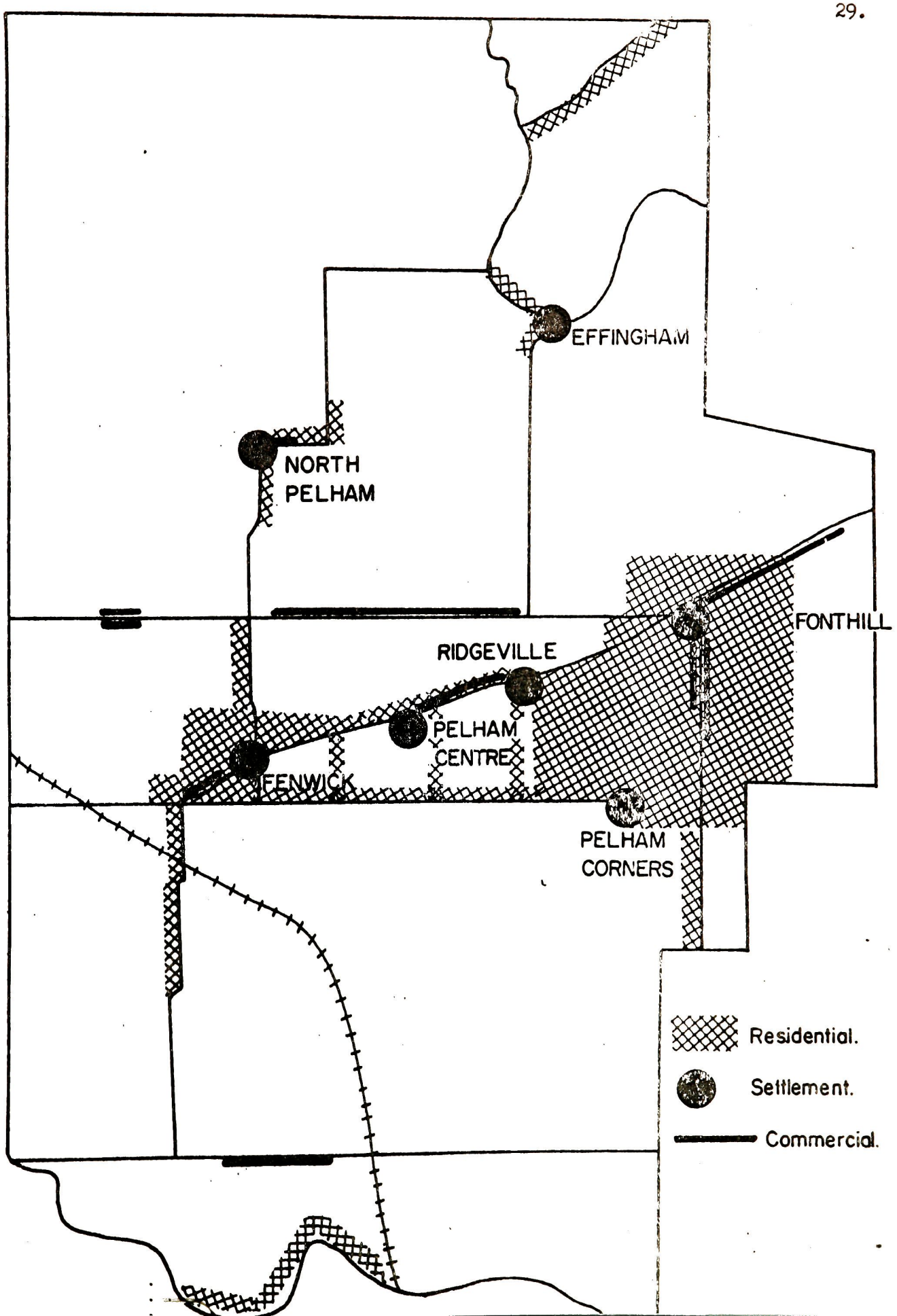
[26] See map two.

[27] Because such a mixture of industrial, commercial, residential and recreation land uses was becoming troublesome, the Niagara Escarpment Commission ordered in 1973 that these lands be 'frozen' to prevent further development until a comprehensive land use plan had been approved by the Commission, the town, the regional municipality and the province.

MAP TWO

THE TOWN OF PELHAM URBAN AND COMMERCIAL LAND USES



all this, is the scenic Lookout Golf and Country Club.

Although sections of the Escarpment do rise one thousand feet above neighbouring lands around Collingwood near Lake Huron, its height in Pelham is about three hundred feet above the Lake Ontario Lowlands to the north of the town. The highest ridge in Pelham and in the region is the Fonthill Kame,[28] hence the communication towers located outside of Fonthill and used by television cable companies, Bell Canada, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Commission. This Kame, which runs for four miles from the centre of Fonthill to the north of Fenwick has both the best soil conditions for tender fruit farming[29] and for mineral extraction. The farmland in and around the edge of the Kame in the Fonthill village was considered by many farmers to have been the best; yet, it was some of the first lands to be converted to residential development. Because of its commanding view of surrounding areas, from Toronto on the north, to Niagara Falls on the east and northern New York State on the south, the edge of the Escarpment has been valued as prime residential land as long ago as the eighteen seventies. Where the land has been good for farming, it also has been attractive for conflicting industrial, commercial and residential developments.

The structure of this dominant Kame has divided the topography of

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[28] A Kame is a short ridge of stratified sand gravel deposited by retreating glaciers.

[29] Tender fruits are peaches, plums, pears, sour cherries, sweet cherries and grapes. Apples are also grown on many of these farms.

Pelham into two different settings.[30] On the north side, the land drops dramatically and is precipitous in nature. Throughout the Effingham Short Hills, immediately below the Kame, live commuters who began to build their expensive homes, horse and hobby farms only in the late nineteen sixties and whose estates are often worth in excess of $200,000. As farmers and municipal officials have never thought that this land was valuable as farmland, both groups are content to have it sold and to see it developed. The only farming on the north side is a few fruit farms close to the sand and gravel pits, and, further out, vineyards, corn and cereal crops, and intensive animal operations (e.g. chickens, turkeys). Immediately to the east around Fonthill are four major market vegetable and strawberry producers while much of the flat land west of the Fonthill Kame is used for intensive animal operations or is being held by speculators and developers.

The land in the south contrasts with that of the north inasmuch as there is no hilly terrain or steep inclines as in the latter. Instead the land gently slopes away from the top of the escarpment to the Welland River, the southern boundary of Pelham. Again, the best farming land is immediately around the Kame and has traditionally been used most intensively for fruit trees, market crops and nurseries. It is now being sub-

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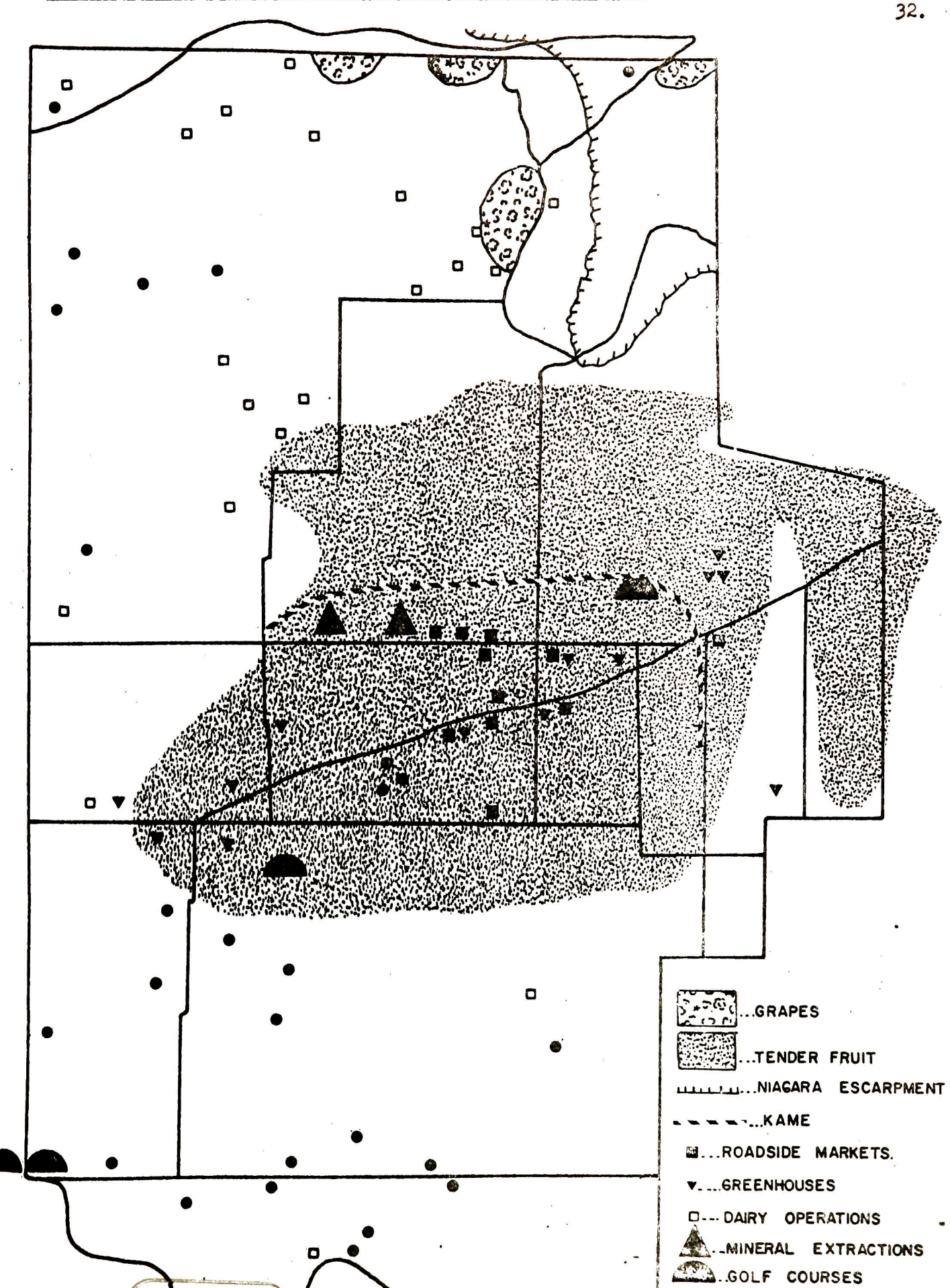
[30] The structure of the crown of this Kame is four miles long and one half mile wide (one mile at Fonthill) so that if a line were drawn another mile around the edge, this area would include the best of the tender fruit soil and market vegetable crop land. See map three.

MAP THREE

THE TOWN OF PELHAM : RURAL LAND USES



jected to the most intense pressure for residential development.[31] Further to the south of this are larger farms whose owners work the land to grow a mixture of field crops to raise cattle or to maintain dairy herds. These farms were never as prosperous as the fruit farms although several have been run successfully as family operations for many generations. The number of 'For Sale' signs appearing in this area was rapidly increasing by 1974, making it difficult to find out whether or not such operations are still profitable.

The transformation of much of the farmland into residential developments began around 1900 in the Fonthill area, a village which had long standing ties with the neighbouring, fast-growing settlements of St. Catharines, Thorold and Welland. First Fonthill developed into a commuting village, then people began, after the Second World War, to move out into the countryside in search of cheaper and larger lots. For many years the township was beseiged by numerous requests for single family building permits on almost every roadway, a process which effected the integrity of the best tender fruit farmland. The Police Village of Fenwick grew slowly during this period as did the area around North Pelham. The pattern of development around Fonthill was caused by an organized building of homes by small commercial enterprises whereas, in the rural

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[31] For example, the Canboro Road, one of the oldest roadways in Ontario runs through the town from Fonthill to Fenwick and then on out through Wainfleet Township. As this is one of the original roads, it is easy to notice the pattern of development in Pelham. There, new homes have been built beside older nurseries and local commercial operations, such as the General Motors dealership and then, in the midst of the new, there were the old--the farmhouses and cemeteries of the nineteenth century.

areas, it was the result of families buying their own lots and arranging to have their houses built.

(b) The People: General Population Characteristics

The people living in Pelham are an interesting mixture of newcomers and old families, those who had decided to move in, even if only for a few years, and those who had decided to stay. The farms and the small shops are a part of old Pelham while the industries and factories of nearby towns are not. Those who work in these plants do not experience Pelham life in the same fashion as those spending all their time in the town and who likely were born into families already located there. The managers, professionals and industrial workers pass their day in an environment notably different from that familiar to the men and women who remain behind working in the shops or in the fields, attending school or keeping house. The commuting worker has, moreover, come more and more to dominate Pelham. The extent to which this transformation has taken place is found in the census data collected in 1971:

Migration Patterns in Pelham[32]

Total population: 10,005

Birth place and immigration:	N	%
Born in Canada	8495	84.9
Born outside Canada	1510	15.1
Immigrated after 1945	980	9.2
In migration 1966-71:		
Migrants to Pelham:	3205	32
Non migrants:	6800	68
Internal movement of non migrants:		
Same dwelling:	5630	82.8
Different dwelling:	1170	17.2

This data implies that close to one third (3205) of the population had moved in between 1966-71 while another eleven percent (1170) had changed residences within the town, a population mobility greater than St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland, Fort Erie and Port Colborne.

The core social unit is the family. Given that the average family size was 3.8 in 1971, the 2515 families represent 9,557 of the residents or all but 438 people. A glance at the type of housing confirms this im-

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[32] Migrants: from an MA: 1675; same MA: 1215; different MA: in Ontario 410; MA outside Ontario 50; from a non MA: 635; in Ontario: 455; outside Ontario: 60; outside Canada: 120; not stated: 115

Statistics Canada, "St. Catharines--Niagara: 1971 Census Tract Bulletin re Population and Housing Characteristics," (Ottawa, July 1974), catalogue 950743 (CT-13B) series B, p. 4. MA refers to a census Metropolitan Area. Information about the other municipalities is found in the same tables.

pression that families form a central social organization: 2,375 of the 2,770 occupied dwellings were single family dwellings and only 435 of the housing units were tenant occupied.[33]

The ethnic composition is somewhat reflective of the combination of old families, settled for many generations, joined by northern Europeans after the Second World War:

Population by Ethnic Group[34]

Total	British Isles	German	Nether-lands	French	Ukran-ian	Polish	Italian	Jew	Other
10,000	6,205	1,045	775	460	265	255	210	34	750

Information about the respective populations of Fonthill and Pelham Township in 1969, the year before the regional reorganization, indicates that while the population of the township was greater (6,102 as compared to 2,947) and growing more rapidly (twenty-one percent compared to six percent between 1966-69), the most intense concentration of homes is in and around Fonthill.[35]

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[33] Statistics Canada, "St. Catharines--Niagara Census Tract Bulletin re Population and Housing Characteristics, 1971 Census," (Ottawa, March 1973), catalogue 95-713 (CT-13A), p. 4.

[34] Statistics Canada, op. cit., catalogue 95-743, p. 6. The overwhelming majority (9,455) reported speaking English at home. One hundred and twenty spoke French, one hundred and five Dutch, and a lesser number spoke German, Italian, Polish and Ukranian.

[35] The urban service area, namely, those streets in the Fonthill area which have the municipal services of water, sewers, paved roadways, street lights and, perhaps, sidewalks, housed about half the population by 1974. Most citizens live in an area bounded by Fonthill and Fenwick along the four mile stretch of Canboro Road joining these two villages and extending one-half mile north and south of this roadway. Other settlements

(c) Government in Pelham

Government activity in the peninsula has traditionally been concentrated in the cities, not in the countryside, so that the cumulative effect has been that public institutions play a minimal visible role in Pelham (leaving aside, for the moment the impact of government monies available by monthly cheques, etc.). All policies, except a few made at the municipal level, decided by governments are handled outside of the town. Governments are there only to provide the occasional service.

The most visible and active governmental structure is the Corporation of the Town of Pelham, a municipality which was created by the Niagara Regional legislation, effective as of January 1, 1970. The corporation's affairs are directed by a mayor, elected at large bi-annually who also serves ex officio as Pelham's only representative on the thirty member Regional Council, and six aldermen, two from each of three wards, also elected every second December. An appointed chief administrative officer, the clerk-treasurer, acts as advisor to council, the implementor of council decisions and the administrator of municipal policies and em-

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within Pelham are North Pelham, Pelham Centre, Ridgeville, Effingham and Pelham Corners. Each has a population of less than two hundred. Fenwick the second largest settlement has eight hundred people. Ridgeville, Fenwick and Fonthill have retained their own post offices and as of 1974 it was still impossible to send mail marked 'Pelham'; it simply did not exist for the Canada Post Office. Fonthill, Fenwick, North Pelham, Effingham, and Ridgeville, also try to retain their separate identity with the additional help of highway signs. Interview with Clerk-Treasurer Hunt of the Town of Pelham.

ployees.[36] The municipal budget was $892,037 in 1974; however, the town collected $1,455,409 in local taxes of which eighty-nine percent originated in residential property assessments. Of this money, $481,367 (38.74 percent) went to the town while education (mostly the Niagara South Board of Education) received 55.57 percent and Regional Niagara received 15.69 percent.[37] The provincial government, through its intricate grants system, transferred $410,670 to the town to cover the remaining expenses. The largest government employer is not the municipality but the Niagara

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[36] The town's staff, totalled forty-six, as follows:

The Staff of the Municipality of Pelham, 1974

	Male	Female
Full-time	20	7
Part-time	3	8 (including school crossing guards)
Other	1 fire chief (full-time) 6 aldermen (part-time) 1 mayor (part-time	

Information from the Clerk's Treasurer's Office, June 1974. Figures do not include Fonthill Hydro.

[37] Belt Tightening Here, 'Budget up, Work down,' Welland Tribune (May 28, 1974), p. 5.

South Board of Education, the largest employer in Pelham.[38]

Apart from a road maintenance yard, mainly used during winter storms, the Niagara Regional Government does not operate any of its de-

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[38] Employment and School Population of the Niagara South Board of Education in Pelham

School	(a) 1972 Enrollment	1973 Enrollment	(b) 1973-74 Teaching Staff	1973-74 Support Staff
Pelham Secondary	380	307	22	9
E.L. Crossley Secondary	960	976	56	22
Fonthill Senior Public	369	352	17	5
A. K. Wigg Elementary	463	373	16	4
Fonthill Elementary	274	262	11	4
Pelham Centre Elementary	246	271	11	3
E. W. Farr Elementary	155	188	7	2
Audio Visual Equipment Centre				3
TOTAL	2,855	(c) 2,719	140	52

These figures are based on statistics found in the Niagara South Board of Education "Minutes of the Regular Meeting, October 16, 1973", (Welland), an information sheet, n.p. Some information was also made available through the Director's office, June 1974.

(a) The Total Niagara South student population was:

Year	Elementary	Secondary	Total
1972	23,434	14,789	38,223
1973	22,401	14,953	37,354
Change	-1,033	+164	-869

(b) This figure represents the total number employed teaching, including the principal and vice principal, and does not take into account that a few on each staff were part-time employees. "Support Staff" includes cleaning, secretarial, and cafeteria workers.

(c) The student population declined 136 from September 30, 1972 to September 30, 1973. The secondary school population includes students from the Township of Wainfleet.

partments within Pelham. Citizens seeking services from that municipality could expect to drive to another city, probably St. Catharines, to find out what was available. The Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority supported by both regional and provincial governments has its central offices in Fonthill for its technical staff and administrators of the numerous Conservation Authority parks and recreation centres throughout the region. The provincial government had installed an office of the Ministry of Natural Resources in an old mansion on the outskirts of Fonthill. That office and a small Liquor Control Board of Ontario retail outlet in the centre of Fonthill are the only visible signs of the Ontario government's presence in the town. Two important local services which it did control, the Ontario Provincial Police patrol of highway #20 and Ontario Hydro's electricity for the rural areas, are controlled from Welland. The federal government's presence is even more obscure as the only activity is the maintenance of a communications tower for shipping on the lakes.

The town's political boundaries for representation in the provincial and federal legislatures have been shifted in most redistributions since Confederation.[39] Provincially, the Fonthill area on the east side of Pelham is represented in the Welland riding by the Progressive Conservative MLA, Ellis Morningstar, whose participation in Welland area politics

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[39] The most recent such changes were in 1966 when the Welland South provincial riding was established and 1967 when Pelham was joined to Lincoln in a federal redistribution. As Pelham was located among urban centres where the population has steadily grown causing electoral boundaries to be periodically adjusted, the town was moved from one riding to another to maintain a near equal number of voters among the peninsula electoral districts. Such a change was being considered again during 1974 although no final provincial decision had been made.

dates back to the early forties. The remaining voters, those in the rural area, are represented in the Ontario Legislature by Ray Haggerty, a Liberal from Fort Erie who was first elected in the Welland South riding in 1967. The federal riding of Lincoln encompasses the entire town, joining it with towns, such as Grimsby and Niagara-on-the-Lake, on the Lake Ontario shoreline. The sitting member, Kenneth Higson, a Progressive Conservative lawyer from Grimsby, was serving his first term in Ottawa after winning the 1972 general election. He, in turn, was defeated by a Liberal, Bill Andres, a fruit farmer from Niagara-on-the-Lake, in the 1974 general election. It was an exception, and not the rule, for Pelham to be represented by men living in the town.

(d) The Economic Structure

One major component of the local economic structure, public institutions, has already been analyzed to show that this sector represented both a major source of income and employment for many of its citizens. Other components of the economy were the small industries, commercial enterprises and farms which were operating 1972-74; however, the largest group of income earners were the commuters who brought income to Pelham from neighbouring centres, mostly from St. Catharines, Welland and Thorold.

The industrial sector of Pelham's economy was small, providing few jobs and paying little tax money. For a number of reasons, including Pelham's location away from the Welland Canal and that conglomerate of major industries and the lack of a readily accessible labour force, no major industries had built in Pelham with the exception of canneries. By the nineteen seventies the town council was anxious to gain an industrial base, in the hope of generating more tax money, but was thwarted by planners

in Regional Niagara and in the provincial government. Instead there are small shops, employing five or six people and located in different sections of the town. The only major commercial operations are the two sand and gravel extraction-mining outfits located on highway #20 along the northern crest of the Fonthill Kame. The owners are from outside of Pelham as are the technical personnel and truck drivers (who haul the minerals around the peninsula and across the international border into western New York State). The economic impact, apart from the buying of farmland (at prices up to $4500 per acre) and monies paid to the municipality in taxes, is in the minds of many worth less than the nuisance value of the trucks rumbling twenty-four hours a day through Fonthill.

The number of private commercial and industrial firms totals one hundred and fifty including retail outlets, two restaurants, two gas stations, real estate offices and banking institutions.[40] The only national-international corporations involved actively in the town are three Canadian banks (Toronto-Dominion Bank and the Imperial Bank of Commerce, both

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[40] Manufacturers in the Town of Pelham

Name of Business	Products	Employees Male	Employees Female
Fonthill Concrete Products Ltd., Builders Supplies Highway 20, Fonthill	Concrete Products	5	1
Leidins Concrete Burial Vaults, Fenwick	Concrete Burial	6	1
Mead Morrison Industrial Equipment Ltd., Fenwick	Design and manufacture mine and mill transmission, Contractor's equipment	4	1

Chamber of Commerce, Niagara Falls, 1971-72 Industrial Directory for the Regional Municipality of Niagara (Niagara Falls, n.d.), p. 31.

in Fonthill, and the Royal Bank of Canada, in Fenwick) which are competing with the Pelham Credit Union with offices in Fonthill and Fenwick. The retail stores are for the most part family operated, designed to service the needs of consumers, buying for household and family supplies or for the farmer who also is operating a family enterprise.

One economic activity bringing in a large amount of cash to Pelham is the real estate trade, especially the buying and selling of farmland for development into residential projects. As the town is growing, if somewhat too slowly for the local council, the homes being built and the lots being bought represent a net increase in cash flowing into the town. This money means retirement funds for the farmer, jobs for the small building contractors, sales for the real estate firms and increased tax revenues for the municipality. The growth of Pelham through increasing the housing stock proceeds, for the most part, on a small and fragmented basis with major developers generally of minor importance; however, the wealth cumulated through these individual small transactions has a significant accummulative effect. For instance, during the first three months of 1974, the municipality issued building permits worth over $1,100,000 for home renovations, thirty-seven new homes and a $240,000 office and commercial building for the main street (South Pelham Street of Fonthill).[41]

The fourth group responsible for generating income are the farmers of Pelham who, although of declining importance, still bring in monies as a result of their sales to canneries, retailers, dairies, flour mills, co-oper-

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[41] Information provided by Pelham's Clerk Treasurer's Office.

atives, and consumers. As of 1971 there were sixty-nine fruit farmers among the three hundred and thirty-two other farmers involved in a variety of crops. Almost all of these operations are run by families, often involving two generations and occasionally three. The exceptions are the larger market crop farmers such as those run by the Penders, the Chryslers, and the Mathias all of whom hire seasonal labour, mostly women, to work in the fields.

Pelham Farms: Classified by Economic Class[42]
Residence and Tenure of Owner

All census Farms	Value of Agricultural Products Sold			Non Resident Farmers	Tenure		
	Under $2500	$2500 $4999	$5000 and over		Owner	Tenant	Part Owner Part Tenant
332	171	42	119	10	275	6	51

The farms especially the fruit and market vegetable farms are typically small:

Pelham Farms: Classification by Size (in acres)[43]

Under 3	3-9	10-69	70-129	130-179	180-239	240-300	400 and over
14	50	191	14	15	5	9	--

[42] Statistics Canada, '1971 Census: Ontario Agriculture,' (Ottawa, 1973), table 49, pp. 49-13, 14.

[43] Ibid. The land was used as follows:

Pelham Farms: Land Use (in acres)

Total	Under Crop	Improved Use of Land			Unimproved Woodland	Other
		Pasture	Summer Fallow	Other		
18,405	11,914	1359	715	1113	1472	1839

The farm population of 1375 had an invested capital of $23,632,800 including $19,991,700 in land and buildings and $2,690,400 in machinery and equipment.[44]

Although the number of fruit farmers is smaller than those involved in other types of farming, the former are by far a more visible group in Pelham politics. This can be explained partly by the fact that a farmer's importance is related not only to his role as a producer but also to his value if he were to sell out his farmland to developers or speculators. Because fruit farming is concentrated close to those areas already transformed into residential land use, citizens are more concerned about the future of these farms than they are about the more distant mixed crop and dairy farms, not at all likely to be developed intensely in the near future. In addition, many recognize that there are few areas left on the peninsula for tender fruit farmers (this is about the only area in Canada for these crops) and that these should be protected as farmland, thus increasing the competition for these lands.

The last group of income earners, the commuters, are the ones who bring in most of the income to Pelham. They work in a number of public and private enterprises, mostly in St. Catharines, Welland, and Thorold while a lesser number travelled to Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Buffalo, Hamilton and Toronto. The male work force is made up of both hourly employed workers and salaried managers; however, almost all in private industry work for corporations noted for their strong unions and,

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[44] Ibid., Table 50, pp. 50-13,14. The machinery investment included 384 autos, 325 trucks, 482 tractors, 41 great combines, 53 hay balers, and 26 milking machines.

consequently, relatively high wages,--such as McKinnons (a division of General Motors), Abitibi Paper Company, John Deere, Stelco, International Nickel, and the Ford Motor Company. These workers live in (1) the lower part of Fonthill, that is, below the edge of the Escarpment where land and housing was traditionally cheaper, (2) throughout the old township where, from 1945-1965, it was possible for workers to use their newly obtained mobility (because of the car) to buy relatively cheap land and to build a house the exact size they wanted and (3) in Fenwick for many of the same reasons as they chose the township. The middle and upper middle income families are concentrated in one section of Fonthill, on the crest of the Escarpment, in an area about one mile in length and one half mile in width. The men in these homes are predominately managers, professionals including a few entrepreneurs who own peninsula firms such as automobile dealerships, pizza shops and income producing real estate. The more wealthy of Pelham citizens are recently arrived commuters who shun the now crowded developments of Fonthill in favour of estates a few miles to the north in the Effingham Short Hills. Here there are professionals and entrepreneurs whose homes and land far exceed the value of any other developed residential property in the town. A new set of enterprises, such as hobby horse farms, which depend on the carriage trade for their income, has flourished because of the influx of these wealthier citizens.

The structure of the labour force is interesting inasmuch as although the average family income is high, a large number of men (and a few women) are involved in manual and industrial work.

The Occupational Structure of Pelham[45]

(a) General Characteristics

Labour Force		Participating in Labour Force	Rate of Partici-	Unem-ployed	Rate of Un-employment
Males (over 15 years old)	3565	2925	82.0%	70	2.4%
Females (over 15 years old)	3390	1230	36.3%	70	5.7%

(b) Occupation groups (both sexes)

Agriculture, Quarries	420
Manufacturing Industries	1,215
Construction Industry	230
Transportation, Communication and Other Utilities	180
Trade	565
Finance, Insurance and Real Estate	150
Community, Business and Personal Service Industries	905
Public Administration and Defense	180
Total	4,110

(c) Class of Worker	Male	Female
Wage-Earner	2,575	975
Self-employed	300	45

The popular image of the townspeople as being wealthy is accurate inasmuch as family incomes and housing values are generally higher in Pelham than elsewhere in the region.

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[45] Statistics Canada, op. cit., catalogue 95-743, p. 12.

Family Income Pelham and Selected Regional Municipalities[46]

	Pelham	Niagara Falls	Niagara on-the-Lake	St. Catharines	Welland	Thorold	Port Colborne
Average Total Income per family	$11,501	9,889	10,365	10,032	9,987	9,448	9,779
Median Total Income per family	$10,316	9,240	9,183	9,151	9,223	9,032	8,998
Average Total Income of Family Heads	$ 9,351	7,795	8,213	8,119	7,874	7,406	7,803
Average Employment Income of Family Heads	$ 9,094	7,904	7,898	8,184	7,977	7,529	7,843

[46] Ibid., pp. 14-19.

Income Distribution for Pelham Families[47]

Income	Number of Census Families	% Distribution	Aggregate Income	% Distribution of Aggregate Income
$1,000 and Less	25	.99	9,767	.03
1,000-1,999	35	1.38	48,769	.17
2,000-2,999	110	4.35	273,543	.94
3,000-4,999	185	7.31	728,003	2.50
5,000-6,999	275	10.87	1,654,160	5.69
7,000-9,999	580	22.93	4,937,665	16.97
10,000-14,999	790	31.23	9,578,687	32.92
15,000 or over	520	20.55	11,752,580	40.39
Total	2,530	100.00	29,097,070	100.00

The total average income in Pelham was $11,501 and $9,997 in the wider census area. The data indicates very clearly that more Pelham families earned more income; for example, 51.78 percent of Pelham families earned more than $10,000 and 73.31 percent of the aggregate income compared to 42.37 percent

Income for Census Families in 1970 for St. Catharines[47]
--Niagara Census Metropolitan Area

Income	Number of Census Families	% Distribution	% Distribution of Aggregate Income
$ 1,000 and less	1,565	2.05	.02
1,000-1,999	1,540	2.02	.31
2,000-2,999	2,915	3.82	.97
3,000-4,999	6,330	8.29	3.30
5,000-6,999	9,935	13.01	7.88
7,000-9,999	21,715	28.44	24.11
10,000-14,999	22,035	28.46	34.79
15,000 and over	10,315	13.51	28.65
Total	76,355	100.51	100.00

Statistics Canada, "1971 Census: Income of Census Families for 1970" Area DC A013CT220, St. Catharines, Niagara, Ontario, file DCA013 (January 22, 1974), p. 1314.

of the area's families earning 63.44 percent of the aggregate. The difference is not such as to suggest a totally different social environment but merely that a significant number of families were better off than those in neighbouring municipalities.[48]

Summary

The problem being investigated is to find out what has been the effects of regionalization of local government institutions on Pelham, a small Ontario town. It was decided that this problem could best be resolved through the application of participant observation, during two years of field work, supported by interviewing, and an analysis of the historical development of Pelham, on the assumption that the understanding of the town as a community would help greatly in recognizing the impact of these provincial policies.

The chapters which follow are organized to acquaint the reader with the historical development of the town and the structure of its organized activity, to interpret the provincial strategy for regionalization as understood locally and to explain the impact of regional government and regional education for the townspeople.

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[48] The same comparison can be made about the value of housing in Pelham as compared to other regional municipalities.

Median Value of Housing for Pelham and Selected Regional Municipalities

	Average	Pelham	Niagara Falls	Niagara-on-the-Lake	St.Catharines	Thorold	Welland	Port Colborne	Fort Erie
Median Value	$19,966	22,999	19,718	22,287	20,967	19,096	19,356	18,176	16,464

Statistics Canada, op. cit., catalogue 95-743, pp. 8-13.

Chapter Two

The Development of Pelham

Two themes are integrated in this history of Pelham. On the one hand, citizens tell how they remember the people and events of their own past, recounting the town's growth and its political history. On the other hand, to avoid a preoccupation with local developments, major societal changes are brought into the analysis to illustrate the relationship between the town and the society about it. The townspeople are, in many respects, responsible for the ways in which Pelham has been developed but, as has been pointed out in other studies of small towns, much of what happens has not been within their control. To quote from the work of Vidich and Bensmen, "a central fact of rural life then, is its dependency on the institutions and dynamics of urban and mass society."[1] This analysis of Pelham's history is different however, inasmuch as more emphasis is placed on the fact that a number of critical development decisions have been made by the townspeople. Although events outside of Pelham have dominated and directed the actions of local citizens, Pelham has become the town it is because its people made choices, such as the location of public services, which have determined the type of people that live there and the life-style commonly experienced among the townspeople. These factors are not to be lost in a more general interpretation emphasizing only societal institutional changes.

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[1] Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society (Garden City, 1960), p. 102.

Community studies incorporate an analysis of local history on the understanding that what has happened in the past influnces existing structures and events. This is particularly true of Pelham where memories of an active agricultural, rural community affects how citizens perceive their town. In large part, the image is that of a rural past only a few years gone and that it is still very much a place of villages and farms. A closer examination of its structure, however, makes plain the fact that its history, especially since 1900, is also integrated into the growth of a wider industrial--urban complex. This account of Pelham's history necessarily involves explaining (a) the development and the decline of the agricultural economy, (b) the development of the industrial economy and its impact on Pelham, (c) the recollections of Pelham citizens of their past and (d) the local political life prior to the implementation of regional government.

It cannot be argued that Pelham has changed since it was settled one hundred and eighty years ago. The signs of such change are readily visible: new homes standing alongside rotting barns, subdivisions constructed beside abandoned orchards, and young couples, newly arrived, living next to the aged who have been forced to give up the demanding life of farming. Also, there have been some important political changes. There is only one municipal council where there once were two and one school board trustee where once there were thirteen. Some institutions had already come and gone by 1972; for instance, the electric railroad connecting Fonthill with other settlements on the peninsula lasted from 1907-1959.

Many of the changes affecting Pelham have occurred slowly over a hundred and twenty year period (1850-1970) and can be partly attributed to a series of structural changes in the Ontario economic, political and social organization. What happened in Pelham is not only the result of local decisions and ambitions but also the product of a changing government and industrial strategy to encourage economic development. To explain the impact of these changes, the growth of Pelham is divided in three stages although none is completely distinct from the other. Its history is more than the simple story of the decline of farming in face of the encroaching urban--industrial complex if for no other reason than, for many, farming continues to be a profitable way of making a living. Yet it no longer dominates Pelham as the historical record indicates that it once did.

A careful analysis of Pelham's history reveals that there have been three overlapping stages in its growth: (1) a rural, agricultural settlement 1790-1880, (2) a village economy 1850-1960 and (3) a commuting town 1900-1974. For instance, by characterizing the town by the dominant occupations, in the early years almost all were farming or in village trades directly dependent on farming. In the second period, most were involved in farming, some were involved in trades, professions or enterprises in the villages not dependent or only indirectly dependent on farming and a few were commuting to their workplace. In the final phase, some were in farming, some were working in the villages but most were commuting to work or involved in organizations whose operations in Pelham were a small part of a much larger structure. This one element of activity, the nature of the labour under-

taken by the majority of the work-force, is used as a basis for describing Pelham's structural changes. How a citizen spends his day, and where he spends it, is described by the citizens themselves as central reasons for explaining why people now behave differently in politics than they did in the past. Furthermore, the history of the town's economy is critical to explaining local political life as so many of the commuters, often spending only two or three years in Pelham, know little of its past, while those citizens who have spent so much of their life there are very conscious that their community is no longer what it was in years gone by. These changes make many of the older citizens uncomfortable. Time and time again in the course of a conversation they would remark that they no longer enjoyed living in the villages as much as they had when they were younger. The nineteen thirties, the Depression years, represent a dividing point in their oral histories of Pelham, symbolizing the years in which the old way of life began to disintegrate and soon became only a memory of a better time.

The Development of Farming

Pelham was first settled in the late seventeen hundreds as an agricultural settlement based on family farms producing a mixture of crops, though the grains were quickly established as the most reliable staple. The first settlers chose to live in Pelham Township because it was not far from the American border where a number of smaller British trading and military centres were located, because it was the next land to be developed as settlement fanned out and because it had a reputation for good soil suitable for a variety of crops. Throughout the nineteenth century the settler working hard for long and difficult days

was likely to build up a self sufficient operation and, perhaps, even have enough left over for a little cash income. The cash was then re-invested in the form of machinery to aid the farmer in his work. The typical Pelham farmer, as recorded in local histories, was by no means a poor farmer. His housing and farm equipment are described as substantial, supporting the claim that for many decades Pelham Township flourished as a farming community.

Each farm, once the forest was cleared and buildings were erected, was organized to gain self-sufficiency. This put a premium on families whose members would all contribute time and labour to sustain the operation without the owner having to hire outside help. Where a farmer could not finish a task alone (such as stump clearing, barn raising or crop harvesting), other farmers would join in to contribute their help. Ontario villages were formed primarily to provide services for whatever the farmer needed and to distribute manufactured goods to him. The economy was originally localized with everyone in the villages dependent on successful farming for their own well-being. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, little cash was available so that most transactions were bartered and exchanges took the form of goods.[2]

The original white settlers, retired English military officers and United Empire Loyalists, mostly Pennsylvania Germans, Quakers and Mennonites,[3] grew crops to maintain their subsistence or to sell local-

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[2] Jacob Spelt, Urban Development in South-Central Ontario (Toronto, 1972), p. 137.

[3] E. Elmore Reaman, The Trail of the Black Walnut Tree (Toronto, 1957), p. 115. The United Empire Loyalists who settled in and around Pelham travelled from Pennsylvania and northern New York; most continued on

ly in the towns and to the flour mills. The biggest buyers were the colonial military installations along the Niagara frontier and the town of Niagara, for a few years the capital of Upper Canada. Buffalo was later the best place to sell market produce for much desired cash. St. John's in the Effingham Short Hills was the location of the first grist mill on the peninsula, according to the local historians, as entrepreneurs found a commercial use for the picturesque water streams. The local nature of the economy, particularly before the arrival of the railroad, meant that the farmers of Pelham were capable of supporting several small but ambitious villages including Fenwick, St. John's, Effingham, Ridgeville, and Fonthill. Of the 29,087 acres in nineteenth century Pelham Township, a full 23,000 were being cultivated in the eighteen eighties.[4] During the years 1850-1900 when Ontario farmers were troubled because of western agricultural expansion, Canadian pro-industrial tariffs, a few bad crop years, and the loss of the English marketplace, Pelham farmers switched, where it was possible, from producing mostly cereal crops into market vegetable and tender fruit products, substantiating that its reputation for successful farms and excellent farmland was well deserved. As one county historian of

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to build farms around Kitchener and in York County, Ontario. Widely recognized and respected for their independent and successful farming techniques, the non-conformist rightly perceived that land of Pelham Township would be profitable to farm. Descendants of these original settlers are still in the area in the nineteen seventies though they participate more in their own churches rather than the voluntary associations and council of 'mainstream' Pelham. Over the years many families had anglicized their name: e.g. Morningstern has become Morningstar.

[4] The History of the County of Welland (originally published in Welland, 1887; reprinted in Belleville, Ontario, 1972), p. 290.

that century noted: "it (Pelham Township) is inhabited by a very thrifty, industrious, and prosperous class of people, many of whom are in extremely comfortable circumstances."[5]

The Villages

The non-farming population lived mostly in the villages of Fonthill, Ridgeville and Fenwick, all built along a five mile stretch of Canboro Road and each with a population of about three hundred by the eighteen eighties. The township had been growing slowly: between 1871-1881 the population of Welland County, in which the township was located, grew about one third from 23,760 to 31,771 people, while Pelham's changed only from 2515 to 2623, a gain of four percent.[6] Among the first village businesses and shops set up to service the farming population were several general stores, a flour mill, a cheese factory and four wagon factories. To the north, not far from the massive sand and gravel operations of the nineteen seventies, were two limestone and firestone quarries. At the same time each of the villages supported a number of social and religious organizations including more than a dozen churches representing all the major Protestant sects, a Masonic Lodge, two temperance leagues, a Loyal Orange Lodge, the Fonthill Fyfe and Drum Band, two elementary schools, a Fonthill grammar school, and two Welland County newspapers published briefly in Fonthill. The existence of these institutions suggests that the villages were more than

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[5] The Council of Welland County, A Historical and Descriptive Sketch of the County of Welland (Welland, 1886), p. 57. For instance, the townspeople in the eighteen seventies wanted to build a new townhall which would be more reflective of their prosperity.

[6] The History of the County of Welland, (1972), pp. 167-170.

simple economic organizations. They also housed activities designed to overcome the loneliness of the farm work world. It was not usually necessary for a citizen to travel to another village regularly for his entertainment and companionship needs as these could be satisfied in a local tavern, club, church or charitable organization. Pelham Township throughout the nineteenth century had sufficient voluntary associations, when combined with strong extended family units, to provide the companionship and support needed to sustain rural life. Commerce, friendship, spiritual guidance and education were institutionalized locally by the township citizens, establishing a mutual sense of togetherness which was extended throughout the common rituals of their lives including marriage, running a farm, raising a family and death. Farming was more than a pursuit for survival and wealth as it represented a way of life, a communal process, accepted by the inhabitants as legitimate and, therefore, good. Fenwick, for example, was developed as a village because of a series of local decisions to build a set of institutions to fulfill immediate citizen needs. First, citizens built the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1835 and the Bethany (Episcopal Methodist) Church was added a year or two later, then the schools were organized in 1844 followed by the taverns in 1845. Later, community halls were constructed. "A drill hall 120' by 100' of braced timber and large double barn doors once stood south of the United Church. It was here that Captain Maney drilled a company of volunteer infantry which he had recruited for the 44th Battalion at the time of the Fenian Raid of 1866. For a long time men kept their rifles there. Later it was used as a community hall. Mr. Tunnacliffe remembers, as a boy,

attending a twelfth of July celebration there with speeches and two bands in attendance. Later it held exhibits when the fair was held here, and still later it became a skating rink . . . (In another community hall) it was here that early concerts were held and singing school and sleight of hand performances and travelling plays. "Babes In The Woods" was a favourite one, complete with birds flying about and bringing leaves to cover the poor babes."[7]

Community Life

The brief written histories of the Fonthill and Fenwick villages emphasize the good times that were enjoyed by the citizenry, paying particular attention to the growth of local enterprises and the activities of its more famous inhabitants. Coming out of the historical record left by the Fonthill Women's Institute is a fascination with the accomplishments and dedication of the high status and successful men. One resident of Fonthill, Dexter D'Everardo, was involved in numerous local public and private projects as publisher of a newspaper (which eventually moved from Fonthill to Welland to become the Welland Tribune), chairman of the township school board, Welland County registrar, and philanthropist. School children in the nineteen twenties and thirties were still being told of his activities, especially his planting of most of Fonthill's shade trees.[8] Judging by the comments

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[7] Magdalene de la Mater, "A speech to the Fenwick Women's Institute concerning Miss de la Mater's 'History of Fenwick to Form the Nucleus of the Tweedsmuir History'" (Fenwick, n.d. but was thought to have been delivered in the early nineteen fifties), p. 6. This was the only record available for the Fenwick village.

[8] Interview with Cecil Stirtzinger whose family was one of the first to settle in the Pelham area.

of local historians, his activities contributed to making Fonthill well known on the Niagara peninsula.[9] The villagers in Fenwick were respectful of another man, Dr. John Fraser, reeve of Pelham from 1850 to 1856, "and a perusal of early township records . . . shows what an active part he and Dexter D'Everardo took in the deliberations of the municipal council of old Niagara. He took considerable interest in politics being an advanced Liberal . . . By 1854 he attained such prominence that he was chosen the Liberal candidate for Welland County . . . In 1861 Dr. Fraser refused to be a candidate a second time. A doctor whose services were in demand for 50 miles had no time to contest elections and travel as far as Quebec City to represent these constituents."[10]

Good people doing good works for a community: surely this is a most common form of romanticizing used by citizens to recall a time when life was better. In Pelham Township 'better' meant that there was a more involved community, an epoch in which citizens gave more of their time to community projects whether that project was initiated by a church, a voluntary association or the township council. All citizens interviewed, who had lived in Pelham before the Second World War, recalled a time when there was no trouble in finding others to help out when assistance was needed and several stories were told to illustrate just this point. The former deputy reeve of Fonthill could remember council meetings in which citizens would pack the town hall on

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[9] Fonthill Women's Institute, A History of Fonthill (Fonthill, 1942, revised 1952), p. 6.

[10] de la Mater, "Fenwick," pp. 4-5.

South Pelham Street to listen intently to council proposals.[11] If a scheme was expensive, such as sewer installations, it did not take long before a citizen's group or two would appear to complain and to try to stop the council from spending their tax dollars. The newspaper reporter who had covered the council for over fifteen years and who had herself served on the local public school board recollected that the Fonthill Parents Teachers Association, even as recently as the nineteen fifties, could gather up a large work party anytime parents wanted to improve conditions at Fonthill Public School as they were always being told that the budget was too meagre for any 'extras'.[12] Mrs. Elliot, one of the most active women living in Fenwick, was discouraged by the small turnout of the Fenwick Women's Institute in the 1973-74 club year. She also could talk about a time when the Women's Institute was the only women's organization in the village. "All the ladies belonged and we were quite busy helping the less fortunate especially in the Depression. Now there are so many clubs to join and so many different groups have moved in--like the Catholics."[13] Finally a former Fonthill Public School principal suggested that it had not been at all difficult to get others involved where children were concerned. At one point, for instance, the townspeople were expecting trouble on Hal-

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[11] Interview with Joe Fletcher.

[12] Interview with Sophie Homenuk. My wife noticed that during the year she taught at Fonthill Public School, this was still the case. The comments of Mrs. Homenuk may be a reflection on the fact that once she lost interest in the school because her children had graduated, she assumed few others were continuing on in the same fashion.

[13] Interview with Mrs. Harry Elliot.

lowe'en but they came together to organize an evening of games and prizes. "A man came home on the late train and he told me that next day that he finally had to ask someone where was everyone else."[14]

These, then, were some of the events and memories found in Pelham as citizens recalled how their community came to be and what they liked most about living there in the past. They remembered the good times, the years when farming was a prosperous way of life, when the villages were busy places with a number of active commercial enterprises and when there were enough activities and clubs to provide entertainment and services to all those who wanted to be involved. Their past as a group was marked by a sense of community and a commitment by citizens to involve themselves in local projects. The details of the decline of this way of life are not easily found, partly because the historical record of these early settlements is either without specifics, or is written by organizations avoiding negative aspects of the growth of Pelham.[15] In reconstructing the political life of nineteenth century Pelham, it is only possible to surmise what was happening and what was thought to be significant from a very incomplete record. Any evidence that was gathered indicates that local politics might not have been nearly as interesting or as exciting as colonial or national matters. Even a supposedly homogeneous settlement such as rural Pel-

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[14] Interview with A. K. Wigg.

[15] The Women's Institute of Fonthill published a short 'Tweedsmuir' history but the Fenwick Women's Institute have only the barest outline in the form of a speech by Miss de la Mater when she was still a Latin teacher at Pelham and District High School. None of the other villages have prepared or maintained records of community events.

ham had its dissenters who were willing and, at times, anxious to challenge the colonial authorities in those restive pre-Confederation years. Given the nature of the life and the different types of people settling the farms (an incongruous combination of soldiers receiving their land reward for service and United Empire Loyalists, many of whom belonged to sects which avoided war at all costs), it would be reasonable to assume that both radical-reform and tory views were expressed openly and opposed fiercely within Pelham Township. At least one group, the Fonthill Women's Institute, would have us believe that this was predominantly a stronghold of radicalism.

The event which stood out in the recollections about early Pelham was the Rebellion of 1837 during which both loyalists and rebels were living in the township. William Lyon Mackenzie, as he dashed for the American border after his disastrous march on York, hid out overnight in a sympathizer's farmhouse in the Effingham Hills and managed to slip across the Niagara River to the United States the next day. A tavern at St. John's was the scene of a violent clash between a company of the Queen's Lancers and rebels which was finally won by government troops.[16] A group of American soldiers had hidden out previously in the same hills during the War of 1812 but reportedly headed back to the United States when a larger number of British soldiers were rumoured to be approaching. Such incidents, especially the Rebellion of

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[16] Overholt's Tavern, the scene of this battle, was moved to Fonthill, renovated and used as a furniture store. That Gretsingers Furniture business was for sale in the spring of 1974 upset several of the newer arrivals in Fonthill who campaigned that the store should have been preserved as an historical site. "Interesting History behind Gretsinger's Furniture Store," Pelham Herald (March 26, 1973), p. 13.

1837 (which had been described by one nineteenth century county historian as the "central incident in the history of English speaking Canada"[17]), are treated in detail and with ceremony by the historians who then claim proudly that their community has played a critical and exciting role in Canada's past. The town is a more valuable place for local historians because historically significant events happened in and around Pelham.

The Decline of the Local Farmer and Merchant

The strength of nineteenth century Pelham was that the farmers were growing a variety of crops which they then were able to sell in the marketplace for a fair return. With this sector of the economy being as productive as it was, other sectors, particularly the merchants and wholesalers, were also able to make a profit in their enterprises in the villages of Pelham. However, by 1900 local and national conditions had changed sufficiently such that farming was not an adequate enough base to support all farming families nor the local commercial middle class. If the nineteenth century can be described as a time during which agriculture was the core of local economic, political and social activity, then the story of the twentieth century in Pelham would be about the slow decline of agriculture from this central position.

Three events taken from citizens' accounts of their historical development illustrate how the mercantile economy had levelled off and began to decline long ago. First, because Pelham was located along

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[17] The History of the County of Welland, p. 292.

major roadways, several taverns had been built to attract the travellers to stay overnight, to have a meal and to down a few drinks. When the township citizens voted their municipality dry under the provisions of the 1874 Dunkin Act, the brisk carriage and tavern trade dissipated; the hotels and drinking establishments had all disappeared by 1900. A second example of local enterprise being terminated was the cannery in Fonthill, operated by Canadian Canneries, to process, beginning in 1912, tomatoes and, later, fruits, including peaches and cherries. At the peak of its busy season, the cannery employed about two hundred female and sixty male employees, many of whom commuted from neighbouring Welland. This was, from 1912 until it was closed in 1958 (and the building remodelled into apartments), the most substantial commercial operation in either the township or the village.[18] A last example to indicate the decline of the local economy is the electric railway which connected Fonthill with other settlements on the peninsula. The Niagara, St. Catharines and Toronto Railroad Company ran a passenger service through the village from 1907 until 1959 when the last section between Thorold and Port Colborne was discontinued.[19]

Although farming was still flourishing at the beginning of this century there were signs to indicate that it too was about to decline. One sign of this decline was that it was no longer capable of

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[18] Another business, Fonthill Nurseries, was one of the largest of its kind in Canada in the late nineteenth century and employed some one hundred and seventy-five men. After the Second World War, the Wellington family sold the lands for residential development as that was more profitable than continuing as a nursery.

[19] John F. Due, The Intercity Electric Railway Industry in Canada (Toronto, 1966), pp. 87-92.

sustaining several villages as active and growing commercial centres. By 1972 Ridgeville bore no resemblance to the village described ninety years before in the county history.[20] All that is left is a small General Motors dealership, an autobody repair shop, a combined confectionary shop and post office, a barber shop and several homes. Located there in the past was one of the largest hardware stores in the peninsula, a restaurant and a number of smaller shops. Fenwick has survived as the village where most farmers shop and buy their farming supplies. It functions, as well, as a place where they go to church, join their favourite clubs and send their children to school. Fenwick, in 1972, housed a bank, an office of the Pelham Credit Union, a hardware store, two grocery stores, two furniture and appliance stores, three gas stations, a funeral parlour, a post office, two elementary and one secondary school and a branch of the Pelham Library. But, according to Miss de la Mater, the village is a mere shadow of its old self: "another blacksmith shop was run by John Effrick where the bakeshop is now . . . Mr. Effrick had a chopping mill next to the blacksmith shop. Another early industry was the saw mill . . . Apple growing was a thriving industry in those days where there was no struggle with apple scab or codling moth. A planing mill which was formerly the Methodist

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[20] One writer in the eighteen eighties observed that the five mile trip between Fonthill and Fenwick was a trip through three villages (Ridgeville is in between) of equal size, with continuous residential buildings strung along between the villages. The traveller making the same trip ninety years later would find one large village, Fonthill, and one small village, Fenwick, joined by continuous housing along the same Canboro Road. Ridgeville, except for a signpost, has in effect disappeared.

Episcopal church, . . . was later destroyed by fire. Of all the industries the only one that remains today is the bakery."[21] Fenwick with its small population of eight hundred had lost that too by 1972.

Fonthill, on the other hand, stands out as an example of an agricultural centre being transformed into a residential or 'bedroom' village. Fonthill resembled Fenwick and Ridgeville in the early development of Pelham Township as writers never distinguished among the three either in size or in function. Its location, however, turned out to be more important than its original builders had imagined. Being located on the eastern edge of the township, the village is situated closer to (and within easy daily commuting distance of) Welland and St. Catharines than the other villages. As long ago as the eighteen fifties Fonthill was attracting men whose interests lay beyond the township, including doctors, lawyers, entrepreneurs and a newspaper publisher[22] who were involved in, among other activities, county, provincial and federal politics. The men remembered as notables also confirm the impression that nineteenth century Pelham was dominated by citizens who were successful as farmers, merchants or local professionals, the middle class of an agricultural-village settlement.

Most people originally lived in Pelham because of the agricultural activity, or because of a profession or trade needed in the local economy, but by 1900 the people moving in were more likely to be involved in occupations not directly dependent on agriculture. The shift in the economic structure from that of agriculture to one more

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[21] Miss de la Mater, "Fenwick," p. 7.

[22] A History of Fonthill, p. 5.

dependent on non-agricultural activity was, in fact, the most important change in Pelham. Although most citizens spoke of these changes as happening fairly recently, no longer than thirty or forty years ago, an analysis of changes in the local and national economy indicates that the turn of the century would be a more accurate date. What the townspeople were describing, however, was that the character of the town did not change until the Depression years. This is especially true of Fenwick which continued to be a farming village much longer than did Fonthill. At the same time, farming continues to influence the local way of life even in the nineteen seventies much more than its economic (family income) significance might otherwise suggest. For example, while the older residents who have spent their lives farming or in the villages are inclined to romanticize about the past, the era in which 'community' existed and flourished has gone for them. Yet, a newly arrived group of citizens, such as the members of the Pelham Environmental Action Committee, thinks that its 'village' and 'rural' environment is about to be destroyed. In other words, one group is seeing Pelham as paradise lost and another as paradise about-to-be lost. Both views on the state of the town have found expression in political arguments designed to influence council decisions about the future growth of Pelham.

This interpretation of the town's development implies that the most productive years for local agriculture were in the nineteenth century as is generally true for the entire Ontario farming industry, which had begun to decline in its role as a primary source of income by the last decade of that century. This was due largely to the fact that the provincial manufacturing sector was increasing production rapidly

as it turned out goods for the new western Canadian markets. As the industrial sector was expanding and creating jobs more quickly than the agriculture sector, the urban population was increasing faster than the rural population. By 1921, industrialization and urbanization had radically changed the structure of Canadian society so that the number of people living in cities was equal to the number living in rural areas for the first time in the history of the country.[23] Urbanization and industrialization were structural changes in Canadian society, the consequences of decisions made by public and private policy makers and designed to attain a set of national goals of which an increased rate of economic and population growth was of central importance. Agriculture in Ontario declined not only as a result of urbanized use of productive land but also because the federal government took less and less interest in its profitability. Essential to understanding the role of agriculture in Pelham is an appreciation of the role of agriculture in the development and expansion of the Canadian economy and the uses it has been put to from time to time and place to place. "The clearest and most significant uniformity regarding Canadian agriculture for more than three hundred years has been its deliberate and consistent use as a basis for economic and political empire. Towards this end it has been fostered, moulded, and supported by legislation and public moneys."[24]

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[23] Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921 A Nation Transformed (Toronto, 1974), p. 2.

[24] Vernon C. Fowke, Canadian Agricultural Policy The Historical Pattern (Toronto, 1947), p. vi. Farmers also lost their political clout when the majority of voters lived in the cities.

Upper Canadian settlements close to the American border were developed, and encouraged to develop, by the colonial government to act as a first line of defence against Yankee invaders. Farmers provided foodstuffs to the military stations and served in the militia when the army was threatened. Pelham settlers were called to fulfill both these functions as citizens had recalled in their stories about local history. The cereal crops produced were sufficient enough that by the late eighteen forties the agricultural industry was a net exporter to the United States and to Britain, bringing in cash for the Upper Canadian economy. The functions of provisioning and defence continued to be significant after Confederation but the ability of Ontario and Quebec farmers to generate export staples at a time when fur and timber were declining illustrated to commercial and political leaders that an expanding agricultural frontier could act as an economic incentive to stimulate manufacturing and trade activity. For this reason, agricultural expansion became part of a national strategy for a quicker rate of economic growth.

The Ontario farmer had by 1850 begun to operate in a cash economy, passing from a position of simple self-sufficiency into one in which he could afford to purchase commodities, thereby stimulating manufacturing activity. Joseph Spelt, noting that thrashing machines, revolving hay rakes and many other mechanical devices were in use by that year,[25] argued that this was in this same period that small towns in the colony were being established as part of a network of urban centres. That decade was the beginning of a transition period in the

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[25] Spelt, Urban Development in South Central Ontario, p. 71

Ontario economy during which these towns grew as a result of non-agricultural activity. This growth was determined by locations near the navigation canals, the Ottawa River, the Great Lakes or on one of the ever improving land roadways while population density and waterpower resources were additional factors determining how quickly a town might expand. These centres were focal points for trade and transportation, for workshop manufacturing and for a variety of other services. These towns and villages were predominantly non-rural settlements as the active farm population in them was always very small.[26] On the Niagara peninsula, towns grew for these same reasons: St. Catherines, Welland, Thorold, Port Colborne were all built on a north-south axis following the Welland Canal.[27] Their early growth was generated by the handling of shipping traffic and the building of related industries set up to maintain, or take advantage of, the transportation system. Niagara Falls, in the second half of the nineteenth century, was the site of the earliest and largest of hydro electric projects in Ontario facilitating the growth of that city. This electrical power development was particularly beneficial to the peninsula industrial centres as they received the distribution of hydro electricity at preferential rates which, until the Ontario government discontinued this policy in the early nineteen fifties,

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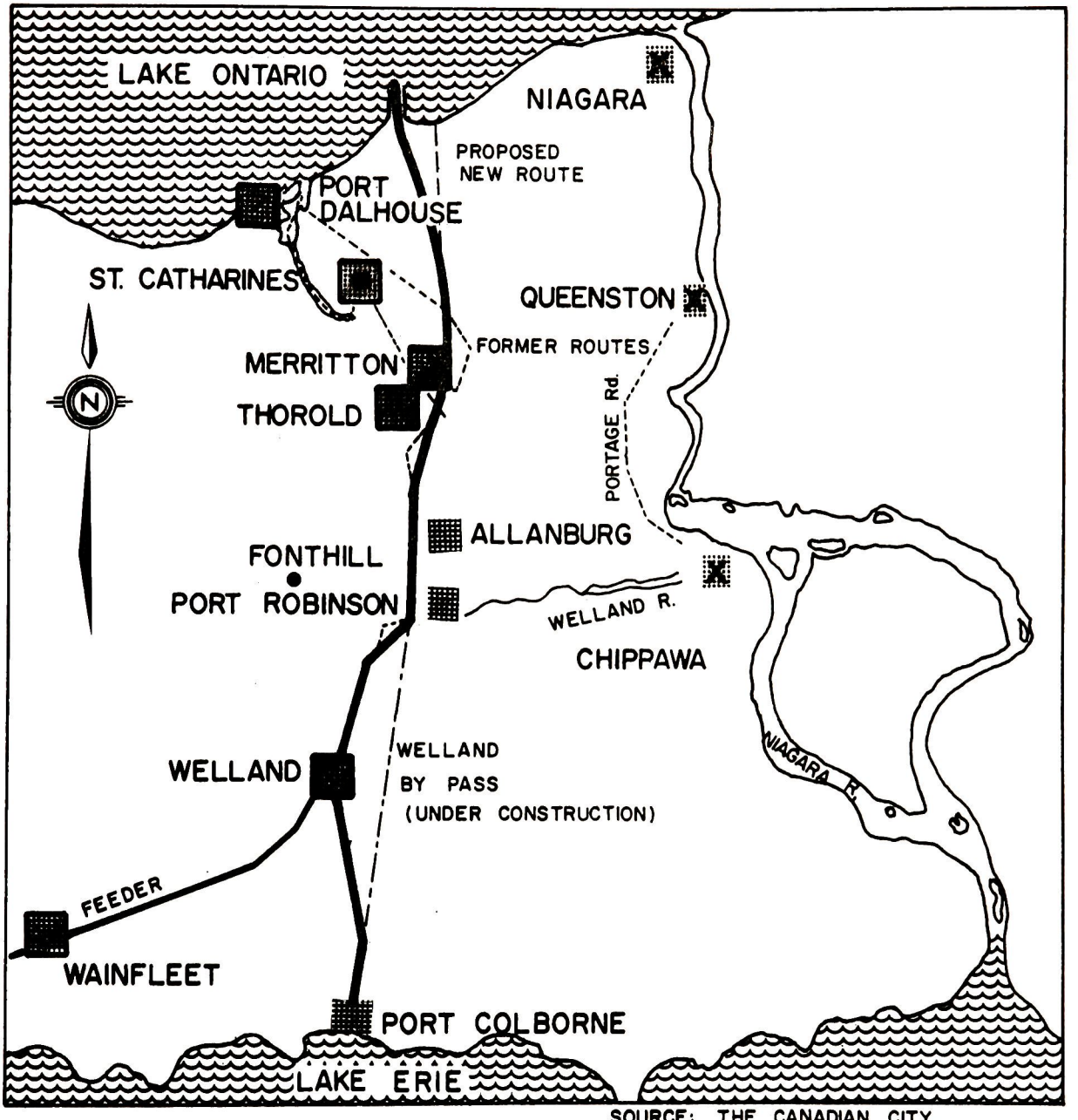
[26] Ibid., p. 95.

[27] The Welland Canal was built and rebuilt five times and each construction period produced a boom economy on the peninsula. The construction years were 1824-29, 1832-45, 1875-87, 1913-32 and 1967-73. See map four for the effects of the Canal on the urban development of the region. The map is adapted from John N. Jackson, The Canadian City, Space, Form, Quality (Toronto, 1973), p. 41.

URBAN SETTLEMENTS



SOURCE: THE CANADIAN CITY.

KEY

- Not now located on the Canal.
- About to be deprived of the Canal.
- Preceeding the first Canal.
- Initiated by the first Canal.
- ■ Expanded by the first Canal.
- X Growth cultivated by the first Canal.

acted as an incentive for manufacturers to locate in the Niagara region.

The structure of Canadian agriculture was greatly influenced by the expansionary policies of the national government between 1850-1930.[28] In the pre-Confederation years, the construction of railroads connecting the new townsof Ontario with those of Northern New York and Quebec proved to be a great immediate boom to the economy. Unfortunately for the financiers the volume of trade needed to sustain the profitable operation of these new transportation links did not materialize. The Americans continued, in the main, to carry their own goods across their own country. At the same time, Ontario farming was no longer expanding; that is, the critical role for the farmer in the early Canadian industrial economy was not what he purchased as a continuing operator but what he purchased to develop his farm. His need for manufactured goods at the outset and at expansion was what aided the industrialists.

Once this was appreciated by policy makers, the Canadian government embarked on its National Policy, a strategy that was deceptively simple for quickening the rate of growth. The building of the railroads would keep Ontario and Montreal industries producing, the influx of immigrants would keep the railroads busy once the C.P.R. began to operate and the development of farmland would generate business to prevent the industrial centres from suffering a recession as a consequence of finishing the railroad. Nothing significant happened in western Canadian agriculture until 1890, allowing the Ontario farmer to enjoy a number of years of prosperity. These are the years affectionately recorded as the good years of Pelham Township. There

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[28] Fowke, Canadian Agricultural Policy, p. 7.

were some lean years during this period, such as the depression of the eighteen seventies, but the Ontario farmer was able to survive and prosper because of an expanding market. The principal handicap to them was the high tariff against the American manufactured goods forcing the farmer to buy expensive Canadian goods as John A. Macdonald's strategy had intended.[29]

The 1881 census reveals that close to half of the workers in Ontario were involved in agricultural labour: 48.3 percent were in agriculture, 20.6 percent in manufacturing, 7.1 percent in commerce, 5.3 percent in domestic, 3.7 percent in professional and 15 percent in unclassified jobs. The following table indicates how this had begun to change in Ontario by 1911:

Percentage distribution of the labour force by occupation category in Ontario since 1881[30]

Occupation category	1881	1911	1931	1941	1951
Agriculture	48.3	30.98	22.66	18.57	10.79
Other Primary		3.13	2.25	3.08	2.21
Secondary	20.6	28.97	30.41	35.26	38.92
Tertiary	16.1	25.07	33.83	36.51	40.80
Labourers	15.0	11.85	10.68	6.30	6.27
Not Stated	-	-	.07	.28	1.01
	100.0	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

[29] Brown and Cook, Canada 1896-1921, chapter 8, pp. 144-161.

[30] Adapted from Spelt, p. 108. In the twenty year period, 1891-1911, the number of persons involved in agriculture dropped sixteen percent from close to one half to less than one third of the labour force. Using his own calculations, Leo Johnson has estimated that the decline continued and that the percentage dropped from 28.79 percent in 1931 to 10.23 percent in 1961.

Leo A. Johnson, "The Development of Class in Canada in the Twentieth Century," in Gary Teeple, ed., Capitalism and the National Question in Canada (Toronto, 1972), p. 149.

The Ontario farmer has experienced inconsistent market conditions from 1900-74. During the war years of 1914-18 and 1939-45, the farmer was again considered to be an important part of the economy, giving him some political power which quickly declined a few years afterwards. While this defense role has been a recurring one, the more common role of provisioner has been continuous but "no longer makes for bargaining strength."[31] Getting rich in Ontario farming has been exceptional (e.g. tobacco) unless one's farm was bought by speculators and land developers operating in and around the expanding urban centres. The farmer in the early part of the twentieth century had varying degrees of success and comfort "but all those on marginal land or those unable to farm effectively were on a standard far removed from that of fifty years earlier . . . on the whole this was a good period for the farmer. On the other hand, as urbanization and industry progressed and the wealth that accompanied them became more conspicuous there was growing dissatisfaction with the farmer's share of the provincial income."[32] Leo Johnson, in his analysis of the decline of the independent producer, has noted that the farmer's income from farming was declining quickly as a percentage of the national income and as a percentage of his own income.

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[31] Fawkes, Canadian Agricultural Policy, p. 280 .

[32] G. P. de Glazebrook, Life in Ontario A Social History (Toronto, 1968), pp. 175-176.

Canadian Farm Income 1948-68 [33]

	1948	1958	1968
Number of Farmers	190,090	205,331	291,553
Number of Farmers as a percentage of all earners	5.19%	3.71%	3.43%
Average Income of Farmers	$1619.81	$2234.13	$3244.36
Farm Income (1949 Dollars)	1669.91	1785.88	2090.44
Percentage of average Canadian Income	78%	68%	66%

In Ontario, between 1901-1951, the number of farms and farm operators declined steadily[34] and for those remaining on the farm a greater percentage have needed to turn to non-agricultural wage labour to keep their incomes at a reasonable level.

Sources of Income for Canadian Farmers 1948-68[35]
(percentages)

	Farmers with Taxable Income		Farmers with non-taxable Income	
	Farming	Wages - Salaries	Farming	Wages - Salaries
1948	91.1	4.3	90.6	5.1
1958	82.3	8.5	83.1	8.9
1968	76.2	11.0	64.6	20.0

Local Factors

The impact of changes in the nature of both the provincial and national economic structure has been to reshape the settlement pattern in Pelham. The industrialization of the Ontario economy did not visibly

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[33] Johnson, "The Development of Class . . . ," p. 149.

[34] Spelt, Urban Development in South Central Ontario, p. 194.

[35] Johnson, op. cit., p. 150.

alter Pelham; that is, no major industries, with the exception of a cannery, were built in the township. Yet the industrialization of the towns of the peninsula has, indirectly, very much affected the growth of Pelham. Similarly, the lack of protection in federal policies for agricultural products, especially tender fruits, has continually eroded the position of the local farmer causing most to quit the land. Thus, the changes in Pelham are twofold: the impact of industrialization has been to increase the non-farming population while the impact of governmental agricultural policies has been to decrease the numbers involved in farming.

The consequences of the industrialization of the Ontario economy for the Niagara area were the movement of industries into settlements along the Welland Canal and an increase in the population living in the surrounding countryside. For the city of Welland, a major influence on Pelham's growth, the biggest influx of manufacturers came between the years 1905-1913, causing an increase in the population for neighbouring townships and villages including Fonthill. The Welland Canal, after its first reconstruction, providing as it did water supplies and transportation facilities, attracted industries which needed some of Niagara Falls' abundant hydro-electric power and which were intending to serve the northern United States--Ontario marketplace. Many were branch plants of major American corporations taking advantage of federal tariff and tax policies which favoured the building of such factories in Canada. Examples of corporations coming into the Welland area are the United States Steel Corporation, the Steel Company of Canada, United Carbide and Page Hershey. Similar types of industrial firms started

production in Thorold, Port Colborne and St. Catharines which are located along the canal.[36] The pattern of development during the early stages of industrial growth was for businesses to cluster along the Welland Canal and the railways which either followed the Canal or joined it to the Buffalo, New York region. Entrepreneurs and civic officials first developed the towns along the Canal while other settlements on the peninsula such as Pelham Township, set back as it was four miles from the canal, grew more slowly and were not subjected to the same intense commercial and industrial developmental pressures.

The only industry which chose to operate in Pelham was the canning industry which processed the major local crops. The canneries are a good example of the structure of agriculture and commerce in the Niagara area at that time. It was then thought to be more profitable to build a number of small processing plants near the more productive farmland rather than to depend on the farmers' inefficient vehicles carrying produce over primitive roadways to a central factory. This industrial calculation changed later in the century when almost all the smaller canneries including the Canadian Canneries' plant in Fonthill had been bought out and closed down by an American corporation which centralized all processing into one plant in St. Catharines.

The lack of industries did not prevent Fonthill (which in 1922 had attained the independent status of a village) and Pelham Township from growing in population. People moving into the village, which ex-

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[36] There were, of course, other locational factors and the Canal was more important for the first generation of industries than it was for ones moving in after World War Two.

perienced the higher growth rate in the earlier part of this century, were doing so, not because their work involved them in local agriculture, but because they chose to live there for other reasons and to commute to their work place. Although there is no clear evidence as to why Fonthill was chosen by these newcomers, a number of suggestions have been made by the townspeople. Welland, as an industrial town (and despite its own official designation as the 'Rose City'), was not developed as a very attractive place to live, a fact which discouraged many of the transient managerial employees of the multi-national corporations from living there. Fonthill was physically pleasing, particularly on the edge of the Escarpment where there was an expansive view of the peninsula and many were said to be attracted because of this peaceful setting. Also, the electric train line provided easy access to Welland (half hourly service before 1930) long before the automobile accentuated the pattern of the Fonthill commuter and allowed many more to commute daily to their workplace.

The changes which transformed Pelham and Fonthill were much less obvious than what had happened to Welland or Thorold, both of which had about the same size of population as Pelham Township in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[37] One consequence of the expansion of the industrial centres was that the character of Pelham's population changed as a result of a spillover effect. The evidence indicates that the many citizens who chose to live in Pelham and in

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[37] Welland, for instance, had a population of only 1,850 in 1889 but in 1971 over 44,000 people lived there although some of this growth can be attributed to the physical expansion of the municipality itself.

Fonthill were employees of private or public institutions in the region. A few were independently wealthy, a very few were on welfare, a few came to farm.

Beginning around 1900, when Welland's industrial base expanded rapidly, people started to look for places to live outside the immediate industrial environment. Once the electric train passenger service was operating in 1907, connecting Fonthill to all towns along the Canal, it was possible to live in Fonthill and to still have access to city life; for instance, it was possible to send students to high school in Welland. The residential growth in Pelham, in the first three decades of this century, was concentrated in and around Fonthill where people could have ready access to the railway. For those living further out, such as around Fenwick, daily commuting might mean a walk of up to four miles into Fonthill to catch the train. Others took another train along the Toronto, Hamilton and Buffalo line to Smithville, ten miles to the west, to continue their education in that village.

The introduction of the car fragmented the transportation system, freeing the worker to find a home most suitable to his family in a location that he liked; he, too, was able to escape the depressing Welland city environment. The strip residential development which concerns many planners did not materialize until the late forties when the automobile became a common vehicle on the roads of Pelham. Many of the smaller housing units, built on equally small lots on the edge of Fonthill, around Fenwick and on several old township roads, was constructed beginning in the years when mobility was gained by the working people.[38]

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[38] Interview with Joe Fletcher.

After 1945, the population of Pelham Township increased more rapidly than Fonthill, partly because Pelham had more land available but also because this land was now available to so many more people.

Industrialization in the Niagara region has changed the composition of the work force, as has happened across the province, so that agriculture no longer is the primary employer.

Labour Force Involved in Agriculture and Manufacturing[39]

	Niagara		Ontario	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
Agriculture	6,724 7.8%	6,044 5.8%	201,482 10.7%	168,755 7.0%
Manufacturing	40,290 46.5%	39,628 37.9%	615,358 32.6%	643,284 26.9%
All Industries	86,578	104,640	1,884,941	2,393,015

Fruit farming, begun late in the nineteenth century as a profitable alternative to mixed farming, was in decline by 1950 and by 1970 a good percentage of the most productive fruitland had been destroyed, being bought up and transformed into residential or industrial uses. The Township of Pelham at one time had the highest number of acres among the Niagara farm townships for producing tender fruit crops, though the soil and climate conditions are not considered to be as favourable as the farmland below the Escarpment, along the Lake Ontario shoreline. Between 1951-65 a total of 11,495 acres of cultivated tender fruit farmland on the peninsula had been converted to non-agricultural land uses.

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[39] Equitable Securities (Canada Limited), Regional Municipality of Niagara, Economic and Financial Survey (Toronto, November 1970), p.7. This study was commissioned by the new Regional Niagara Government.

Peach orchards suffered the greatest loss: 4,850 acres, followed by plums (3,480 acres), pears (1,823 acres) and apples (1,429 acres).[40] The original losses in Pelham were the lands immediately around the village of Fonthill including the Wellington Nurseries and the Stirtzinger farm (thought to be one of the best in the Pelham area). In the former Welland County there was, in 1951, a farming population of 11,118 people living on 2,035 farms but by 1965 this number had been reduced to 7,097 persons on 1,413 farms.[41] A study commissioned by the Regional Municipality of Niagara on local farming showed that the number of acres under cultivation in 1971 in Pelham was considerably less than in the past. While it was estimated that, in the eighteen eighties, approximately 20,000 out of the 23,000 acres or 87 percent of the land area of Pelham Township was under cultivation, it was found that the amount of land under cultivation in 1968 had dropped to 60 percent:

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[40] Ontario, Regional Development Branch of the Office of the Chief Economist, Department of Economies and Development, Niagara, 1966 (Toronto, November 8, 1966), p. 24.

[41] Regional Municipality of Niagara, Official Plan Studies: Agriculture Research and Analysis, Report No. 2 (St. Catharines, n.d.), p. 36.

Township of Pelham: Agricultural Land Uses (1968)[42]

Total Area	20,035 acres	
Cropland	12,139	100%
Field Crops	8,688	71.6%
Tree Fruit	1,924	15.8%
Grapes	808	6.7%
Vegetables, Small Fruit Nurseries	719	5.9%
Total Number of Farms	352	
Total Number of Fruit Growers	69	
Approximate Area of Tender Fruit Soil	8,800 acres	

The farmer in Pelham has shared the fate of other Ontario farmers; that is,he too has suffered from declining sales, rising costs of production, unstable market conditions and sons no longer convinced that farming is an attractive way of life. It was perhaps only a matter of time before the price offered by land developers became too attractive to refuse. This exodus from farming is also the result of federal tariff policies, which since 1945 have consistently failed to protect the farmer, especially the fruit farmer, from cheap imports from the United States and Australia. This situation confirms Fowke's argument that as a producer the farmer has been in a weak political position and that his demands for more protection have generally been ignored.

The intrusion of the industrial-urban complex had two immediate consequences for the farmer. Locally it increased the non-agricultural

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[42] L. G. Reeds, Niagara Region Agricultural Research Report (Hamilton, 1969), p. 60 in Regional Niagara, op. cit., p. 81. Note that these figures are larger than those of Statistics Canada in the 1971 census (see chapter one).

value of his land while, at the same time, industries offered opportunities for part-time or full-time jobs to supplement the weakening farm income. Secondly, federal strategies for provision of foodstuff were built on the premise of finding cheap food from any source for the city consumer. These factors together caused much of the decline of the Pelham family farm.

Those who were attracted to the Pelham villages were not interested in agriculture per se but in a small town atmosphere as distinguished from the "big city". The chief attraction of places like Fonthill--and this is how it was affected by industrialization in other centres--was that it represented a retreat, a recluse from business, from noise, the quickness of the city life, the many obligations of social life and, for a few, a retreat from higher taxes. The end result of this movement was that the village increased in size, swollen by those who were not involved in agriculture but who had made the decision to live outside the neighbouring cities. Industries and government paid them sufficient wages to afford housing and transportation so that the family emerged as an independent unit, economically and spacially, both of which were never realized in earlier times. The spillover from urbanization has increased the numbers living in Pelham but, as new arrivals are different from the original settlers whose families still live in the area, this has in fact changed the character of the village. The principal demand on land is for subdivision and estate housing. For the retired farmer, or the one about to quit the farm, the opportunity for a profit is enticing and no government is anxious to suggest that the farmer should not sell his property. The impact of

industrialization in this farming area has been to turn around the price of land, to escalate values and then to introduce competitive and sometimes contradictory land uses. Where factories are not built, as in Pelham, industrialization causes other changes equally important, such as changes in the type and number of people wanting to live in the villages and a corresponding change in land uses.

All too often, the year 1945 is given as the time at which Canadian society was transformed into something new and entirely different. One purpose of this analysis has been to suggest that the transformation process was initiated long ago, that the beginnings of industrialization can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century in Canada and that urbanization began before the turn of the century. The last thirty years are usually singled out, however, because the consequences of earlier trends finally became apparent. What had changed was the rate of change to the extent that change itself was a widely discussed issue in its own right. A few citizens in the town expressed the belief that their environment was out of control and that they no longer could influence what was happening to them. This powerlessness is especially felt in small settlements such as Fonthill or Pelham Township because so few of the decisions originate from within, yet so many changes have affected the residents in some way. For instance, the economic scale has changed so that it has eventually become impossible to produce goods or maintain services on a local level at an acceptable and profitable level of efficiency. The result in Pelham has been the decline of the independent producer and the merchant class. For many in the village the separation of workplace and home was taken for granted.

People working outside Fonthill are now the norm, not the exception. The only ones remaining behind during the day are the housewives, pensioners, students, farmers and those who are involved in the local service industry or employed by one level of government or another. Being as small as they are, the village and the township have had no opportunity or hope of receiving a part of the mass communication networks which have mushroomed in the last forty years. What happens locally is of passing importance to newspapers in St. Catharines, Welland, Hamilton and Toronto, all of which are widely read in the area. Nor is there any hope of being an essential link in the electronic media for it too needs larger markets to survive.

Combined, the village and the township had by the nineteen sixties lost the underlying supports which created its rural style of life. The residents are no longer able to support the range of activities common to small towns because the resource base is inadequate. Communication systems including bus, train, newspapers and radio are designed to function in high density urban environments. Attention is pulled towards events, happenings, entertainment and politics that are available in the large cities reinforcing local images, especially in the perceptions of the teenagers, that 'there is nothing to do here'. For those whose lives are bound into the cities through work, it is perhaps natural to be somewhat uninterested in what is happening in Pelham. At its extreme, this means that some relegate their home to a place for sleeping, eating and raising a family.

The second major change has been the decline of agriculture, an argument which has already been explored. Since agriculture still com-

mands a large part of the land, people refer to the town as being a rural community, thus ignoring the fact that some of this land is sitting idle waiting for residential development and that a very large number of residents are commuters whose lifestyles are in no way related to farming. The persistence of the image makes agriculture more central to the life of Pelham than an occupational, revenue or land use survey might indicate. Rural life is idealized because it symbolizes a day gone by when a strong sense of community was apparently recognized and taken for granted. It helps those, bound into city life because of careers, set themselves apart from that urban environment which they dislike. Ruralality, to their way of thinking, adds status to their existence.

The sense of togetherness in days gone by was fostered by the shared lifestyles of families farming together. They worked through the same rhythm of the seasons, faced the same hardships and celebrated the same festivities, usually through the church and the school. Very early in the development of Pelham, farmers would gather to haul logs and set bonfires to help a new family clear the land or they would pitch in to build a home. One old farmer who was interviewed spoke at length about the relationship between farming and a strong sense of community: "before the days when farms had machinery it was necessary for everyone to help everyone else in order to survive. At harvest time, once you finished one farm you went on to help out the next. We were all young in those days and a full day in the field seemed more like fun than work. Once each farmer bought his own machinery, there was no need to help one another. People became isolated from each

other."[43]

The transition from a more purely rural settlement into a mixed residential town has, however, had some positive effects which were mentioned by its citizens. The influx of people has in itself increased a most valuable resource in any community for it is people that are the basic resource with which one is able to maximize possibilities for activity and involvement. A small town, where no industrial tax base is available, is entirely dependent on its people for two resources: time and money. As far as time is concerned, some types of volunteer groups have benefited substantially from the town's growth, especially activities primarily aimed at satisfying the needs of children in recreation and education while men's service clubs such as the Kinsmen and the Lions have active memberships and are involved in a number of fund raising projects.

The Political Life of Old Pelham

It is fascinating to listen to local citizens talk about their past because so many different events are remembered by different men and women, making it quite apparent that no particular set of events or characters stand out as the core of its past. One reason for this disparity in recollections is that there are at least four different groups, each with its own perception of the town's past. For example, there are those citizens of Fonthill and of the township who have lived all their lives in that locale, in a family which was established there for probably two or more generations. These people know intimately the

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[43] Interview with Ernest Brown.

details of other families, of neighbours, of the council and of businesses, whether from accumulating gossip or from their own involvement. Since 1922, when the village and township were separated into two municipalities, there has been no tradition of interaction between the citizens of each area. If anything, there are strong hints of resentment and hostility between the two; for instance, older Fonthill residents refer to Fenwick people as those living 'out back' while the Fenwick people are quick to describe the others as 'snobs'. Consequently, the two have had a tradition of keeping to themselves and not knowing a lot about what has been happening in the other community.

A second division among the people of Pelham is between those who have lived there for many years and those who had recently moved in, even if that has been five, ten or twenty years ago. Usually, it was found that this second group are not especially knowledgeable about the town's past except that they typically accept the idea that the village (or the township) is a rural, agricultural settlement slowly being changed (for better or for worse) by residential development and an ever increasing population. Only a very few living in Fonthill recognize the fact that commuters had been moving into the village for about seventy years.

As the citizens of the two municipalities had been aloof towards each other for such a long time, the establishment of the new Town of Pelham was imposed on two parochial political structures. On the one hand, the farmers and the newly arrived in the township, for the most part, got along fine and there were only a few political battles which left any bitterness. The same could be said for the Font-

hill dwellers, old and new, who managed to work within the framework of council. However, now that both are combined into one council, the 'urban' politicians and activists are not often willing to agree with the 'rural' citizens making it impossible for council to resolve major political differences. In 1974 alone, after council had been operating for four years, the two major proposals before council and the townspeople, the approval of the official land use plan and the building of an arena complex, had to go before the Ontario Municipal Board because no concensus could be reached in the town.[44] There were fights not only over economic issues such as land development and taxation but also over the role of the council in Pelham, the priorities of public spending and the relationship between citizens and public officials.

What citizens remember about their past is very selective. For example, when questioned about the Depression years which had never been mentioned in any conversation, one man replied "What's there to talk about? Nothing happened in those years."[45] Instead many of his cronies prefer to talk about their adventures during the Second World War and even then they care to retell only the good times. Recollections about local politics are somewhat similar as citizens tell stories only about the days when tense decisions were made by council or when several dozen citizens had shown up at a council meeting to protest an unpopular action.

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[44] Correspondence from town official, September 1974.

[45] Interview with E. A. Ker.

Although the doctrine of local independence in matters of a local nature had been established by Ontario legislation in the nineteenth century, municipal government has never been organized in a fashion which would allow it to be either entirely independent or completely democratic. The concept of a local council, supported by administrative officers, from the outset created tension between the central government, the province of Ontario, and the local authority. (The same could be said for administration and policy making in the sphere of education). The one tension of centralization--decentralization of authority and finances is mixed with the question of democracy and efficiency where democracy has come to mean representation of local opinion and efficiency to mean spending as little money as possible. One result of these tensions is that citizens only recall council events which emphasize these frictions. For example, during the eighteen seventies the Ontario Department of Education claimed that grammar schooling could not continue past 1877 in the school-house(built in 1857) in Fonthill because its structure was no longer suitable to the provincial officials. The citizens decided after a long and crowded public meeting not to build another school. In 1910, after another such meeting, it was decided to proceed and a substantial edifice[46] was constructed, one which was still in use sixty years later. Every decision to spend large amounts of public funds was argued and debated for months. For instance, although a medical doctor, whose practice was in Fonthill, campaigned hard during the nineteen twenties for a public water deliv-

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[46] Interview with A. K. Wigg.

ery system, it was twelve years before enough citizens had agreed to accept the expense. Finally, sewers for Fonthill were first mentioned in 1948 but it was not until 1972 that they were finally installed; every time the suggestion was made, a large public meeting was held in which citizens shouted down the proposal. Being a pro-sewer candidate was a sure way to be defeated at the polls.

Despite these flurries of political activity, there is little reason to believe that local politics ever dominated local life. An indication of the minor role played by local government in the latter part of the nineteenth century is that Pelham council was mentioned for nine brief lines in a thirteen page discussion on the township in a county history commissioned by the Welland County council. The short passage did mention the reeves and it is interesting to note that the names of non-farmers came up regularly in Pelham. Dr. Fraser, the first reeve, served from 1850-1857 at the same time as Dexter D'Everardo was clerk, (1850-1859); D'Everardo was followed by a John Crow who was clerk from 1859-1887. Other reeves were barristers, farmers and merchants as one might expect to find in such a settlement. Between 1850-1887, one reeve was in for seven one year terms, one for twenty (including two as county warden), one for three, another for two and three for one year terms, indicating an overall pattern of low turnovers in civic offices. Of a list of thirty-seven 'important' persons listed in this same county history, twenty-one were farmers, eight merchants, five professionals (one of whom was also a merchant), one minister, one postmaster-merchant and one, Mr. Crow, who was a Liberal farmer and merchant, as well as town clerk.

The political association was mentioned for eight others showing that three farmers were Reformers, one a Grange and one a Conservative while only one professional was a Reformer. Of these thirty-seven, twenty-one held no political office at that time, six were on township council, two on council, one a county justice of the peace, one Member of Parliament, two town officials, two postmasters and two school board members.[47] Of those few who were involved, many participated in more than one activity. Some, especially the reformers, were very active in politics outside the township.

Recognizing the number of changes that were transforming the peninsula at the turn of the century, including the building of another Welland Canal, the increased rate of industrialization, the full scale production of Niagara Falls hydro electric power, all of which were attracting a number of people to the area, it is not surprising to learn that governmental activity also increased. In 1915, Fonthill became a police village[48] which, while it remained in the township, gave it some independence in its political decision making.[49] Seven years later, in 1922, the village was officially incorporated and separated from Pelham Township. That remained the arrangement up to 1970 when they were reunited by regional government legislation.

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[47] History of the County of Welland, p. 173.

[48] A police village in Ontario is supervised by three trustees elected by the village to oversee the spending of funds in matters of water, police and a limited number of other local services.

[49] The first year revenue was $1,264.00 and expenditures $849.00. A History of Fonthill, p. 11.

Politics in the village of Fonthill was undisturbed throughout the first half of the twentieth century if anything can be judged by the length of terms for public office. The clerk treasurer held his position from 1922-41, another from 1941-64 and a third was still in office in 1974. As late as 1962 there were only two full-time and one part-time staff members on the payroll. Only seven reeves have held office in the last fifty-two years although the turnover is higher for deputy reeve and the three councillors. The township had a similar pattern of longevity in the reeve's office and in the clerk's position. Although reeves were typically re-elected as long as they ran for office, elections were often contested in what are remembered as lively events. Disgruntled citizens had a difficult time eliminating the incumbent.[50]

The establishing of Fonthill as an independent village with its own local government marked the beginning of the separate development of the township and the village. This is indirectly recognized by local historians who have excluded any mention of citizens from the other municipality in their community histories. It is as if, in each settlement, citizens thought themselves somehow different and unique, even a little better than the others. The social space between the two has gradually increased over the years so that while the municipal officials looked forward to a new town, there was no group of citizens which was anxious to be joined to the other by regional government legislation. It was an established characteristic of the local culture that those living in Fonthill were described (and described themselves) as different from

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[50] Interview with Mardi Collins.

those in the township, a fact explained locally as a rural-urban split. Similarly, a comment often heard is that each municipality had its own style of politics because of the different types of people living there. Citizens, it is argued locally, expected different actions from their councils according to their own values and needs; thus, the politics of each municipality reflected the separate political cultures. By comparing incidents recorded in the interviews and in the local writings, a few conflicts were noted which indicate that while the councils did operate somewhat differently, the citizen culture was similar, in as much as in both municipalities residents tended to react to public decisions and that these reactions were typically the most common form of public participation.

What attracted citizens to participate in local politics? There are two perspectives commonly taken to answer this question. Either people respond to politics in order to preserve some self-defined self-interest, or people participate out of some sense of responsibility, some sense of public commitment. In Pelham Township and Fonthill Village most citizens recall that people were most likely to respond to council action if it involved spending local tax dollars.[51] Occasionally, such as in the Fonthill Public School debate in the early nineteen hundreds, decisions were made in favour of spending more funds and endorsed at large if an obvious improvement was to be the result. In this particular school debate, a series of well attended public meetings were

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[51] Interviews with Glyn Green, Sophie Homenuck, Harold Black and Len Hunt among others. This was a common observation.

held to discuss whether a four room combination grammar and high school should be built. When it became apparent that the alternative was going to be bussing, the townspeople decided to build. This building (substantially the same) was still standing in 1974, demonstrating, according to its long time principal, its substantial structure,[52] the implication being that there was nothing stingy about local taxpayers.

A second education decision of major importance was the building of A. K. Wigg Public School in the early nineteen fifties. As it became obvious to the principal of Fonthill Public School that additional space was urgently needed for young post-World War Two families, he recommended the building of a second elementary school. To prepare the School Board for this expenditure, Mr. Wigg began in the late nineteen forties to present monthly reports at board meetings. The board at this time, known as the Fonthill Public School Board, only had the one school to supervise so that the presentation of a regular report facilitated a close rapport between Mr. Wigg and the four members of the board. The decision to expand was then recognized by all as a natural one, the only alternative in face of the number of families moving into Fonthill. Where there had been intense debate in the first case, there was only quiet discussion among elected officials and the administrator in the second.

The third decision reflects the ambivalent and mixed emotions in the village toward upgrading existing educational facilities. Fonthill Public School had more classrooms added to the original four but

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[52] Interview with A. K. Wigg.

no gymnasium and no auditorium. This also was true of A. K. Wigg whereas a high school, the Thorold-Fonthill High School, built centrally in the village in the sixties, had excellent facilities because of a more generous provincial grant structure for secondary schools. The Fonthill Public School Board decided to add to A. K. Wigg and to upgrade its facilities. This request was questioned by the village council which, at that time, had to approve the Board's budget before taxes were levied as part of the village's general property tax rate. Council decided to cut the item from the budget as they could not understand why this 'extra' could be thought of as a necessity. The decision reveals something of the conflicting views in that village about its priorities and its politicians.

The principal and a long time board member both referred to this decision on their own initiative during their interviews. One noted that the council had no imagination, no ability to see ahead and develop policies which would be rewarding in the end for the whole village. This was because, according to the second interviewee, council members were local self-made men, either from farms or from downtown businesses. It was thought that this was why councillors dismissed education as not being all that important.[53] If council was being responsible, their duty to the taxpayers was to keep expenses down to a minimum. The Board, on the other hand, consisted of more educated, high status residents in the village who were more likely to value the education of young people. It was "a good board with professional people, good intelligent people,

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[53] Interview with lawyer Glyn Green.

businessmen, accountants, people from Atlas (Steel, Welland) and places like that, ministers, doctors. Of course, over the years there were one or two, but generally they thought about the situation without any of the small town bickering, that's what made it a very happy situation. I never mind having an intelligent argument with someone but you get with some of these guys . . . . "[54] That same citizen revealed the indignation and disbelief of an official who had carefully prepared a report, had it accepted within one publicly elected body only to have it rejected by the next. "I doubt whether they did their homework" was his reaction and, as if to prove his argument, he pointed out how one councillor who originally refused the expenditure did some independent research and came back in favour.[55] The alderman later substantiated this interpretation.[56]

This issue was resolved by council authorizing the addition to be constructed at the time that the new county school board system was being announced by the provincial government. Like other recent educational decisions in Fonthill, this one was settled without the active participation of citizens except elected and appointed officials. The only decision that either the principal or the trustee could recall in which people wanted to discuss and argue--and this was only mentioned by one--was the decision to close one of the public school

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[54] Interview with A. K. Wigg.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Interview with Eric Bergenstein.

kindergartens because of falling enrollment. According to the former chairman, the Board called a public meeting, discussed the matter with the parents and carried out the changes as planned.[57]

During the same period, educational problems and policies were very much in the centre of activity in the township. The Pelham Public School Board was responsible for seven small schools scattered throughout the township. Like the Fonthill Board, the Pelham trustees saved money by not appointing a principal for every school; instead a supervising principal regularly travelled to each of the schools assuming the role of a principal, aided by a resident assistant principal. By 1967 a number of taxpayers and parents were doubting the competence of the supervising principal and the Board. At the nominating meeting held during that autumn, several acrimonious speeches were made denouncing the incumbents. After the December election, an entirely new board found itself elected. None of the newly elected had served on a publicly elected body before and most had not even attended more than one or two school board meetings. The atmosphere for the first meetings was hostile as former board members attended in the audience with their 'buddies'.[58] Despite the pressure of these unfriendly onlookers, the Board set about to rid itself of the principal, a decision which they unanimously interpreted as being their mandate. This was accomplished in the spring; by fall the Board was dis-

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[57] Interview with Glyn Green.

[58] Interviewswith Gerry Shields, a school trustee at the time and Sophie Homenuck, a newspaper reporter.

banded as the Welland County Board of Education began operation January 1, 1969.

Milder than this argument was the building of E. L. Crossley Secondary School, on highway #20 in the middle of the township, by the Pelham and District High School Board. The project was engineered by Dr. Crossley, then a highly respected principal of Pelham High School, to serve the technical and occupational training requirements of local students. Aware of the educational grant structures, he obtained one hundred percent financing from the federal government. What disturbed local citizens was that the large piece of property purchased for the building was owned by Joseph Stirtzinger, former Fonthill councillor and long time school board trustee. That was, however, a more quiet and sullen protest which produced no public expression (meetings, letters, petitions, etc.) but much grumbling among friends and neighbours. The decision to build left the Township of Pelham and the Village of Fonthill with no less than three secondary schools with places for 2700 students where the total population was approximately 8500. These schools were able to continue because they drew students from neighbouring towns and townships; yet any changes in school boundaries would jeopardize the existence of one, perhaps two, of these schools. Strangely, no one had premonitions of what was about to happen to their schools.

The schooling of children shows the ambivalent attitude found in Pelham (before 1970) towards publicly elected local bodies. On the one hand, few cared to involve themselves regularly in the decision making process, preferring to watch from the sidelines. If an unfavour-

able decision was being made, many mobilized themselves in a matter of days so that the Board was no longer operating quietly by itself. Trustees suddenly found themselves the subject of public scrutiny. In some circumstances the officials had been able to push on as they had originally planned; more often than not, they retreated to a more popular stand. The manouevering of school boards brought out the best and the worst in authorities entirely responsible to a small local electorate. Their responsiveness to public demands for action was widely acknowledged and admired. Perhaps this was the essence of local democracy. A public board or council in Pelham expected to be left alone in the normal exercising of its duties; after all, it had been elected by other townspeople to administer local services, as inexpensively and as efficiently as possible. When complaints surfaced or when ratepayers demanded more information or an explanation of a decision, local politicians recognized that it would be opportune to indicate their responsiveness to the expressed wishes of the people. However, in their hurry to work out more acceptable policies, officials often abdicated what is euphemistically known as their public obligation or, as expressed in an interview, "they lacked the guts to go ahead and do what they knew was right."[59] The price of responsiveness has often been innovation, whether that was expressed in introducing new school curriculum or controlling development through an official plan. Responsiveness limited the scope of action for local politicians because they would seek to reflect the mood of the community and not try to impose their own views.

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[59] Interview with public official.

SUMMARY

Seeing the development of Pelham through the images and ideas of its residents is complex for no one version emerges as dominant. One theme which does persist is that the town is rural in character, that its lifestyle and mystique is somehow irrevocably bound into farming, villages and country atmosphere. This is a questionable image of the town because so many are involved in a life totally divorced from the traditional rural community. Indeed, it would appear that much of the strength of the old local way of life was already destroyed by economic and social changes before 1970. The traditional idea of community, the one that is often used to interpret Pelham's past, is that of a selfless people, willing to share resources in everyday life, interested in politics and willing to participate for the good of the community. Given this account, one could expect to find a definite community mindedness expressed in the modern community or plausible explanations of why it has disappeared. In this respect the intervention of regional government is an opportunity to investigate how changes in local government affected community affairs in Pelham.

Chapter Three

The Organizational Structure of Pelham

Most citizens participate in the affairs of Pelham by involving themselves within organizations which are essentially non-political. There are few formal organizations that claim to be primarily concerned with local government. Instead, churches, voluntary associations and political parties are the groups providing an informal setting in which many items of public interest are considered and discussed. This pattern is characteristic of many small places[1] and explains how many community problems are dealt with in Pelham. The following phenomena are elaborated on in this chapter. 1) More citizens are members of voluntary associations and political parties than of interest groups or citizens' committees. 2) Most suggestions for council action (such as the construction of an arena) are generated by voluntary associations. At the same time, council is hesitant to venture into a new sphere of activity, such as planning, without signs of support from interested organizations. (3) Candidates for local office come forward as the result of the support of voluntary associations, meaning that these clubs are important recruiters for municipal government.[2]

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[1] Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson, City Politics (Toronto, 1963), p. 25.

[2] A tradition pointed out by a municipal employee. He anticipated that the Lions and Kinsmen and Firefighters' clubs would be entering candidates in the 1974 election. It was also suggested by a member of the Pelham Environmental Committee that they would have a candidate.

Such organizations are useful to study because they reveal how citizens view local politics. First, people make a distinction between activity and action. Activity implies involvement but with an element of companionship, entertainment and passing the time. Action also implies involvement but with a stronger commitment to change a particular social or political situation, even if it requires conflict. The townspeople tend to avoid the latter.[3] Secondly, a distinction is made between political and non-political events and organizations where political is thought to mean governmental and to be avoided if possible. Voluntary associations and churches are, for example, definitely considered to be non-political.[4] Thirdly, the study of churches and voluntary associations shows chosen interests and chosen relationships, particularly the type of interest with which people choose to associate. For instance, men's service clubs exclude women from normal activity but, typically, have a women's association attached whose members are mainly wives. Men choose voluntary associations not only as an expression of their interests but also for the social comfort of mixing among those with whom they feel quite at ease.[5] Finally, a striking characteristic of the associations in Pelham is the fact that the groups are small and

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[3] A similar point is made on a lighter note in a humorous novel on small town Ontario. Max Braithwaite, Its a Pleasure and a Privilege (Vancouver, 1973). The second part of this chapter looks at the efforts of one group to transform local group activity into action.

[4] The associations cover a number of activities including sport, hobby, cultural, social and charity. Those noted in this chapter were written about in the local newspapers, found in the municipality's mailing list or mentioned in published lists of local organizations.

[5] Margaret Stacey, Tradition and Change A Study of Banbury (London, 1970), p. 77.

normally have no more than thirty-five members. Thus, the formal group activity is limited to a few hundred men and women who are involved within small groups.

Organized Communal Activity

People are busy in this town. They are occupied with their families, their friends, their jobs, their clubs, their churches, or with their recreational activities. Responding to a question about the involvement of his congregation, a minister replied "they're fairly active on the whole, I think, all of them. There's a lot going on. It's not easy to get days to fill extras in." After listening to a more specific inquiry about their interest in the town council, he answered "no, I don't think people, unless there's some special personal concern, take a deep interest in council. Anyone involved with something like the Lion's Club or the Kinsmen, they're working on their own, with the co-operation of a good many people. Big Brothers, Big Sisters are working here with offices in Welland but various activities and concerns of that kind are going on and, of course, in Davis Hall, they do a lot. It operates largely on its own and it seems to cater to its own clientele as it were. The churches have quite a bunch of young people in their youth activity organizations (and) Davis Hall has another group with some overlapping but not much."[6]

That interview and others which followed illustrate the two principles which guide the activities of various groups. First, their modus operandi is to work on their own with as little interference as

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[6] Interview with Rev. Douglas Dunlop of Fonthill United Church.

possible from other groups. This is achieved by not asking for, or volunteering, assistance in projects unless the projects are major ones. In effect each group goes about its activity on its own. For the most part, this is accepted as reasonable although overlapping of events is decried as a 'silly waste of time' and evokes the rhetorical question of "why couldn't there be more co-operation?"[7] Secondly, each organization operates strictly in a 'non-political' role in the town and none of the local citizens are heard describing voluntary associations as being 'political'. Only councils, governments, political parties and occasionally education are spheres of activity described as 'political' implying that these organizations in the town are somehow inherently different from other organizations. Consequently, there are domains solely concerned with power and/or administration and there are domains involved in non-political concerns such as recreational, social, professional and religious needs. Every effort is made to maintain this distinction. The two are kept separate as indicated in this interview: "Q: Do people, or yourself, get involved in many political discussions when you are with them? A: Oh I wouldn't say many--some. People, because of party politics, tend to keep off political discussions in church groups to a large extent. I take up political matters from time to time in sermons (but) I try to stay clear from party politics. People expect

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[7] For example, on Victoria Day, May 1973, both the Fenwick Lions and Fonthill Kinsmen Clubs presented their fireworks display on the same evening at the opposite ends of the town, depriving others of an extra show; this miscue on the part of the service clubs irritated one man enough that he wrote a letter to the editor of the Pelham Herald. W. Brian Walker, 'Letter to the Editor', Pelham Herald, (June 3, 1973), p. 2.

that of me and I have no problems. If I seem to have a different opinion about what the gambling craze is doing to the economy, about families, some people have a different point of view, some hadn't seen it that way before. If I take a different point of view, such as alcohol being the most abused drug, there will be some difference in opinion about that but there's not much said about it. Q: What parties do your members belong to? A: I don't really know. I would guess there would be very few N.D.P., and highly divided among Liberals and Conservatives. I have no idea, they just don't indicate . . . They could vote Conservative for provincial and Liberal for federal (elections) although the N.D.P. picked up a few votes last (federal) time, with that fellow Leavens, than they usually get around the town."[8]

One politician, the mayor, explicitly refused to remain in any service club after he was first elected years ago because of the pressure he felt club members try to exert informally in order to gain 'favours' from council. Other councillors vary in their association activity. This tends to be more a reflection on the time they have available after taking office rather than a deliberate policy of excluding the possibility of undue influence by association. One of the rural aldermen was less inclined to separate the political from the non-political as he had found that the goals and actions of clubs and council were closely interwoven rather than independent.

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[8] Interview with Rev. Dunlop. The N.D.P. candidate was a local resident and thereby was able to gain a few extra votes.

(a) Churches

The churches are all of the Christian faith.[9] Most of the churches are organized in such a way that the active members are involved at least once a week beyond the regular Sunday morning service. For example, the Roman Catholic parish of St. Alexander in Fonthill co-ordinates its community activity with the separate school located beside the church in an attempt to integrate church, family and school life to achieve unity in purpose. Rarely does a week go by that the Herald does not carry an information item about events in these two institutions. The most active church groups, however, are the protestant fundamentalists who have organized their church life so that members are expected to be involved several nights every week. The Church of God, one of two Canadian congregations of a church originating in the American mid-west, is organized

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9 Pelham Churches

Church	Location	Affiliation
Fenwick United Church	Fenwick	United Church of Canada
Pelham Centre United Church	Pelham Centre	United Church of Canada
Fonthill United Church	Fonthill	United Church of Canada
St. Ann	Fenwick	Roman Catholic
St. Alexander	Fonthill	Roman Catholic
Church of Christ	Fenwick	Church of Christ (American)
Holy Trinity	Fonthill	Anglican Church of Canada
Kirk on the Hill	Fonthill	Presbyterian Church of Canada
First Presbyterian Church of North Pelham	North Pelham	Presbyterian Church of Canada
Jehovah Witnesses	Fonthill	Jehovah Witnesses (International)
Pelham Evangelical Friends	Fonthill	Evangelical Friends (International)
Fonthill Baptist	Fonthill	Baptist (International)
Ridgeville Bible Study	Ridgeville	local
Church of God	Fonthill	Church of God (American)

in that fashion. In the following passage Rev. Hearp, a clergyman newly arrived from a small town in Illinois, explains the involvement of the church goers.

"We have members from Fonthill, Welland, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Hamilton. Some come from Niagara Falls, New York, some from Tanawanda (New York), so the membership is really quite diversified . . . Our membership is 89 individual members not 89 families and all, you might say, adult members. They come into membership as they make a confession of Christ, are baptized and this usually takes place sometime after they are twelve . . . Our church schedule begins with the Sunday services. At 9.45 we have our Sunday School then at 11 o'clock the morning worship service and 7 o'clock our evening service and on Wednesday night at 7 o'clock we have our prayer meeting and Bible study and this continues all year except for July and August when we don't have the Wednesday night or the Sunday night service. So its Sunday School and morning worship all year around and Sunday evening service and Wednesday night service ten months out of the year and then Thursday night there is choir practice and Wednesday night also the youth meet during the time we are having our prayer meeting. There are classes for the youth, young people's group, and then afterwards on Wednesday night, the first Wednesday of the month, they have their Sunday School meeting and the second Wednesday night the missionary meeting and the third Wednesday night is the executive board meeting so that they combine that with the Wednesday evening service so that it is in the one night rather than taking another night out for the meeting. . . . You would expect more to attend . . . Last year our Sunday School averaged about 81 and the morning service was

96 and the Sunday evening service was 42 . . . the Wednesday night service averages about 35 so that gives you some general proportion that maybe 40-50% will attend the Sunday evening service and about 40% the Wednesday service." But even that minister found that church attendance was not as strong as it once was: "people today seem to get involved in so many activities that take up various times of various nights, that you find there will have been naturally times when they could not have got out."[10]

The largest of these church denominations, according to Rev. Dunlop of the Fonthill United Church, is the United Church if for no other reason than the fact that there are three United Church congregations, more than any other sect. "In the Fonthill area itself, Fonthill United Church is the strongest congregation, the Anglicans would come next, possibly St. Alexanders would be third now. I'm not sure because I didn't see the stack of cards the Baptist Church had. The Baptist Church

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[10] Interview with Rev. J. Hearp of the Church of God.

has a wider geographical area to cover than Fonthill United Church."[11]

An informal co-ordinating group has been formed by the clergymen from all the local churches, with the exception of the North Pelham Presbyterian Church. The Pelham Clergy Fellowship, which was originally organized by the protestant churches, has included the priest in charge of St. Alexander's Roman Catholic Church since 1967. They meet three or four times a year, "working together in regard to community services and religious services."[12] It is an ecumenical committee, with a tenuous consensus, which means that each pastor is hesitant to advocate any strong position on community problems. The clergy are inclined to stabilize their relationships and none are confident enough to use this association as a vehicle in matters outside the sphere of worship.

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[11] Interview with Rev. Dunlop. During 1973 the Pelham Clergy Fellowship organized a door-to-door blitz throughout the town to determine the denomination of families not attending church (hence, the 'stack of cards' he refers to in above quotation).

The 1971 census revealed church affiliation as follows:

Population by Religious Affiliation for the Town of Pelham and the St. Catharines - Niagara Census Area, 1971

	Anglican	Baptist	Greek Orthodox	Jewish	Lutheran	Pentecostal
Pelham	1,650	865	125	30	130	80
Niagara	53,270	9,585	4,145	1,075	13,235	26

	Presbyterian	Roman Catholic	Ukranian Catholic	United Church	Other -	None -	Total -
Pelham	1,100	1,730	50	2,568	1,140	533	10,000
Niagara	22,470	111,210	3,370	51,405	21,455	9,100	303,440

Canada, Statistics Canada, Population 1971 (Ottawa, 1973) series 92-724 table 15 pp. 15-14, 15-15. Note that Pelham is over-represented with United Church, Baptist and 'Others' and under-represented with Roman Catholics.

[12] Interview with Rev. Dunlop.

Church life is thought to be strong in Pelham although ministers could be overheard worrying about the size of their congregations. A 'blitz', organized in the spring of 1973 by the Pelham Clergy Fellowship, approached each home to determine the families' religious affiliation. This was an effort to keep track of the high turnover of families in the Fonthill area as the movement of families keeps attendance lower than the pastors think is appropriate. "There is a large turnover both in Fonthill and in the township, people coming to one or other, many times for a short term job and transferred somewhere else. Not all of these become involved in the church line of work, and I think this is partly because both having been involved, working in a large city and having been further off geographically from a church centre, just haven't had the time for continuing interest in the church activities and I would say that, for all the churches in Fonthill, they find a growing number of people who don't seek out the church on arrival, maybe later on there is a contact, but this is a city tendency which is brought here by them. I think here the conditions of church life are very strong." [13]

What is interesting about the pattern of involvement in church life is that the citizens from the less active and more 'orthodox' church are those who are more involved in service clubs and political organizations. The more active church members from the fundamentalist churches are inclined to interact mainly with other Pelham residents involved in their own church. Consequently, the religious organization of the town is significant inasmuch as some citizens indicate their interest in community life through their involvement in church related activities. This

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[13] Ibid.

in turn fragments the social structure of the town to the extent that some citizens are excluded from politics because others think they are 'fanatics' in their religious life[14] or because they themselves are unconvinced that political participation is as rewarding as their religious experience.

(b) Voluntary Associations

The striking feature about a majority of the voluntary organizations functioning in the town is that they are branches of provincial, national or international organizations. In fact, there are very few which can legitimately be described as being indigenous to Pelham. This is particularly true of churches and men's voluntary and professional organizations. In addition to the organizations listed here as carrying on activities in Pelham, there are a number of others in other localities around the peninsula which either attracted the interest of Pelham citizens (such as the Welland Little Theatre) or demanded that they join for work reasons (such as trade unions). The most common voluntary association is that of the branch of men's international club with its women's

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[14] The minister with the Church of God denied that religious discrimination is any longer excluding his congregation although he did admit to hearing stories that this was so in the past. Interview with Rev. Hearp.

counterpart.[15] Each group holds regular general meetings at least once and usually twice a month. They are all involved with some local or regional project. In 1974, the Fonthill Lions supported the building of a new arena, the Women's Institute in Fenwick was writing a village history and the Kinsmen donated funds to handicapped children's projects. What is also very important is the fact that the associations offer a chance for like people to come together on a regular basis. Meetings, with the exception of the Masons, are often organized around suppers or afternoon teas stretching out long after the business of the club has been conducted. Meeting halls, such as those of the Legion, the Fenwick Lions and the Fonthill Kinsmen, are used regularly for informal get-togethers over a few drinks. As the sexes are usually segregated into their own clubs, mixed evenings are unusual and treated as special occas-

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15 Voluntary Associations in Pelham

Organization	Place	Affiliation
Lions Club (Men)	Fenwick and Fonthill	Lions International
Lioness (Women)	Fenwick and Fonthill	Lions International
Royal Canadian Legion Branch #613 (and Ladies Auxiliary)	Fonthill	Royal Canadian Legion
Kinsmen Club (Men)	Fonthill	Kinsmen International
Kinette Club (Women)	Fonthill	Kinsmen International
Women's Institutes	Fenwick,Ridgeville Fonthill, Pelham	Women's Institute (International
Mountbatten Club	Fonthill	Mountbatten Clubs (International)
Phoenix Lodge (Men-Masons)	Fonthill	Grand Lodge of Ontario (International)
Rebeccas (Women)	Fenwick	Rebecca Lodge (International)
Oddfellows (Men)	Fenwick	Oddfellows (International)
4-H Club	Fenwick	4-H Clubs of Canada

ions; for instance, the dinner and dance for 'Ladies' Night' held by Phoenix Lodge is considered to be the big social event of the year for the Masons and their wives.

The second group of voluntary associations are those of a local nature with no formal ties with a larger outside organization.[16] With the exception of the student council associations, the membership in these groups is not large. Membership in men's organizations never excedes thirty-five or forty except for the much larger Legion. In some cases, such as the volunteer fire departments the membership is smaller as only thirty men belong to Fonthill Station No. 1.[17] As many of the women's clubs are auxiliaries to the men's organizations, their membership is about the same or slightly less than the male counterpart. Some clubs, such as Lioness, Lions, Kinsmen, Kinnettes and the Fonthill Hospital Auxiliary, are able to attract members over a wider age group

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[16] Local Organizations in Pelham

Organization	Location
Fonthill Volunteer Fire Association (and Women's Auxiliary)	Fonthill
Fenwick Volunteer Fire Fighters Association (and Firettes)	Fenwick
Pelham Snowmobile Club	Fenwick
Pelham Hunters and Anglers Association	Fenwick
Pelham Hospital Auxiliary	Fonthill
Fonthill Nursery School	Fonthill
Pelham Horticultural Society	Ridgeville
Pelham Senior Citizens	Ridgeville
Pelham Secondary School Student Council	Fenwick
E. L. Crossley Secondary School Student Council	Fonthill
Home and School Associations: All public and separate elementary schools	

[17] A History of Your Fire Department Prepared in Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of its Formation, March 1, 1923 (Fonthill, 1973), p. 6.

range than the Masons, the Oddfellows, the Rebeccas and the Daughters of the Eastern Star, whose membership represents the older and more traditional groups of Pelham. Since the new town was created, none of these clubs (such as the Fonthill Lions and the Fenwick Lions) have combined their activities while the fire department, which was required to combine its operations under Regional Niagara legislation, really continues to operate as two independent stations under one fire chief.

(c) Recreation

The most active organizations in Pelham are those involved in the sphere of recreation. Co-ordinated by the Pelham Recreation and Parks Committee, each association provides local citizens with opportunities for involvement by offering the numerous athletic, artistic and general interest groups publicity, facilities, equipment and training. The Recreation and Parks Committee is aided in its work by some very energetic voluntary associations including the Pelham Minor Hockey Association,[18] the Pelham Minor Hockey Association Ladies Auxiliary and the Pelham Figure Skating Club. The more obvious linkages between local government and voluntary associations are in this sphere of recreation and, as in the case of education, it illustrates the emphasis in Pelham placed on child oriented activities and services.

The Town of Pelham operates its recreation facilities (swimming pool - rink - baseball diamond in Fonthill, Davis Hall, an old barnlike structure in Fonthill, and the former township hall in Pelham Centre)

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[18] The annual award to the most active citizen in the Pelham Minor Hockey Association is called the 'Humanitarian Award'.

through the eight member Recreation and Parks Committee of which two councillors are members. This committee is responsible for allotting time and space in its buildings, maintaining equipment and buildings, budgeting for new facilities and publicizing upcoming events. Most of this work is accomplished through the recreation director assisted by a part-time secretary. Its budget and spending forecasts are submitted to council for approval and, while it is not expected that the recreation department should pay its way, it is expected that some of the services provided should be paid by its users, particularly by those using the rink and the swimming pool. Any increase in expenditures in these services are passed on to the consumer and not borne by the taxpayer. During the 1972-73 activity schedule, the Recreation Committee was involved with either providing facilities or other services to forty-two different groups, indicating a high interest among adults and children for recreation and diversion.[19] These numerous activities rarely are of any interest except to the participants as boys sports dominates the newspapers and conversations about local recreation. Hockey in winter, lacrosse and softball in the summer are the three most organized sports and, of these, hockey is the most controversial.

Beginning with boys aged four and five, the Pelham Minor Hockey Association has organized house leagues and all star teams which start practicing on enclosed ice surfaces in the region long before the artificial (but open) rink in Fonthill is available. The number of games

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[19] Some organizations such as the Pelham Horticultural Club and TOPS (a weight reducing club) are not recreational but special interest clubs in need of a place to meet.

played (up to seventy in some cases), plus practices, ensures that the rink is used during every available weekend and after school hours. As a result, each family who has a son playing is required to contribute financially for ice time and to show up for games, or to send him off to games, late at night or long before dawn. Rising costs had forced Council into the unfortunate situation (as far as the aldermen were concerned) of raising the price of rink rentals in 1973 from eighteen to twenty-two dollars per hour. This decision certainly affected a large number of families and was followed by a number of citizen complaints expressed to council, to the recreation committee and in the local newspaper. In council the issue was treated with delicacy and embarrassment, so much so that anytime it was aired the mayor quickly suggested that this would be better discussed in the committee of the whole, that is, in private. Despite intense public protesting, council refused to change its position stating that the user should pay the cost of providing ice time. The Minor Hockey Association, facing an increase in fees, decided to step up its fund raising and, in the autumn, began to sell Christmas cakes and to organize a turkey raffle, thus, in effect, raiding the financial territory of other voluntary associations, a decision which brought forward a number of protests.

Minor hockey is a major attraction bringing together people who otherwise would not meet.[20] While the child plays hockey the more active parents share the responsibilities of coaching, managing, refereeing, driving, etc., while a few others, thrown together along the sidelines

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[20] Interview with Jim Curtis, a secondary school teacher.

for the course of the game, trade gossip about local events. This arrangement, however, is only temporary, dependent on the child's involvement, so that when his interest disappears or when he grows out of the last age group, the parents retreat from this gathering spot. This activity area, boys sports, which at any one time interests more people than any other activity, is subjected to a large turnover in the people who are involved.

There are, in Pelham, a few citizens who think that recreation is a concept which can be used to transform the town into a community. They saw the large numbers who participated in all sports, competitive and non-competitive, and decided in 1972 that what was needed was a sports complex, a building which could symbolize a new sense of purpose and commitment of the townspeople for their community. If it were designed properly, the proponents suggested, all age groups (meaning the entire family) could find something to do at the complex. One group singled out as important was the older teenager, between sixteen and nineteen for whom, it had been claimed privately, it was near impossible to provide acceptable services and accommodations.[21] The teenagers, in rejecting every attempt to organize them, disturb townspeople inasmuch as older citizens are unsure what the younger ones might be doing with their spare time. A quiet campaign was waged by appealing to the 'sports enthusiasts', the 'builders' and those concerned about local youth. While the council had studiously ignored this committee in 1972, by late spring 1973, councillors began meeting with these citizens and tentatively

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[21] Interview with Alderman Gerry Shields.

agreed to add such a complex to its five year budget projections.[22] A committee of citizens and councillors was struck for a few months and its report recommending a $500,000 enclosed arena to be built on municipal property in Fonthill was received and accepted by council in January 1974.[23]

(d) Special Interest Groups

The townspeople are not inclined to join or support long term citizen groups for the purpose of developing better government and public policies, or pursuing other such ideal goals. Instead, there are associations which appear and disappear according to problems being encountered; these typically are not formally organized. For example, in the late nineteen sixties, the provincial government had announced its intentions to rebuild highway #20 either to the north or to the south of Fonthill village. Each side of the village and the township soon produced citizens committees to fight off the possibility of the road running through that section of town. There were a few of these special interest groups active in Pelham between 1972-74,[24] but none of these, with the exception

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[22] Interview with town official.

[23] Marion Lampman, "New Enclosed Arena Planned for Pelham," St. Catharines Standard, (January 22, 1974), p. 28.

[24] Special Interest Groups in Pelham

Organization	Location
Community Concerns of Pelham	Fonthill
Concerned Parents of Pelham	Fenwick
Fonthill Business Men's Association	Fonthill
Pelham Fruit Growers' Association	Fenwick
Concerned Citizens of Pelham	Fenwick

of the parents group trying to keep Pelham Secondary School open, were too successful in keeping the membership active and willing to participate.[25]

(e) Political Parties

Three political parties are active in Pelham: the Progressive Conservatives who held the federal seat in Lincoln riding 1972-74 and one of the two provincial ridings, Welland, for over twenty years (since 1951), the Liberals who had held the other provincial seat, Welland South, since 1967, and the New Democratic Party. No party is officially involved in municipal or regional politics. As Pelham is a part of a wider constituency and has never been a whole one in itself, its citizens hold party positions and compete for public office with citizens from neighbouring municipalities. For those who are committed to finding a way to contribute to their community, choosing a suitable organization can be frustrating: "I used to be heavily involved in minor athletics but I got turned off on that when I discovered that all I was was a baby sitting service. This is one of the things that bothers me about this community; it bothers me about athletics too and about most of the adults involved in minor athletics. From our own experience, you're either supplying a baby sitting service for somebody's kids, that's not to say that I didn't enjoy working with the kids, I really did, or most were involved (because of) ego trips. You know, they're using someone else's body to try (to) accomplish things they never could

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[25] Interviews with Rev. Dunlop of the Community Concerns, Jim Robertson of Fruit Growers' and Keith Crick of the Business Men's Association.

. . . But, you know, I think what's happening in minor hockey is the symptom of what's happening in our society. Generally a lot of us are becoming too busy to be involved with our kids." But choosing a political party as a vehicle to achieve some idea of public good is just as frustrating for this citizen: "The (political) excitement for me, you know, has really been since the (1972) election because I've been involved in so many (N.D.P.) decisions. I get tired sometimes, you know, fed up--like this week I was ready to throw in the towel--but that comes and goes all the time. The thing that really bothers me about politics is the infighting in the party itself and we have a lot of it in this area but my fits of depression pass and I get back into the groove of things . . . During the fall, I was having serious thoughts about curtailing my activities from the party but right now there have been some encouraging things . . .and it makes you feel better and you're ready to get back into the fight again."[26]

As is the tradition in rural Ontario politics, the town council has a non-partisan air about it. However, enough comments were made about the role of political parties in the town's politics to warrant a short commentary. The most obvious feature about the parties is that third parties have never managed to gain much support. This is true for the New Democratic Party both in the rural and in the urban areas. The Social Credit and Communist candidates have picked up less than a hundred votes. In fact, in 1974, James Walter of the Social Credit received

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[26] Interview with Ron Leavens, N. D. P. candidate in the 1972 and 1974 federal elections.

only twenty-seven votes. Ron Leavens who ran a second time in 1974 as the N. D. P. candidate is making minimal gains in his party s strategy of having the same candidate run a number of times in order to gradually build up support. The 1968 N. D. P. candidate, John Martin, received 740 votes. The 1975 election was exceptional as the Liberals swept the town, outvoting the Conservatives 1,909 to 1,579 and winning nineteen of twenty-five polls.[27]

It is apparent in reviewing the historical voting patterns in the federal elections that the township people have tended to vote differently than the Fonthill villagers. The federal Conservatives have had more votes than Liberals in the rural area only four times (1957, 1958, 1962, and 1974) since the 1925 general election.[28] Fonthill, on the other hand, has generally voted Conservative though the Liberals have gained since 1935, outvoting the opposition in 1940, 1953, 1965, 1968 and 1974. Since 1949, the two areas have voted the same in every federal election except in 1963, 1972 and 1974.

The provincial results are similar in that the competition for votes has been between the two old parties with the Conservatives usually making a strong showing in Fonthill and the Liberals doing favourably in

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[27] "Liberal Margin 330 in 25 Pelham Polls," Welland Evening Tribune, (July 10, 1974), p. 5. The polls won by the Conservatives included two in Pelham Centre, two in the Effingham area and two in Fonthill.

[28] Previous to the 1925 election, Fonthill was a part of Pelham. During those years the vote was usually for the Liberals. From 1904 to 1974, Welland Riding, the riding of Pelham and Fonthill until 1967, was Liberal except for 1917, 1925, 1926 and 1930. Lincoln Riding which Pelham and Fonthill joined in 1967 was usually Conservative except for 1949, 1953, 1962-68 and 1974.

the township. Nevertheless, there is a difference inasmuch as this historical trend has not been true for the last five elections. The Conservatives have also won the rural areas since the 1955 provincial election. This is in part due to the sitting member for Welland, Ellis Morningstar, who has built up a strong personal following since his first election in 1951. Previous to his running, the seat had been held, between 1914-48, five times by the Liberals, twice by the Conservatives, once by the United Farmers of Ontario, once by the Progressives (both Fonthill and Pelham voted Progressive in 1926) and once by the C. C. F. In 1967, the first election in which the rural people voted in the newly created riding of Welland South, they voted Conservative, although the riding was won by Ray Haggerty a Liberal. In 1971, they voted for the Conservatives again, this time for J. C. Hansler whose family was an old township family.

The following tables illustrate that the historical voting trend (Liberals strong in the rural area and the Conservatives strong in Fonthill) is no longer as pronounced as it was before 1945. More recently, party support has been about the same for the Conservatives and Liberals with the N. D. P. not a serious electoral contender. The rural voters have since the twenties supported the federal Liberals (47.4% is the mean average) more than the Progressive Conservatives (39.8%); however, this support is less obvious in provincial elections where the Liberals have received an average of 41.8% of the vote compared to 42.8% for the Conservatives. The pattern is reversed in Fonthill. There the voters have supported heavily the provincial Conservatives (58.8% against 29% for the Liberals) but given the federal Conservatives a slight edge only (42.7%

for the Liberals and 45.9% for the Conservatives.

Provincial General Elections 1926-71
Party Support (Percentage) in Pelham

Year	Municipality	Liberals	Conservatives	C.C.F.-N.D.P.	
1926	Pelham	33	67		
	Fonthill	47.8	52.2*(1)		
1929	Pelham	55.8	30.1		
	Fonthill	54.8*	38.6		
1934	Pelham	63.	28.9	8.1	
	Fonthill	51.1*	35.8	13.1	
1937	Pelham	61.4	34	4.4	
	Fonthill	50.9*	49		
1943	Pelham	45.1	27.3	27.6	
	Fonthill	24.9	43.9	31.1*	
1945	Pelham	50.1	35.4	11.1(2)	
	Fonthill	32.0	51.6*	15.6	
1948	Pelham	44.9	34.4	20.7	
	Fonthill	44.0*	36.2	19.7	
1951	Pelham	44.4	40.5	14.2	
	Fonthill	32.3	55.4*	12.0	
1955	Pelham	37.9	48.9	11.9	
	Fonthill	32.0	60.3*	6.7	
1959	Pelham	35.2	48.6	16.2	
	Fonthill	10.3	63.8*	10.3	
1963	Pelham	31.8	59.4	8.8	
	Fonthill	24.8	70.0*	5.2	
1967	Pelham	32.7*(3)	46.4	20.9	
	Fonthill	16.3	58.9*	24.8	
1973	Pelham	28.8*	47.3	23.9	
	Fonthill	12.2	66.2*	21.5	
	Total Votes				Total
	Pelham	7596	7837	2828	18,261
	Fonthill	2584	5051	1269	8,904

Municipality	Liberals	Conservatives	C.C.F.-N.D.P.	
	Average (Mean) Support (Percentage)			
Pelham	41.8	42.8	15.	100
Fonthill	29.0	56.8	14.2	100

(1) Asterisk indicates party winning election in riding.

(2) Labour Party received 3.3%

(3) The areas were separated into two ridings, Pelham in Welland South and Fonthill remaining in Welland.

Federal General Elections
Party Support (Percentage) in Pelham

Year	Municipality	Liberals	Conservatives	C.C.F.-N.D.P.
1925	Pelham	61.4	38.6	
	Fonthill	32.4	67.6*	
1926	Pelham	61.4	38.6	
	Fonthill	42.1	57.9*	
1930	Pelham	65.	35.	
	Fonthill	56.7*	43.3	
1935	Pelham	64.9	28.7	2.3
	Fonthill	55.5*	35.4	5.5
1940	Pelham	61.2	36.8	1.9
	Fonthill	57.6*	40.1	2.3
1945	Pelham	53.7	34.9	5.4
	Fonthill	44.8*	47.9	5.7
1949	Pelham	49.9	33.5	14.6
	Fonthill	38.8*	46.2	14.1
1953	Pelham	52.2	34.8	12.2
	Fonthill	51.4*	40.1	7.5
1957	Pelham	34.8	47.1	18.
	Fonthill	27.6*	62.8	9.4
1958	Pelham	33.9	50.	15.9
	Fonthill	30.5*	60.2	9.2

Year	Municipality	Liberals	Conservatives	C.C.F.-N.D.P.	
1962	Pelham	40.3*	42.	13.1	
	Fonthill	34.5	54.	10.1	
1963	Pelham	43.7*	42.9	9.0	
	Fonthill	43.4	46.5	7.9	
1965	Pelham	44.6*	36.7	18.5	
	Fonthill	44.9	39.5	15.1	
1968	Pelham	43.0*	31.7	24.5	
	Fonthill	48.6	36.6	14.7	
1972	Pelham	44.9	34.5*	20.5	
	Fonthill	39.5	43.2	16.8	
1974	Pelham	39.5*	41.5	18.9	
	Fonthill	47.1	34.8	17.5	
	Total Votes				Total
	Pelham	12,128	10,172	3,285	25,585
	Fonthill	6,061	6,525	1,617	14,203
	Average (Mean) Support (Percentage)				
	Pelham	47.4	39.8	12.8	
	Fonthill	42.7	45.9	11.4	

The data indicates clearly that as the number of votes in the township increased, the percentage of the vote received by the Liberals steadily declined. The Liberal Party's share of the provincial vote has shrunk from a high of 63% in 1929 to a low of 28.8% in 1971. Similarly, as Fonthill grew so did the strength of the Conservatives, from a low of 35.8% in 1934 to a high of 70% in 1963 (and 66.2% in 1971). However, this voting behaviour is typical of the changing pattern of support for Ontario political parties and can be said to illustrate the different electoral bases for the Liberals and Conservatives. At one time rural Ontario was the preserve of the Liberals but this no longer appears to be the case. For example, the local centre of Conservative strength has been in the

largest village, Fonthill, while support for the Liberals has been in the rural areas of the town. The Liberals have not gained the support of the newcomers, a fatal weakness of that party which has been noted elsewhere in studies of Ontario elections.[29] For instance, the number of persons voting for the Liberals has not changed dramatically. In 1926, 163 voted Liberal in Fonthill and in 1971, 210 voted Liberal, but the percentage was reduced from 47.8 to 12.2. If the nineteenth century was a time when the Grits were the reform and anti-establishment party in the province (as argued by Wilson and Hoffman), then its support among Pelham farmers could be a result of their hostility to the Toronto business and political establishment. Indeed, it was pointed out in chapter two that local opposition to the political regime at the time of the 1837 rebellion was a central event in local histories. Even though the evidence is somewhat tenuous, there may be a relationship between the settlement of this 'fragment' in local society and contemporary political participation.[30] Never-

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[29] The most important article on this aspect of provincial politics is John Wilson and David Hoffman, "A Three-Party System in Transition," in Martin Robin, editor, Canadian Provincial Politics (Toronto, 1972), pp. 198-239. Their argument is that the Liberal Party of rural southwestern Ontario has been replaced largely by the Conservatives who have received much of their support from the small towns. This would also be true of Pelham.

[30] The Hartizian argument about the political ideology of founding groups has been applied to Canadian politics by both Kenneth McCrae and Gad Horowitz. The rural residents were most aware of their political past and the case is made here that their knowledge of Pelham's history was an important factor in local politics. The relative importance of political parties is difficult to assess because it was not often asked about and was not often brought up in conversation. See Gad Horowitz, "Conservatism, Liberalism and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation," in Hugh G. Thorburn, editor, Party Politics in Canada (Toronto, 1972), pp. 78-96.

theless, while it is apparent that Liberal support has declined as the town expanded, it is not clear how this has affected civic politics. The party cleavage stands, primarily, as another indicator of the different political perspectives held by the rural (traditionalist) and urban (newcomer) participants and, again, the rural people find themselves in a position of decreasing importance. It also shows that the nuclei of the two traditional communities (Fenwick and Fonthill) supported different parties. Certainly the farmers reflected a greater anti-establishment feeling than was found elsewhere during the interviews. The one instance that partisan allegiance surfaced as an issue was during the fight over the future of Pelham Secondary School. Supporters of the school were convinced that parts of their difficulty in lobbying the provincial government was the fact that the sitting member for the rural area was a Liberal as was the principal. This problem was overcome by using two politicos, closely associated with the principal, who belonged to the Liberals and Conservatives respectively. At no point was anyone accused of using a citizens' organization or an interest group to further a political-partisan career. The only complaint, heard infrequently, was that such groups were used to further local council ambitions.

The town's politicians keep their own party preferences hidden as much as possible. When the mayor seconded the nomination for the Lincoln riding Liberal candidate in the 1974 federal election, he added credence to the rumour that he was about to retire from public office. Declaring oneself to be openly partisan is paramount either to quitting local council or moving on to more prestigious activity. An alderman, Leo Bressusse, was on the fund raising committee for the Conservative

campaign in 1974 and before that had been active as a Liberal. Other aldermen are non-committal in public as to their party affiliation but it is usually assumed that they are either Liberal or Conservative. The N. D. P. candidate did, however, indicate that one alderman had privately expressed sympathy for his party.

(f) Professional Associations

The last set of organizations are the work associations which are almost exclusively outside of Pelham, mainly because there are few sets of workers concentrated in Pelham, except for farmers and teachers. The farmers belong to various regional, provincial and federation associations according to the crops and livestock that they are producing. The teachers at the secondary school level are members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation. Their school is a branch with its own executive and the Niagara South Board of Education boundary is District #17 and the provincial O.S.S.T.F. is the governing body. The public school and separate school teachers belong to regional associations, which again are part of provincial bodies, including the Ontario Public School Women Teachers' Federation, the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation, and the Ontario English Roman Catholic Teachers' Federation.

Community Welfare

As noted earlier, one of the outstanding characteristics of the array of groups active in Pelham is that few are indigenous to the local citizenry and that many people are involved with groups outside of the

town or those whose activities are, in the main, not in Pelham. Professionals, union members, teachers, farmers and so forth belong to a number of organizations which are regional (or sub regional but include more than one municipality) in nature and which make few obvious demands in the town except for the time and money of their local members. Social agencies of which there are many within the Niagara Regional Municipality operate out of St. Catharines and Welland where the major problems, such as juvenile delinquency, welfare cases, physical and mental handicaps, are thought to exist. For these social organizations, activity in Pelham is an extension of city-oriented services. There is, for example, no United Appeal in Pelham; instead most who contribute do so to the Welland campaign. With the exception of those offices listed in chapter one, contact with the government necessarily takes place outside of Pelham. A regional guide, published in 1972 and listing services available with the Niagara Region, could mention only thirteen organizations relevant to the Town of Pelham.[31] If a local resident is in need of help, advice, or if a citizen wants to contribute, the chances

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[31] These listings included an agricultural society (during 1972, a Ridgeville resident, W. D. Fear, was the 'contact' man for the Niagara Regional Exhibition, Welland), an ambulance service (from Welland) a local camera club (the Fonthill Camera Club), churches (eight), the Council for Exceptional Children, Chapter 166, Fonthill, a day nursery, Fonthill, the two fire stations, a horticultural society (Pelham Horticultural Society), the Pelham library with branches in Fonthill and Fenwick, the Order of the Eastern Star, Fonthill Chapter, the Town of Pelham's Recreation and Parks Committee, and the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch #613, Fonthill.

Committee for the Co-ordination of Regional Community Services, Directory of Social Services in the Regional Municipality of Niagara (n.p., June 1972), pp. 265-266.

are that he or she is forced to look beyond Pelham for a suitable organization.

This list, however, is too short and incomplete inasmuch as it does not take into account a number of organizations which meet regularly and in the course of a year's activity contribute in some capacity to the town through projects, funds or volunteer activity. The drawback is that these groups are not usually structured to respond to individual complaints or requests for assistance, preferring to work with a particular clientele over a long period of time. For example, the Fenwick Lions Club works away at providing recreation facilities including a ball park; tennis courts and new washroom and changehouse facilities were added in 1974 at the same park. The club also provides funds to associations assisting the blind. Another, the Masonic Lodge in Fonthill, goes about its social work in a shroud of secrecy leaving outsiders guessing as to what the Lodge is actually doing in the town. This arrangement among clubs allows each to carry out its obligations without competition and interference from others. The only time when organizations compete is during fund raising activities, most of which are held in the autumn when groups are beginning anew after the summer lull. Turkey raffles (male parties at which there are chances to win turkeys combined with beer and sandwich sales) make for many successful fund raising evenings and are the most popular techniques used by local men although, by 1973, there were complaints that too many clubs were using this technique. Women's clubs are more likely to rely on afternoon events such as teas, antique shows and bake sales to replenish their treasuries (spring strawberry festivals are especially popular), thereby

excluding a number of working women.

The picture to be drawn here of life in Pelham is that of a number of clubs, organizations and churches competing for attention and commitment from the townspeople. No one association dominates all others although it should be noted that recreation and youth related events have more prestige and support than other activities. During the time of this study, some citizens decided that these different associations no longer filled the vital needs of the town and the time had come to initiate action to create a new way to solve community problems. For this reason, Community Concerns of Pelham, discussed in the following section, is critical inasmuch as it challenged the prevailing notion of community activity.

Community Concerns of Pelham

It was the Pelham Clergy Fellowship which in early 1972 decided that the new town was lacking in community purpose and spirit. To resolve this they began to hold meetings with a small group of church members to discuss what could be done. Discussion continually returned to the drug issue: how many of the town's children were taking drugs which would soon ruin their health? What could they, as concerned citizens, do to help these teenagers? To help them out the clergy called in experts on the drug scene in the Niagara peninsula, including a representative of a youth bureau in Welland, another in education, Judge Scott of Fonthill (Chairman of the Niagara Regional Police Commission), and Heather Kilty, a field worker and community organizer in the Welland office of the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation. At the exploratory meeting, the outsiders convinced those present that the misuse of drugs

was an indication of other problems and that they all needed to contemplate other issues in the community. "We got into a dialogue about all kinds of needs that are needed in a small community because people perhaps turn to drink, have to curb their barbituates or their drinks. Is this a housewife frustrated because there is no transportation? Generally talking, what are the needs of youth that perhaps would give into other alternatives from social action to arts and crafts kind of ideas? Out of that session came some direction to that group to really look at some of the other needs going on in the community."[32]

The clergy had obviously opened up discussion on a range of issues which exceeded their original intentions but they had committed themselves to seeing some community action as a result of their initiatives. "I think we all felt it was part of our field, we wanted to get involved in it. We have been involved in different ways in some community management before, but this was looking at the community as a whole and I suppose being stronger emphasis than ever before is the church members' involvement in certain community concerns." For this United Church minister, involvement in the town followed an earlier training in commitment which he had obtained in Ireland: "my whole background in the ministry has been to be involved, not just a personal piety but I'm not what might be generally described as a social gospel man (because) basics don't get very far but the social implications of theology in the gospel (do). You see, I was brought up in the Methodist Church in North-

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[32] Interview with Heather Kilty.

ern Ireland and Great Britain and I think you would notice a difference in outlook between folks over there from their backgrounds than folks here. Over there I found a more fundamentalist background. You'd probably notice some difference between churches in Canada. There are some churches said to have different outlooks; some ministers and some congregations but in Fonthill, now, some of us would be concerned to see the application of Christian principles taken in everyday life. Now that we launched this perhaps it should go on its own steam. I think one (clergy) man made that remark . . . People overseas just expected me to be involved in things that would have an impact on them, unemployment questions, housing questions, all of their working conditions, some political issues, some economic issues."[33]

After hearing the advice of the community organizers, everyone hesitated before they initiated meetings which would lead to concrete action.[34] The original meeting, held in February 1972, was not followed by planning meetings until December of that year. Comments made by the woman from the Addiction Research Foundation brought into question the commitment of the ministry to involve themselves in a social action movement never attempted before in Pelham. "I got the feeling that they wanted something to happen, they wanted to give quick and back off and there was no member right within the group willing to take some respon-

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[33] Interview with Rev. Dunlop.

[34] The clergy association was not a strong one so that church leaders were anxious not to push any controversial proposals. The priest from St. Alexander's Roman Catholic Church had only joined the protestant ministers in 1967.

sibility for the failure, or success, of whatever happened. So they continued as a group and they had a few meetings of their own then they asked me to come in and just sit in on a session with them, and so I did, and I brought up a lot of ideas that had been done in other areas. They seemed pretty set to the point of telling me, wanting me to do a conference type of idea . . . I took on some responsibility at that time, some direction for programme, helped to set up a programme and bring it back to the larger group. Again, still sensing that there was a lack of 'gung ho' commitment, let's do it and yet each one of them would express that this needs to be done -- someone needs to do this. I would throw in my analysis of (government) regionalization at this point, and that's some of the feeling I took up in some of the smaller communities: someone should be doing this and that someone is far away and that someone is an expert, and it's somebody's government and that somebody isn't ourselves."[35]

The clergy had a working committee by January 1973 including clergy and lay people, all except two were women, who proceeded to plan out a one day conference for the townspeople, to be held Saturday March 3, 1973, at E. L. Crossly Secondary School. The conference, "Focus on Our Community: A Conference on Community Concerns for All the Citizens of Pelham," was organized to bring together people who would not normally be together, to stimulate conversation which would lead, hopefully, to new structures to answer the problems thought to be most pressing. Seminars were arranged around topics: 'being a good neighbour', 'environmental concerns', 'family life', 'freedom from over-dependence',

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[35] Interview with H. Kilty.

'needs of older people', 'needs of youth', and 'recreational facilities'. All except one (recreational facilities) were to be chaired by women.[36] The most difficult question raised at a steering committee meeting (February 12, 1973), was how to approach council. Some members of the committee were arguing that council should be approached in a special manner, either by letter or by presentation, as "after all, they are our leaders and have the power to do what we need." The majority quietly and hesitantly suggested that council members should know what is going on as this was the sort of activity that the good councillor comes across in his work. The committee had contacted townspeople through the church, voluntary associations, the weekly and daily newspapers and had notified the recreation committee. Therefore, councillors should already know about their plans. It was decided that one of the clergymen would go over to the council meeting (taking place at the same time) to distribute flyers to the town officials but the committee would not make any presentation to council.

In planning the conference as they did, the committee members were putting forth the idea that community development had little association with government. Topics chosen, perhaps showing the influence of the clergy, were more concerned with the psychological state of local people (family life, drug use, god, etc.) than how governments might contribute to providing a better serviced or a more participatory town. The role of the committee, as expressed in that meeting, was to stimulate

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[36] A flyer distributed in February by the 'Conference on Community Concerns' committee. I was later appointed chairman of the transportation session.

discussion, to translate private feelings, private complaints, private solutions into public conversations and, eventually, into community projects and public policies. However, the intention of the committee was to stay out of 'politics'.

The conference, attended by seventy people, had its greatest attraction for those living around Fonthill and Effingham.[37] The guest keynote speaker, A. K. Wigg, a former public school principal, chose to speak at length about the need for community commitment to overcome the basic problems of today which were "loneliness, emptiness, guilt and death." These could be dealt with in a number of ways such as cancer drives, a storefront counselling centre, a 'power centre' for spiritual needs, senior citizens employment opportunities, a coffee house and activities making greater family use of trails and parks. Wigg also expressed the hope that this would not degenerate into a political meeting but later admitted that he attended the conference not quite sure what to expect during the day-long meeting. The search for the needs of the community members was not in itself a political act nor was the publication of these needs. Action became political when a group decided to take its needs to council as demands, which Wigg thought that the new committee might eventually need to do.[38] Others, also confused as to the purpose

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[37] Only eight gave their addresses as being in and around Fenwick, illustrating the failure of the organizers to convince other citizens that this was a meeting for all of Pelham, not just for those around Fonthill. Sophie Homenuck, "Need for Buses Stems from Pelham Session," Welland Evening Tribune, (March 5, 1973), p. 6. These ideas were elaborated on in an interview with Mr. Wigg.

[38] Interview with A. K. Wigg.

of the Conference, were motivated to attend because of the church influence and the encouragement of their pastors[39] while others (very few) were excited about the possibility of "changing things around Fonthill."[40]

The one day Conference illustrated the ambivalence of the townspeople towards creating new organizations as a method for resolving commonly recognized problems. Each discussion uncovered the anxiety and intense concern of middle aged citizens towards changes in their community, particularly the ways in which some obvious complaints had been left unresolved. For instance, the drug abuse among the young scared individuals into bitter and self righteous monologues about nothing in particular, only to be left amazed by Heather Kilty's analysis about the dependent society. While everyone agreed that abuse was not limited to the young nor to drugs, the obvious implications in the shortcomings of their lifestyles and social structures caused many to retreat from additional comments. Representatives from a Port Colborne citizens' committee, who had gone through a similar process of self analysis a year before, talked in detail during lunch hour to the conference as a whole about their experiences only to be ignored in the discussions which followed in the afternoon sessions. Areas of need which did emerge for further attention was the plight of senior citizens and youth, lack of public transport-

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[39] Interview with Mrs. E. Bergenstein.

[40] Conversation with Ethel Hughes. Mrs. Hughes, a prolific letter writer (to newspapers and politicians) in her sixties, keenly sought to join a group who would follow up her suggestions for reforms, which ranged from a better sign for the town library to a more elaborate care system for elderly people. Her ambition to shake up the town was not shared by others on her committees who were satisfied with research and discussion, and soon she withdrew from participating.

ation, protection for the environment and additional recreation facilities. The first three needs were interrelated, symbolizing the dependency felt by deprived groups within a small and isolated town such as Pelham. Although not far from any neighbouring town, all of which offer the full array of urban activities, Pelham is without adequate public transportation. Buses were described at the Conference as going into Welland on an irregular basis (so that private operators could maintain their franchise) and only returning if one phoned the bus terminal to demand return transportation. As many families in Pelham own at least two cars,[41] the majority are independently mobile, unaware of the troubles of a few. The last two spheres, recreation and environment, were talked over in sessions and subjected to intensive lobbying. In the sphere of recreation, persons such as Jack Smith who were pushing their favourite schemes (the sports complex) were anxious for more support throughout the town. For the environmentalists, the Conference offered an ideal situation for a small number who had already concluded what their own priorities were (to save the environment), and who were looking around for reinforcement and help, to sit down to map out a strategy.

The Conference, then, served a number of purposes, including encouraging participants that increased possibilities for community action did exist; however, judging from what happened during the following next few months, most came away as disinterested or as frustrated as when they arrived that Saturday morning. One alderman pointed out that there

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[41] According to the 1971 Census data, 1215 out of 2770 dwellings had two or more cars. Statistics Canada," catalogue 95-743," p. 120.

were no new faces in the crowd, that everyone who attended already belonged to an organization, particularly a church, and that the Conference failed to broaden interest in the town in solving common problems.[42] Certainly the clergy were under scrutiny as others tried to outguess their motives in the movement: were they trying to make everyone into Christians?[43] The meeting ended in optimism as reports of individual seminars called for renewed commitment, further study or immediate action. Furthermore, the organizers astutely suggested that a second meeting be held within a month to begin to initiate specific actions recommended in the reports.

While the first meeting attracted seventy citizens, the second at the Anglican Holy Trinity Church in Fonthill only attracted twenty-nine. The mood was subdued and the clergyman who was acting as chairman was unable to recapture any enthusiasm which may have been kindled at the first session.[44] The crowd was older and more dominated by middle aged women than the original Conference which had, among others, ten families attending.

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[42] Interview with Eric Bergenstein who was the only alderman to attend.

[43] Interview with Mardi Collins, a school trustee who attended the Conference.

[44] The meeting broke off into three small committees: 'senior citizens', 'the environment', and 'community services' which covered several unrelated complaints about town life. The senior citizens' group continued to meet for this and the third meeting but because the organizers had failed to include the leaders of established groups, functioning independently, the elderly soon disappeared without accomplishing anything.

An environmental committee emerged as the most effective of the Conference groups due to their expertise, their commitment, and the immediacy of the problem in their area of concern. As to be described in chapter five, the Town of Pelham was in the midst of its complicated planning process dominated as it was by municipal, regional and provincial officials, meaning that few citizens were participating or even knowledgeable about the decisions being argued about by these officials. Among those attracted to the environmental committee were those with skills applicable to criticizing this planning process. Two such people were Kady Denton, a one time land use planning official with the provincial government and A. B. Scott, an architect living in the Effingham Short Hills area. The group met more frequently than the others, sometimes with as many as twenty attending but more frequently with less than ten. They were able to draw up sophisticated proposals challenging the town's official position of encouraging growth for the purpose of expanding its revenue base. In June 1973, the Community Concerns meeting approved these environmental proposals with little discussion, allowing the environmentalists to begin preparing their presentation to the planning department of Regional Niagara (in late June) and the town council (in early September). Thus, the arrangement between the environmentalists and the informal leadership of the wider association was effective and useful for each other. The environmentalists, once they had been introduced to each other (although most knew each other before), continued on with the approval of the Community Concerns Conference, a convenient umbrella organization with a larger number of members who declined to question what the implications of the environmentalist position might

have been. The leaders of the Conference were quite happy to see some people initiate positive action as the clergy had originally advocated. Nevertheless, the environmental issue was not one which rallied more citizens to join the association. Membership in the citizens' organization continued to decline between March and June, a few at a time, so that the fourth and final meeting (June 15, 1973) was attended by only fifteen citizens.

The third committee 'community services' began discussing a pot pourri of ideas and problems each participant thought to be crucial and relevant. Recreation, the idle youth, transportation and communications evoked comments which revealed a lack of information more often than informed or thoughtful opinion.[45]

This dilemma symbolizes the situation of the restless and dissatisfied citizens. Because of the town's dependency on other outside agencies to respond to its problems, the town is drawn into a pattern of service-delivery which only gives Pelham passing consideration. Since the first need of the group was to discover who was doing what or who was willing to help local people, the argument was made and accepted that the first step would be to gather information and find a method of distribut-

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[45] For instance, a Recreation and Parks Committee staff member reacted with hostility when it became apparent that few knew of the Committee's work and efforts to inform others about available resources. The exercise of exposing problem areas to be later resolved by citizens working together in an effort to build a strong community was destroyed by an obvious lack of information about their own town. Citizens on this committee (fifteen at the March 29th meeting) found that they had little idea what services were available from what organization or what might be provided by others if approached.

ing this new compilation of local and regional resources. The notion was expressed that the lack of social and political participation, obvious to those at the meeting, was due to there being no information about relevant activities available to local citizens. The informed citizen, it was argued, was a more active citizen and one who was more likely to be concerned about the community.

The committee of five, set up to find out what was happening in Pelham, went about its work during April and May, collecting information about government services, private agencies, education opportunities, senior citizen activities, religious institutions and recreational facilities. Although some material was gathered for each of these spheres, the committee never submitted a draft of its proposed publication to the larger Conference, partly because the Conference was no longer meeting and partly because the committee lacked the strength to put it together.[46] Members were either too busy with other activities or not quite ready to submit their own collection of information. In late June a provincial government official offered his services, arguing against money as a vehicle for building a strong association, when the group began anew in

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[46] A meeting was arranged between a community development official of the Ontario Ministry of Social Development and the informal leadership of the Conference including a clergyman, the chairman of the environmental committee and the chairman of the community information services. I had arranged this as a result of correspondence between myself and Ellis Morningstar, M.L.A., (Welland Riding which included Fonthill). I was also chairman of the community information committee.

September; however, no further meetings were to take place.[47]

Within Pelham new associations designed to change any aspects of local living conditions have had great difficulty in organizing and developing a lasting coalition. The farmers, fighting to maintain freedom to do what they want with their lands, have been able to maintain a working, if unsuccessful, association of their own to deal with local and regional governments, due to their defensive position and obvious goals. The newly formed Fonthill Businessmen's Association is unable to attract Fenwick merchants and, among those in Fonthill, no one is quite sure why the Association exists or what it could accomplish to help individual merchants better their income. Another commented that the Association is jeopardized every time projects are suggested which might cost something to individual members.[48] Without specific goals or specific needs clearly recognized by all involved, local residents hesitate to commit themselves to any untried citizens' committee although many were originally willing to spend that Saturday in March listening to complaints and suggestions.

Councillors expressed suspicion when questioned about Community

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[47] The environmentalists did begin anew in January 1974 and were able to continue on as an interest group involved in the local and regional planning process. During the fall of 1974 they began to expand their meetings to discuss transportation and recreation.

[48] Interview with Keith Crick, a Fonthill businessman and alderman and a comment by a Fonthill businessman, Donald Alsop, at a council meeting, October 1973.

Concerns as they tried to fit the idea of a community-wide association into their framework of council -- private corporation -- service group -- ratepayer interaction as the basis of local political life. In describing the new organization as a ratepayer's association, councillors satisfied themselves that it was out to look after the specific interests of its membership like every other group. The association, for them, had no moral basis, no claim to be speaking for everyone or for a new way of approaching the problems of Pelham. It was merely able to make demands upon council which, in turn, would be viewed as all other demands were viewed. One alderman, from the rural area, approved the way in which Community Concerns had tried to overcome its Fonthill bias and include citizens from all over the town.[49] Another thought that it was more spiritual and recreational than political. "When you say that you are going to look at the needs of people, what people are you talking about? . . . If I was a person in this town looking for something to do, I wouldn't have any trouble. From my experience there is quite a lot to do for a man my age (late thirties): club work, social work, any of the clubs that are in town, clubs that are working not just as a social club, Lions, Kinsmen in Fonthill are good clubs and are doing a lot of work; also the Recreation Committee does a lot of good work . . . People moving into this town might have a difficult time getting familiar with what is going on, it's hard to know until you get to know neighbours and other people in town but if you come knocking on council doors you are only one of many others that do."[50]

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[49] Interview with Douglas Beamer.

[50] Interview with Gerry Shields.

Why did Community Concerns fail in the opinion of Conference participants? "I myself expected it to hold together better, although there was bound to be a falling off, coming up to summer. I think one reason for the falling off of interest in the larger group has been the fragmenting of our interests to some extent. We had a strong representation from the committee interested in the sports complex and they felt that this little conference we were having, from time to time, meeting in the United Church premises because it was convenient, and the larger conferences we had planned was the place for them to become involved with other people. I think that they have made their approach to the local council and applied for grants and they have been working on their own so they're coming now to this Community Concerns Conference . . . they certainly were not at the first two or three meetings . . . but when they learned it was going on and were interested in our social community interest, they came in and one asked if he could make a presentation of their case, which he did, and he took that up and, in fact, we were almost making it a confirmed priority for the E. L. Crossley Conference but then we realized that there're other strong interests as well. So we ought to cater to more than one strong priority."[51] He argued that this failure was, in addition to those small groups pushing their own interests, the result of a lack of community commitment: "One of the things that I have felt all along with regard to this whole Conference on Community Concerns is that in this area we are not really a united community and one of the hopes I had was that through these meetings we would become

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[51] Interview with Rev. Dunlop.

more community minded. We're fragmented in all sorts of ways. To some extent this is not harmful, to some extent it can be quite good, but, for instance, I don't think from the point of view of the church, all the churches can work together on many projects, and, perhaps their best work is done in their own communities, as far as immediate church life goes, but the question of secular interests would jell a bit with recreation because most of our recreation dollars are spent outside this area, and we have no large facilities for family recreation . . . that way it (the recreation facility) could be a binding force. At the same time it could be a divisive influence in the community because there is quite a section who do not want to be putting their hands deep into their own pockets for facilities they themselves would not use . . . I would think that this would be a strong community interest and if the committee involved can only get the men and women who are curling or bowling in Welland or Niagara Falls, St. Kitts (St. Catharines) to transfer their interests to a local area, this would, maybe, help strengthen community spirit. I hope so."[52]

The community development officer from the Addiction Research Foundation (she lived on the edge of town) was asked to join as a professional and, hence, brought with her different ideas about the possibilities of the new association fulfilling expressed needs in Pelham: "You see, why I got involved with this group in the beginning was that I could see some elements, some seed areas that were possible to grow into that kind of thing, to have a concern for getting people together in, like

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[52] Ibid.

you say, the neighbourhood kind of thing, developing the kinds of things that were closest to the people and that takes on an effect in a bigger neighbourhood, and on up that greater changes that are more human and involved happen that way, and because I see it that way that's where I started to put some energy. It's, strangely enough, the people in Pelham who are of the kind of human resources who are community activists in other communities, within their jobs and other areas, so even potentially conscious things as there is with the Pelham High School issue as one issue that shows it can get together or around something that is effecting it at all levels, but there hasn't been very many of those kinds of things that people felt in common enough about to get together on."

The original excitement and energy which she saw in the Conference organizers was never quite transformed into the structure and action so important to initiated new groups concerned with the social development of a community. "It never quite happened, the circle of the movement just reached out so far and then stopped and became strictly a planning group." She agreed with the clergyman about the lack of togetherness "You know there is no one profile to Pelham in their (citizen) reactions, the way they do things. There are usually people who very much want to decide what goes on where they live but they're isolated from one another, they don't often get together and decide how they can do that. They talk to one another and their neighbours but they don't put that into some kind of effect, a group that will have an effect and there are those who say, 'well, that's the way it is and things will be better someday.'" The group failed to come to terms with its lack of specific goals (except for the environmentalists) and avoided the difficult and introspective

'griping and groping' out of which a group finds its purposes and most attractive structure. That never surfaced, partly because no one was willing to face the prospect of taking on a more political role in the town. The lack of resolve among the leadership when faced with this prospect caused the citizens to lose interest: "I see my role as being very political (yet) there is a tendency (among citizens) to at first not be aware . . . but the realization does come along, it comes along the way but not until much later on in the circumstances . . . I got the feeling that people (in Pelham) were aware that it was getting into politics and were afraid of it, and that would come up, no matter where this would come up, there would be (this attitude) 'let's not let this happen to us.' Most local people were saying that, even in the planning of the Conference. In that process of organizing, many groups were going to take on issues which were not popular but, nevertheless, real, and someone, particularly the clergy, says no let's back off of that, let's be careful we don't want to get into that."[53]

The meetings were awkward occasions, as organizers hesitated to take charge in a way which would make Community Concerns appear to be sponsored by the clergy. Yet other citizens were unprepared to take over the leadership, to spend the time needed to build up an independent group, to present ideas and agendas which would suggest possible action alternatives, and to work on the committees independent of what others were or were not doing. Everyone hesitated and lost confidence that anyone else was about to put forth the effort required if the group were to

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[53] Interview with H. Kilty.

succeed. Failing to gain strength at this critical time, the group collapsed as church leaders and outside professional helpers tried to shift the responsibility to local citizens. They, in turn, were unable to transform it into a new organization with any hope of building a base of support among the townspeople.

Summary

Pelham is a place in which citizens are involved in a number of groups in several spheres of activity. Many belong to churches, school organizations, recreation clubs or men's and women's voluntary associations but fewer belong to political parties or interest groups which are overtly seeking to initiate or change government policies. A distinction is made between non-political and political activity where political implies involvement with governments or political parties. The sole effort to convince the citizenry of the importance of rethinking this conception of community participation was made by the organizers of Community Concerns, who had argued that other citizens needed to transform their activity into purposeful action in order to solve commonly perceived problems. However, Community Concerns of Pelham was not able to convince others that problems generally thought to be of a private nature, such as alienation, loneliness, and drug abuse, were actually public problems capable of resolution through political action. Politics is thought to be divisive because of the competition of interests. Few citizens believe that public action can create social consensus, common purposes or community among men.

The historical analysis in chapter two suggested that citizens were concerned about local government particularly when large expenditures

were involved. The community life in the more contemporary context indicates that citizens are less concerned about local council and have little confidence that municipal organizations can help in their private and communal difficulties. Citizens have abandoned the notion that local government can be used to develop a community through support for group projects or through a commitment to citizen participation. When Pelhamites decided to do something about their problems (such as drug abuse) they did not turn to the local council. Similarly the council was not anxious to involve itself in a group with such a vague goal as community development. The major finding of this research is that council's accepted role within Pelham is to provide limited services to assist in the economic development of the town. This view of local government is explained in more detail in chapter four.

Chapter Four
The Formation of Pelham

The townspeople experienced major political changes when the Ontario government abandoned the old school boards in 1969 in favour of regional boards of education. In the following year the Regional Municipality of Niagara was formed to complete the restructuring of local government in the Pelham area. This chapter is designed to investigate why these changes were brought about and what the government intended to accomplish. The argument put forth here is that the provincial authorities wanted to regionalize local governmental structures because they found that the existing bodies did not have the political and administrative capacity either to facilitate the expansion of the province's economy, or to deliver their assigned services. The strategy was to rationalize local government while, at the same time, encouraging private development to locate and invest outside of the Toronto-centred region. This explanation of regional government, then, is based upon the argument that there is a relationship between local government and regional economic expansion. However, the evidence gathered in Pelham clearly indicates that few, if any, of the townspeople saw these new governments in this light.

The local government reform movement is not new to Ontario politics as the following historical review illustrates. The tension between those who want to decentralize public authority and those who want to centralize and increase the province's control over local matters has been

constant in this province. Often the debate is expressed as administrative efficiency versus local democracy but this only camouflages the more basic concern as to which government should have effective control over local politics. The largest part of this chapter is given to explaining why regional government was implemented in the Niagara region. The last section reveals how the citizens of Pelham interpreted these events and what they foresaw as the possible consequences of these actions on their community.

The Traditional Debate

Present Ontario local government, including the newer regional governments, is based on principles which became law between 1788 and 1849. The tradition in early Upper Canada was that the governor and his executive council retained and exercised as much political control over the colony as was possible; hence, the early regime was marked by its centralization and authoritarianism. The political reaction, which finally accumulated in the rebellion of 1837, focussed on these characteristics, using every opportunity to expose the weaknesses and abuses of the Family Compact. The reformers demanded both a more decentralized and a more democratic political system.

Originally the province was divided into districts for reasons of defense and development.[1] Areas such as the Niagara peninsula

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[1] Four districts were established in 1788 for administrative purposes by Lord Dorchester. Using the same districts in 1792, Governor Simcoe further divided the colony into nineteen counties to establish militia units and boundaries for parliamentary representatives; these counties were not used for political-administrative purposes until the eighteen fifties. The first four districts created in 1788 were Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nassau and Hesse. Niagara was one of four added in 1800.

were rapidly settled by United Empire Loyalists, beginning in the seventeen eighties at a time when the British were worried that rebel Americans might enter Upper Canada via the Niagara River. Official policies were to develop the hinterland quickly and even the capital at Niagara (Niagara-on-the-Lake) had to be removed to the more isolated and secure York. The establishment of districts is not to be confused with the establishment of local democracy or even local control. The governor had his personal administration decide all important matters for the colony. The only discretion left to local officials, whom he himself had appointed for life, were minor details concerning, for instance, roads and the setting of tolls. The original legislative unit in each district was the Court of Quarter Session which had limited authority to legislate, administer, and to carry out judicial functions. All these duties were, of course, supervised by the governor and, later, the executive council and governor.[2]

The authority vested in the justices of the peace (who were in charge of the Courts of Quarter Sessions) was limited to minor local issues such as domestic animals running loose, road construction and the conduct of local taverns. Over the next forty years, the district officials were given additional responsibilities although the spheres of act-

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[2] The governor appointed judges of the Court of Common Pleas, a sheriff, a clerk for the Court of Common Pleas, justices of the peace, a clerk for the sessions of the peace and coroners for each district. K. Grant Crawford, Canadian Municipal Government (Toronto, 1954), p. 23.

ivity such as maintaining law and order, facilitating transportation systems and the assessing of various taxes remained the same. This established the role of Ontario local government; that is, municipalities were to administer, according to responsibilities assigned by the central authority, and to collect taxes in a fashion also decided by the same central authority.

Municipal government was also developed as a result of (1) middle class demands for electoral and legislative reform and (2) an increasing complexity and scale of work performed by local officials. The legislative acts, the District Councils Act of 1841 and the Municipal Act of 1849, were outcomes of political agitation for reform. The democratization of local government appealed to many inhabitants of Upper Canada, partly out of a strategy to change policies and partly out of a philosophical opposition to oligarchical rule. While many families had left the United States because of opposition to a radically changing political order, the administration under the British system was becoming less appealing. The speeches and writings of Robert Gourlay and later William Lyon Mackenzie were not lost on the dissidents who opposed monies (mostly their own) being spent without their participation in the decision making. What has been interpreted as an early Canadian populist movement in the eighteen thirties and forties may be more properly thought of as a pragmatic move by local citizens to gain control of financing as the yearly tax burden became more substantial. In any case, there certainly was no

overpowering demand for reform for the sake of local democracy.[3]

The parliamentary debate over the 1841 local government legislation illustrates the colony's ambivalence towards democratic structures. This Act constituted each district as a corporation with residents permitted to elect councillors at the annual meeting, while the appointed warden held office at the pleasure of the governor, as did the clerk and treasurer. The councillors held office for three year terms with one third retiring every year. It was concerned with local matters and supported by local taxes but was very much under the control of the colonial executive. Any authority previously held by the justices was transferred to the new councillors to be elected from each township. The list of responsibilities indicates how much more demanding local administration had become: roads, bridges, purchase and sale of district real estate, the defrayment of costs of the administration of justice, the erection and maintenance of schools, the establishment of its officers' salaries and the salaries and the fees of township officers.[4]

The public debate was whether or not local inhabitants were ready

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[3] "It is evident that the people of British North America as a whole--or those of them who took an active interest in politics--were very much divided on the degree or nature of self-government which they wished to see in effect. It is, of course, impossible to express the balance of opinion in terms of numbers. Votes in the various assemblies and in general elections afford perhaps the nearest indication, and suggest that while the trend was toward responsible government there was still substantial opposition." G. P. de T. Glazebrook, A History of Canadian Political Thought (Toronto, 1966), p. 118.

[4] Interestingly enough, although councils should raise the necessary monies through tolls or taxes, they were limited by the act as to how much they could actually raise by assessment. Crawford, p. 30.

to assume the responsibility of controlling their own affairs and how the central authorities could guard against the abuses of unscrupulous officials. Colonial authorities were convinced that local citizens had limited intelligence and ability and that any legislation passed had better provide for their intervening to protect the public good. The principle of provincial supervision and intervention into all aspects of a municipality's affairs still remains a major characteristic of provincial-municipal relations. Many officials found local autonomy unsound, from an administrative perspective. Similarly, the governor and his advisers also found the idea of local democracy a dangerous proposition. Looking at the United States as an example, they believed that local government could lead to radical thinking and radical demands; hence they chose to control affairs, mostly by controlling local appointments. Once they lost that, the argument went, then they would have no influence over what might happen throughout the colony.[5] Thus, the purposes of local government were far from being radical or democratic but, in fact, were entirely

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[5] The Municipal Act of 1849, or the Baldwin Act as it is more commonly known, faced the same barrage of arguments as further reforms on the municipal structures were carried out. The principal changes were to establish counties instead of districts as the larger unit of local government while permitting for the creation of villages, towns, cities, townships where necessary throughout Upper Canada and for the regulation of local police forces. These municipal acts were hailed as a major victory by many who had been agitating for local control over local matters. As the population was growing rapidly in parts of southern Ontario and as some people were gaining wealth and independence, the demand for better public services had increased. Yet, until the eighteen forties, the supervisors of the large districts were either unwilling or unable to administer funds to satisfy local residents.

conservative and administrative.[6]

Education reform debates in the colonies illustrate many of the same attitudes towards government and public services as found in the disputes concerning local government. The battle over regional education did not begin in the nineteen sixties but in the eighteen thirties. A bitter struggle lasting for close to twenty years developed over what structures could best supervise education throughout the colony. The argument for one side favored a centralized system controlled easily by an educated elite while the opposition supported local control.

Debating the future of education was more acrimonious than that of local government and illustrates how fundamental and continuous the efficiency-democracy debate has been in Ontario society. Conservative leaders at once saw that a carefully controlled public programme would inculcate in children the values of respect for authority perpetuating the authoritarian colonial style of politics. A monolithic structure, allowing a central authority to supervise the training and appointment of teachers, the curriculum outlines, and the choosing of texts, was thought to guarantee that a proper set of values would be transmitted to the young. The heterogeneous population could easily be transformed into a truly indigenous community through the proper use of a public school

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[6] Observing that frustration was building among many inhabitants, Lord Durham argued in his report that 'it would be far better, in point of efficiency and of economy, that the power should be entrusted to municipal bodies of much smaller districts.' His intervention was as significant as any event in introducing responsible local government into Upper Canada. He lent status to the demands which were emerging from several parts of the colony but were being blocked by legislative-executive fights. Durham's arguments were not radical; instead he claimed that a more stable political life would exist if local friction was dissipated locally through democratic processes. Lord Durham's Report edited by Sir G.P. Lucas (Oxford, 1912) quoted in K. Grant Crawford, Canadian Municipal Government, p. 29.

system.

The opposite stand, for local control of the local classroom, is, by comparison, a radically conservative position. By arguing in favour of local democracy, the 'reformers' were actually asking that each settlement be given the option to resist a centrally designed educational programme. The idea of a powerful local school board meant that conditions in the schools would resemble the immediate social, political, economic, and religious environment more than an outsider's construction of the good life. Before 1833, education was administered locally by four or five men who travelled throughout the region, each living in a separate settlement, meeting irregularly to decide current problems in education. Each did his task without salary and expenses, usually leaving much to be desired in the view of the central authorities. Egerton Ryerson, with the backing of Strachan, argued that this unworkable structure needed to be replaced by a professionalized central authority.[7] The opposition reformers could only see the arbitrary executive council gaining the power to rule over education throughout Upper Canada, a fate which they dearly wanted to avoid. Despite the lengthy debate and the arguments put forward to oppose the plan, a centralized educational system was in effect in Upper Canada by the eighteen fifties.[8]

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[7] R. D. Sidney, "Centralization and Education: the origins of an Ontario tradition," Journal of Canadian Studies, (November, 1972), p. 38.

[8] Fonthill's best remembered nineteenth century citizen, Dexter D'Everardo, took time out from his busy schedule to write to Governor Merritt in 1847 outlining that he favoured this centralist position. Merrit had described him in his papers as "a local politician and the District Superintendent of Schools." Sidney, p. 44.

Although the town hall was officially rejected as the proper place in which to make decisions concerning the moral and intellectual improvement of the younger generations, the prominence of the debate in the public life of Upper Canada signified the evolving importance of education in that society.[9] Men like Ryerson are not to be thought of as insensitive persons or as enemies of the people, for that misinterprets the underlying ideology of Ontario education. If anything, they were simply anti-democratic inasmuch as they could not bring themselves to accept the fact that people were able to decide, on their own, matters so crucial for the state and social structure. The centralists believed that education belonged in the hands of educated people, those capable of deciding matters outside the emotional, prejudicial atmosphere of township meetings or small town public opinion. This remains a part of the Ontario tradition as does faith in achieving efficiency and public accountability through centralization. Although the opposition was quick to see a conspiracy throughout the long debate, the reasons for education went much deeper. "It was, rather, to become the mainstream of nineteenth century administrative reform: bureaucratization and cen-

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[9] For the uneducated immigrant the opportunity for educating his children was essential in his establishment of his family among the more prosperous classes. These men were among the first to articulate the relationship between centralization, efficiency and loyalism: "the establishment of a common school system in 1840 bears witness to the pervasive influence of attitudes susceptible to the promises of an educational solution to social problems. From then on, the development and internal elaboration of the public school system would provide the middle class with their main strategy for meeting the problems of their changing society."

Susan E. Houston, "Politics, Schools and Social Change in Upper Canada," Canadian Historical Review, (September, 1972), p. 271.

tralization in the name of both efficiency and justice were the wave of the future, and liberals who believed that the state was the chief enemy of liberty, and local government its bulwark were a dying breed, though the rhetoric lingered."[10]

Regional Government and Provincial Objectives

An overview of regional government is necessary, in part, because little has been published on the subject. More specifically, little has been said about the relationship between the province's intentions to develop Ontario's economic structure and its strategy to reform local government. The arguments presently circulated in support or in opposition to regional government are similar to those debated in colonial politics and concern the same problems of development and public services. In the following section government studies and ministerial statements are used to illustrate the policy thrust of the province which created new municipal and educational structures in the late nineteen sixties.

The senior policy makers within the provincial government had decided in the early nineteen sixties that Ontario was faced with two central problems. First, the structure of local government was unable to support the industrial, commercial and residential development proposals which were increasingly being presented by corporations. Secondly, the processes of economic growth were disturbing inasmuch as growth was centred in and around Toronto while other regions were being developed at a much slower rate. Based on this analysis, the province embarked on two schemes. The one, regional government, was intended to strengthen the

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[10] Sidney, "Centralization and Education," p. 46.

municipal government structure while the other, regional development, was designed to strengthen and expand the economic structure of each region. These should not be thought of as isolated initiatives although there is evidence to suggest that, publicly, at least, the leadership of the government was originally hesitant to admit to a grand design or centrally initiated comprehensive planning. Premier Robarts, in 1966, stated that "regional government and regional economic development are separate compartments." However, by 1968, the provincial Treasurer was saying that "the government's goal in regional development will be to create regions with the opportunity to develop their resources and to guide their economy in the direction that will benefit them most." The objective was to reduce the economic differences between municipalities: "here the wheel comes full circle because in the character of regional governmental change will come the machinery and means of helping all regions develop purposefully and effectively." According to one official writing more recently, the two initiatives had a natural compatibility; yet, they were developed as if they were distinctly separate. "Regional development and regional government are overlapping programs in Ontario, but they are distinct, and either could exist without the other. However, they are sufficiently complementary that each will work more satisfactorily if the other is in existence."[11]

The policies designed to encourage decentralized economic growth

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[11] All quoted in Lionel D. Feldman, Ontario 1945-73 The Municipal Dynamics Part 5 of The Evolution of Policy in Contemporary Ontario Prepared for the Ontario Economic Council (Toronto, 1974), pp. 22-23.

were twofold. To facilitate local initiatives, the government sponsored ten Regional Development Associations beginning in 1964; the Niagara area was included in the South Ontario Development Region. The development council concept never has been supported enough for it to operate with a competent research staff so that few of its weak proposals have had significant influence on patterns of development.[12] Of greater consequence are the 'Design for Development' statements developed by the provincial government starting in 1966 and dealing more directly with controlling and directing regional growth patterns.[13] Economic development and local government have traditionally been interrelated in Ontario government inasmuch as municipalities have encouraged development and offered whatever public services they were capable of providing to attract industrial, commercial and residential investment. The crisis in the sixties was due to the inability of local government to deliver services as was expected by local and provincial officials. Regional government, when viewed in the context of regional development, was designed by provincial authorities as a set of governmental structures capable of servicing an expanding industrial activity and facilitating more extensive housing for an increasing population. The provincial position favouring regional government resulted from its officials' concluding that local governments were incapable of administrating and developing as the province had expected, and, secondly,

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[12] Interview with official of Niagara Regional Government.

[13] For instance, the 1970 "Design for Development: The Toronto-Central Region" policy statement laid out the policy mechanism which the government intended to use, and in some cases have put into effect, in order to restrict Metropolitan Toronto from spreading endlessly into the countryside.

that Ontario's economic development needed the incentives and supports which only a technically competent regional structure could provide. Officials, responsible for the efficient administration within the municipalities, were convinced that local governments no longer had the financial and administrative resources to be effective.[14]

The Ontario Committee on Taxation, which reported to the Legislature in 1967, digressed from its study of the provincial tax system into a discussion of the structure of local government in order to analyze; (a) the inadequate nature of the property tax as the primary base for local revenue, (b) the inability of municipal institutions to finance local services as indicated by the wide range of provincial grants and (c) the lack of non-property tax revenues open to municipal governments both because of provincial hesitancy and the municipality's "limited territorial jurisdiction."[15] Two elements of local government of most concern to the Smith Commission (as it is better known) were its territorial extent and

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[14] A committee of the Ontario Legislature, for instance, recommended in 1965 that the entire province be divided into regional-type local government structures "with suitable boundaries having consideration to population, assessment, logical planning areas, watersheds and economic and social conditions." as quoted in Ontario, The Ontario Committee on Taxation (Toronto, 1967), Volume II, p. 500.

[15] The Ontario Committee on Taxation, p. 495. These three justifications implied to the commissioners that a more equitable provincial taxation scheme needed a different municipal partner. Because the committee's research coincided with other investigations and debates about the future role of local government, the writers argued that it would be foolish to ignore the opportunity to suggest how it was necessary to integrate plans for a more adequate tax system with a more efficient provincial-municipal division of labour. Their findings and rationales for regionalization, which are summarized here, have been often quoted as justifications for provincial policies.

its internal structure. The report was quite unequivocal inasmuch as the commissioners argued that local governments in the future needed to command a much greater land space than at present if it were to succeed in responding to increased demands. Two alternatives were available; either expand or combine existing units through annexation or amalgamation, or abandon the existing two tier system (counties and local municipalities) in favour of new regions which might act as an intermediary between provincial and municipal governments.[16] The long-standing tradition of enveloping neighbouring areas to satisfy assessment and land needs did not resolve the long term shortcomings in the Ontario municipal system. Simple expansion into the rural areas diverted attention from the scarcity of resources (in this case the scarcity of land and revenue) by taking away from others to satisfy the more demanding urban complex. The decision history of provincial authorities indicated that the continuous extension of larger cities and towns would eventually destroy the surrounding municipalities. Local officials from the smaller municipalities were inclined to accept the need for regionalization because it offered a guarantee that they might survive many years longer than under the existing system of encroachment.

The Smith Committee, then, agreed with professional opinion that regionalization was an attractive alternative which might provide a more efficient method of delivering services. Yet, if local government was to

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[16] Out of thirty-two selected Ontario municipalities all but two had sought (and succeeded) to enlarge their boundaries since 1945. Eastview, probably because it was quickly surrounded by Ottawa, and Port Arthur had remained the same size while twenty-six doubled their acreage. Ibid., pp. 498-99.

be changed drastically what could be done to retain local democracy? "Why have local government? The simple and correct answer is that local government will exist in any given jurisdiction and at any point in time because it fulfills certain general objectives or values of a political community."[17] The values expressed by local government in the Ontario political community are access and service where access means:

> "The most widespread participation possible on the part of all or virtually all individual citizens. Access to government, in terms of capacity to influence public policy decisions and to enforce responsive and responsible administration is, of course, fundamental to any democratic government. But that local government is particularly conducive to the realization of the access value has been recognized by political philosophers at least since the time of Plato. The central reason is that the capacity of government to promote access is in part an inverse function of size. The local government that is sufficiently small to enable all citizens to participate directly in public affairs--in short, the town-meeting government --is that local government which is capable of realizing the access value most fully."[18]

The Committee then turned to the traditional argument in Ontario local government: could the central government resolve the conflict between efficiency and democracy at the local level? The question raised was whether or not a newly organized structure could balance citizen demands for local democracy and the demands of officials for the efficient administration and organization of services. The contradiction is especially acute when the central authority decides to change municipal

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[17] Ibid., p. 502.

[18] Ibid., p. 503.

structures in small communities to achieve provincially sought goals. Conflicts arise because many of the purposes of local government are defined by provincial authorities and imposed on these communities. The raison d'etre for local government is defined for the town by the central authority as are the available financial resources and the spheres of action. What in theory represents a "value . . . fundamental to the very existence of our democratic system,"[19] is marginal to the policy making at the local level. Reduced to its clearest meaning, local government has evolved not as the most democratic organ of Ontario political life but as another intricate process involving civil servants, politicians and skilled interest groups.

In balancing the dual roles of local government, the Commission ventured to suggest that access and service could only be reconciled in a true community. "Community can be defined as a sense of shared interest, and while community arises from elusive factors as history, geography, economic relations and sociological traits, it plays a concrete and essential role in making a governmental unit viable."[20] Regionalization obviously demands a re-thinking of community as it absorbs people into wider governmental units. If people are actively involved, if public participation is encouraged, a new sense of community can emerge over a relatively short period of time. The first criterion of a new regional type of government is that it possess, "to a reasonable degree, a combin-

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[19] Ibid., p. 504.

[20] Ibid., p. 507.

ation of historical, geographical, economic and sociological characteristics such that some sense of community already exists and shows promise of further development."[21] There were four other criteria for the new format suggested by this committee: (1) that the regional boundaries include a balance of interests such that no one group dominates, (2) that each region possess an adequate tax base so that ultimately provincial support might be reduced, (3) that each region be constituted to perform assigned functions that are area wide in nature with the "greatest possible efficiency, efficiency being in terms of economies of scale, specialization and the application of modern technology"[22] and (4) that regions be delineated and organized so that their operations be organized co-operatively and that this be considered a primary responsibility of the region.

Emerging from this study is this intriguing idea of how to reorganize local government. It was readily accepted at that time that increasing the scale of an operation would most likely increase efficiency; therefore, the idea of regional government was immediately popular among those who were concerned about the cost of municipal operations. The more complex problem of local democracy was to be resolved by stating that new 'communities' (as defined by provincial authorities) would emerge corresponding to new political boundaries. By balancing interests and maintaining, if not increasing, the possibilities for citizens to

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[21] Ibid., pp. 507-8.

[22] Ibid., p. 509.

participate, it would only be a matter of time before old communities were forgotten.

Premier Robarts accepted the notion of regional government as set out by the Ontario Committee on Taxation and added his own criteria that his Progressive Conservative government would emphasize: (1) the seeking of community participation in the formation of regional governments, and where possible, "we shall strive to achieve community acceptability of the proposal," (2) the seeking of regional boundaries, or combinations of them, usable by other institutions and (3) the designing of local boundaries, in the case of two tier structures, along the same criteria as the regional level.

Speaking during the same Legislative debate, the Hon. Darcy McKeough, Minister of Municipal Affairs and largely responsible for the introduction of regional government into Ontario, outlined more specific standards for regional structures. In order to be effective in the efficient provision of services, regional government would need a population base of 150,000 - 200,000. To ensure citizen access, a lower tier of local government would be designed for the new regions, although the minimum population for each municipality would be not less than 8,000 to 10,000 people.[23]

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[23] This constituted a dramatic change as in the mid-sixties ninety percent of all municipalities (approximately nine hundred) were below the 8,000 - 10,000 minimum population suggested by McKeough and the median population was 1,775. The limitations on the small municipalities were reflected in the fact that one in three municipalities was spending less than $100,000 annually. S.G.E. Carr, "Regional Government . . . What is it?" Ontario Division, C.U.P.E: Education Seminar, (March 1970), memeo, p. 4. This is the source for the quotes by Robarts and McKeough in the Ontario Legislature Debates in 1969. Darcy McKeough was Minister of Municipal Affairs 1968-1971.

In a speech delivered in 1971, Mr. McKeough pursued the same themes as justification for reform. Local government was inadequate and, therefore, in need of reform. As it was a most essential form of government in Canadian society, his policy was to strengthen it. The province, he declared, would not pour funds into a system of government which was unwilling to take advantage of economies of scale. He further claimed that there usually was complete agreement in all regions that changes were necessary while the question of what types of reform best suited local conditions was not as easily agreed to by everyone involved. "The Provincial Government believes that there must be local input and general acceptance in order to get local commitment. It is going to be their government -- they have to make it work. There is no mistaking, however, that the final responsibility and authority in the matter of reform is the Provincial Government. Under the British North America Act the Province is given responsibility for local government . . . when the time for a decision on reform action must come, it is clear that the Province has the power to act and decide the course of reform."[24] In the same speech he referred to the relationship between regional government and regional economic strategies: "The inadequacy of local government in meeting the pressures of growth has been dramatically demonstrated by the Provincial Government's new departures in the field of regional economic planning. Out of its growing alarm for unstructured sprawl and destruct-

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24 The Hon. W. Darcy McKeough, "Ontario Reshapes Local Government to Meet the Challenges of Rapid Urbanization," (February, 1971), mimeo, p. 6.

ive land use practices, the Province has embarked on a programme to set out guidelines for economic growth and population density. Municipalities will have to plan within these guidelines."[25]

To summarize, it can be said that the province accepted regional government as a new strategy in its policy making because of: (1) an acceptance by governmental officials of the need to reform local government, (2) a view of local authorities as generally being sympathetic to change, (3) an opportunity to combine local government reform with economic developmental policies, (4) an inclination to abandon counties and small municipalities in favour of regional type structures, (5) a belief that resources (mainly time, monies and land) could be most rationally allocated in a regional structure and, finally, (6) an optimism that communities would be strengthened if brought into a regional organization.

The last point is critical to understanding the thinking of provincial authorities. Most planners, administrators and politicians had come to two conclusions about small communities which were not widely shared or articulated by the public. Firstly, most communities were not as independent as the residents thought. Because of the proliferation of ad hoc committees, special bodies (totalling some 6500 in Ontario), provincial grants, ministry priorities, county policies and so forth, the scope for independent municipal action for the small community was severely limited and circumscribed. The second assumption was that no difference existed between urban and rural communities; they had reached such a point of functional interdependence that their politics and problems could be treated as one. A provincial official clearly stated this

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[25] McKeough, p. 8.

position:

> "This distinction between rural and urban local government has become increasingly artificial in this century. The real pressures of economics, transportation, labour mobility, and communication have blurred the distinction so completely that the point becomes self-evident. Today, the shopping patterns, the desire for a high quality of municipal services, the demand for equality in the education received by our children, bring home to us the fact that rural and urban Ontario now share the same basic view of the role of our governmental institutions. However, the point I wish to emphasize is this: this merging of basic rural and urban values has not been reflected in our municipal institutions."[26]

This provincial support for local government reform and more rational economic development, when combined, lent a powerful force to any local desire for similar changes.

Niagara Regional Government: Innovative Influences

Unlike other regional government schemes, where officials and citizens alike have complained about arbitrary provincial action, there was a well organized and articulate base of support for municipal changes on the peninsula.[27] Niagara politicians had decided by 1960-61 that the existing system of local government was unacceptable and they were agitating for a municipal setup strong enough to support local development

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[26] S. J. Closkey (Director, Municipal Research Branch, Department of Municipal Affairs),"Background to the Development of Regional Government in Ontario," in Trevor Price, ed., Regional Government in Ontario (Windsor, 1971), pp. 46-47.

[27] A thorough study of the support for regional government among the local municipalities and negotiations which led to the eventual formation of Regional Niagara can be found in Morris Guy Jones, "The Formation of the Regional Municipality of Niagara," B. A. thesis, Brock University (May, 1971).

and to reduce taxes for the property owners. These demands were the consequence of their decision that the Niagara local governments were inadequate because of the following problems. (1) The cities were unable to provide services such as water and sewers to develop new land for residential and industrial use nor were they able to provide other routine services in an economical manner because the municipalities had too limited a resource base. (2) The demand for land for the cities had caused numerous applications for amalgamation and annexation to be made before the Ontario Municipal Board.[28] (3) As each section of land was claimed by a city, the surrounding villages, townships and counties lost important tax revenue. The annexed territory was typically the most valuable as tax residential and industrial developers built on the outskirts to avoid the high city property tax rate. If the land was not already developed, it represented the periphery of development, valuable real estate laying vacant. Cities were not members of county councils meaning that loss of good assessment property to the city reduced the fiscal base of the entire county structure. (4) Another worry was that rapid urban-industrial expansion, spilling as it was into neighbouring municipalities, caused strip development (that is, increased non-farming use of rural lands), quicker deterioration of the road system, conflicting land uses, and higher demands for better urban-type services such as water, sewers, garbage collection and a more equitable urban-rural school system. (5) Finally, the pressure for more local revenue increased competition among

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[28] Between 1950 and 1960 there were eighty-seven applications made in Lincoln County alone as St. Catharines and the more urbanized townships sought land to alleviate shortages within their own boundaries.

municipalities to attract more industrial (and, to a lesser extent, residential) assessment, reducing the possibility of adhering to planning regulations.

In all, there were some twenty-eight municipalities within what is now Regional Niagara including four cities, five towns, three villages, fourteen townships and two counties. Each had large councils and small support staff. As a group, through municipal associations and through the county councils, local politicians and bureaucrats expressed their frustration in that too many problems for which they were delegated responsibility by provincial legislation -- such as pollution, planning and transportation -- were now area wide in nature while their authority remained fragmented. They had concluded that the only alternative was to design a system of government which corresponded in area and purpose to these problems.[29] The initiation for change came from local municipal and county authorities, not from the provincial government. This difference between the Niagara study and later regional commissions which were frequently initiated by the provincial government was emphasized by public officials who support regional government. They pride themselves on the fact that they were able to anticipate problems before the province, to generate support for a common front and to initiate an intensive investigation in search of new structures of municipal government. The more enthusiastic supporters argue that regional government was more acceptable around the peninsula because of the crucial role played by local

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[29] This search for better administrative structures was also well supported by the local media and interested groups such as Brock University, the Niagara Development Council and most of the local Chambers of Commerce.

citizens in developing policy alternatives even to the point of reviewing and revising the legislation before it became an act of the provincial legislature.[30] Between 1966, when Dr. Mayo presented his first report, and 1968, when the second report became public information, there was much manoeuvering among officials in the area. Although the local muncipalities had initiated the reform, the two years during which the review commission was most active 1965-1967, the provincial government assumed the leadership and responsibility for seeing that the proposals were made law. Consequently local participants quickly found themselves reacting to provincial ideas rather than developing their own solutions.[31] As of February 1967, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Hon. J. W. Spooner, had received one hundred and sixty submissions but only about sixty of these were really briefs, the rest being letters signifying agreement or disagreement.[32] Other signs of debate were the counties attempting to resurrect their own structure into a more powerful and attractive unit of government, and the growing number of representations which caused Mr. Spooner to delay the introduction of the legislation so that it took effect on January 1, 1970, instead of January 1, 1969, as he had originally planned.

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[30] Interviews with John Campbell, Chairman, Niagara Regional Government and Mayor Harold Black, Town of Pelham.

[31] At one meeting held at Brock University on October 15, 1966, immediately after the release of the first report more than four hundred and fifty invited citizens (mostly municipal officials and politicians) participated in a long session over proposals concerning boundaries, costs and the threatened loss of identity for smaller municipalities; however, no concensus was ever reached to enable regional municipalities to put forward one brief to cover the major objections.

[32] M. G. Jones, "The Formation of Regional Niagara," p. 37.

Once the provincial authorities recognized that the chances for introducing local government changes were significant, they entered the project by agreeing to pay half the costs (later they assumed all costs) of the study. Their position was that local government throughout the province was showing itself to be inadequate and unwilling to respond to the demands of rapid urbanization. The most common phrase heard in research interviews or read in speeches was that "at the time, local government was still in the age of the horse and buggy."[33] The purpose of local government activity had been to catch up, to see if officials could not for once get ahead of the citizen's demands for more services and the developer's demands for serviced land. The task of local government, especially before regional government, was to find as many ways as possible for accommodating 'urbanization'; yet this level of government had lacked sources to control or influence decisions which continually encouraged such growth. For these reasons, there was strong support at the provincial level for changes in local government in the Niagara area. Administratively, the idea of larger units to purchase materials, co-ordinate activities and deliver services, had its appeal. The idea of a new body which might base its decisions on more straightforward economic efficiency principles was also attractive to those involved in corporate development. Given both a dissatisfaction with local government and the apparent appeal of (and support for) regional structures, provincial leaders saw an opportune time to begin large scale changes in municipal legislation.

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[33] "The first assumption (of the provincial government) is that the municipalities themselves will not act." Feldman, The Municipal Dynamics, p. 27.

At the same time, municipal reform could be combined with a centrally directed programme of stimulating economic growth in as many regions as possible by diverting private development away from the Toronto-centred region and by increasing the total amount of capital flowing into the province.

The Structure of Niagara Regional Municipality

Local politicians and bureaucrats on the peninsula had decided early in the nineteen sixties to go ahead on their own and study possible solutions to their municipal problems. The study group first obtained financial support from the Canadian Council on Urban and Regional Research and under the direction of Professor Henry Mayo, a political scientist then at the University of Western Ontario, issued a preliminary report calling for reform based on further research. The provincial government, confident of local support, established a local government review commission again with Dr. Mayo as the head. This Commission first issued a data report in 1966 and a final report in 1968 suggesting possible regional combinations.

The research and recommendation reports were produced quickly within three years because of a reasonable unanimity among local officials. For instance, it was commonly assumed that the Niagara region was a natural community encompassing both Lincoln and Welland counties, thus fulfilling one of the province's statedrequirements for regional

government.[34] The allusion to community as a generally accepted description of the entire peninsula gave an important rationale to those who favoured a new system of local government. Asserting that a community did in fact exist, in an area exceeding that presently controlled by any one municipality, implied that the new regional structure would be primarily answering a need. Regional government would not need to create a community and a sense of allegiance because a sense of commonality and commitment already existed. Given the costly and unco-ordinated nature of the municipal system throughout the Niagara region, the idea of community gave the project a momentum which was hard to deny. It gave the province an opportunity to develop its argument that imposition of regional government would not destroy local communities but would reinforce long established ones, going beyond simple residential communities to integrate work, entertainment and shopping 'communities'. Regional government would be an expression of the entire universe of people's daily activities, replacing fragmentation with unity.

As regional government involved re-organization of structures and relationships among politicians and bureaucrats, these officials were a most vital base of support. As already indicated, a local committee

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[34] A speech by one local authority illustrates the superficial consideration given to the notion of community. "It (Niagara) has a natural identity and a sense of community. The area has always been known as 'The Niagara Region' or 'The Niagara Peninsula'. Lake Erie, Lake Ontario and the Niagara River are natural physical boundaries on three sides, and in the area are several special features with which the total populace can identify. These would include--the Niagara Parkway; the Welland Ship Canal; the Niagara Escarpment and Queenston Heights; Brock University; the Fruitlands." Cy Armstrong (City Manager, St. Catharines), "The Regional Government Programme for the Regional Muncipality of Niagara," in Price, Regional Government in Ontario, p. 83.

consisting of representatives from the cities of St. Catherines, Welland and Niagara Falls, from the counties of Lincoln and Welland, from the Department of Municipal Affairs and from the Niagara Regional Development Association originally endorsed the need for change. Each municipal government was given ample opportunity to submit proposals to the Mayo Commission as to its ideas on regional reform. That most of them favoured some new structure (or at least declined to oppose the concept of regionalism) provided the opportunity for the provincial Legislature to implement regional government on the peninsula. The actual legislation was the logical outcome of co-operative provincial and local officials bargaining out proposals mutually acceptable to all concerned. No one interviewed thought that the province was carrying a big stick.

Bill 174, the act creating the Regional Municipality of Niagara, was designed specifically for the re-organization of local government throughout the Niagara peninsula. This act set up the structure and size of all thirteen of the municipalities, the responsibilities each was expected to perform and the relationship between 'Niagara', the regional municipality, and each of the twelve 'area' or local governments.[35] The new town of Pelham included the Village of Fonthill, the Police Village of Fenwick, the Township of Pelham and sections of the townships of Thorold and Louth. The political representation on regional council was to be in accordance with the size of the population. Every municipality was to be represented by at least one person from its council, the mayor or the reeve, plus an additional member for each 10,000 residents, elect-

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[35] See map one in Chapter One.

ed at large, creating a membership of twenty-nine councillors and a chairman for regional council. Pelham was given one representative (the Mayor) which was accepted as reasonable by the townspeople; however, changes had to be made to accommodate the demands of politicians in St. Catharines and Lincoln that they deserved at least one more representative. A last minute amendment in the Legislature satisfied these complaints. The Act also set out the structure of the local council, the number of elected representatives and the date of the first election. On October 15, 1969, the people of Pelham elected its first council of one mayor and six aldermen in a ward system (also specified by the province) designed by the former clerks and councils of Pelham Township and Fonthill.

Regional responsibilities are designated as follows:

1. The carrying out of planning studies within the region and the preparation of an official plan for the region. "The Regional Council, before the 31st day of December, 1973, shall prepare, adopt and forward to the Minister for approval an official plan for the Regional Area."[36] The inclusion of the plan's completion date in the act indicates its importance to provincial officials. Local municipalities are also given planning authority with the assumption they would develop official plans of their own. A regional official explained in an interview that the Niagara Region planning office is simply the thirteenth on the peninsula and works with other planning boards (councils are desig-

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[36] Revised Statutes of Ontario, 1968 - 1969, c. 406, S.91(2), p. 1149.

nated as planning boards) to develop regional and local plans.[37] While co-operation may accurately describe the method sought by the Region to resolve planning conflicts between the two tiers, it is fair to state that regional intentions are to take precedent. The Regional Act explicitly designates area municipalities as "subsidiary planning areas."[38] Their plans are ultimately to conform to the regional plan which, once accepted by the province, is to be the guideline for each subsidiary plan.

2. The production, treatment and storage of water and the trunk distribution mains required for supply of water to local municipalities which are responsible for its local production, treatment and storage.

3. The receiving of sewage and land drainage and the treatment or dispersal thereof. Local municipalities retain responsibility for local sewage collection and transferring it to regional lines.

4. The maintenance and operation of a regional roads system. The Region assumed the responsibility for six hundred and fifty-five miles of roads including four hundred and six miles taken over originally, mostly from counties, fifty-two which were added later, one hundred and thirty-two miles of arterial roads from the cities and as

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[37] Interview with planning official.

[38] Revised Statutes of Ontario, c. 406, S.91(2).

of May 1, 1970, sixty-four miles from the Department of Highways.[39]

5. The operation of health and welfare services.

6. The operation of all police forces within the Region, though the government chose not to commence with regional policing until January 1, 1971, or a year after other services were implemented.

7. The levy of sufficient sums from the area municipalities for the estimated current expenditures and for the necessary payments on debts and sinking funds. These sums are apportioned among the local municipalities in proportion to the property assessment. Municipalities are the tax collectors for regional government and the Niagara South Board of Education (or the Lincoln County Board of Education); both spenders are clearly indicated on the tax notice lest homeowners believe that the municipality is responsible for spending the entire amount.

8. The regional government assumes some debts for the municipalities and is to be the sole issuer of debentures. All local issues need to be approved by the Region to be then issued in its name whether the purpose of the funds are local, joint local-regional or regional. This is intended to strengthen the borrowing power of each municipality (and, in theory, its ability to act) by having the support of all municipali-

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[39] Brock University, Regional Niagara: Political Fact Book (St. Catharines, 1972), p. 5. The exact number of roads that the Region is responsible for change from year to year according to agreements reached with the area municipalities. In Pelham, the Region has responsibility for Canboro Road, South Pelham Street, Rice Road, Church Street, Regional Road 24, (the western town line) and Effingham Street. In addition, the province controls Highway #20 running through the middle of the town in an east-west direction. These roads represent the major roads in Pelham but previous to regional government most were cared for either by the county or by the province. The town has several miles under its own supervision including one hundred and thirteen miles of unpaved roads.

ties in the region. In the words of a senior regional administrator, "we all assume responsibility for each other's debts."[40]

As this was one of the first regional governments activated by the province, the ideal division of labour between the tiers of government was somewhat of a guessing exercise. What was regional in nature and what was local was a trade-off between costs, work involved, benefits and tradition. The solution hammered out in Niagara is more centralized than not inasmuch as services which require planning, capital investment, co-operation between municipalities, or tend to be unnecessarily heavy in administrative costs, are located at the regional level. Those services which are of a more routine nature--such as the collection of taxes, the filling in of land spaces following a closely supervised regional plan, the maintenance of local water and sewer systems, fire protection, libraries and local improvements such as roads, sidewalks and street lighting--are assigned to the area municipalities. The second tier, Regional Niagara, is needed primarily for co-ordinating the activities of different municipalities and for financing large projects. All this is possible only when planning is asserted as the way in which an acceptable future can be achieved. The idea of planning transforms the nature of local decision making, insisting as it does, that participant policy makers, councillors and staff officials, recognize that it is no longer sufficient to decide major items without knowing the possible consequences of government actions. In contrast, the routine of local councils has always been to respond to demands in an ad hoc fashion especi-

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[40] Interview with J. Campbell.

ally if the outcome promises an immediate addition to tax revenues. Regional government influences more than the pattern of delivering and expanding services; it promises--or threatens--to change the basis on which many of the decisions are to be made.

Structural Changes in Ontario Education

Unlike regional governments, which are being implemented one at a time, the new boards of education were created by two legislative acts. The first, Bill 168, provided for the establishment of new Roman Catholic separate school zones by combining existing jurisdictions into counties or combinations of counties, effective January 1, 1968. The second, Bill 44, effective January 1, 1969, restructured the public elementary and secondary schools into single jurisdictions, supervised by elected boards, which, like the separate school boards, were organized to coincide with the county boundaries (including cities unless otherwise designated). The three problems leading to the restructuring of local education, as identified by provincial education officials, were those of education innovation, political responsibility and financial control.

Although the politicians were given to making statements about the altruistic purposes of education spending,[41] government officials were more inclined to explain public investment in education in utilitarian terms. Education was a technique of developing a society by in-

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[41] For example, William Davis, as Minister of Education, stated that "our major and ultimate goal is that all children regardless of their so-called station in life, the particular nature of their individuality, or the chance of their geographic location have a right to equality of educational opportunity." W. G. Fleming, Ontario's Educative Society, Volume Two: The Administrative Structure (Toronto, 1971), p. 127.

vesting heavily in the young in order to produce a more skilled, and, therefore, more productive, labour force. "While the economic aspects may not have been the only important ones, there is strong support for the view that, no matter how their feelings were verbalized, the people of Ontario actually looked to education primarily for economic results and that they were willing to support a multiplication of investment in various educational endeavours primarily for this reason."[42]

The investment required to finance elementary and secondary schooling during the early sixties increased considerably and even included federal monies in technical programmes. By 1966, investigations into financing indicated that part of the difficulty was caused by the fragmented structure of local school boards. For instance, the two municipalities of Pelham and Fonthill had two public school boards (the Fonthill Public School Board and the Pelham Township Public School Board) and one secondary school board (Pelham District High School Board) which included neighbouring rural municipalities. The Department of Education argued for changes in favour of larger units based on the Smith Committee on Taxation recommendation that "efficiency in raising revenue demands that taxes be levied on a base larger than our present small local units."[43] A centralized regional authority could provide a more professional staff, reduce administrative costs through the elimination of duplications, and through uniform co-ordinated purchasing and contracting procedures. It could en-

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[42] W. G. Fleming, Education: Ontario's Preoccupation (Toronto, 1972), p. 1.

[43] Fleming, op. cit., Volume Two, p. 127.

sure a more efficient use of classrooms as formerly static boundaries could be shifted as demographic and residential patterns shifted. Most importantly, it could offer equal opportunity for students from rural areas who would be able to use the more sophisticated urban facilities. The justifications were founded on a professional evaluation of the provincial school system. The demand for reforms, in the form of a regional structure, was made in the belief that a larger and more professional staff with a sound resource base could successfully develop responsive and responsible education programmes.

Between 1955 and 1968, the Province of Ontario had reduced the number of public and separate school boards from 4,187 to 1,358.[44] Further organization changes were implemented because of the rising cost of elementary and secondary education for both current operating expenses and capital expenditures. It was not difficult for Departmental planners to project that falling enrollment at the primary grades (due to a declining birth rate) and in the senior classes (due to a fall in interest in education) would lead to significant cuts in monies available to school boards as provincial grants were related to the school population. At the same time, the local school officials showed no signs of reducing budgets, leaving the province searching for a supervisory structure through which tighter control could be exercised over spending. By enlarging the boards so that only one hundred and ninety-two covered the entire province, the government put itself in a position of monitoring

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[44] Ontario, Department of Education, The Annual Report of the Department of Education (Toronto, 1969), p. 44.

expenditures through its budgetary ceiling while, at the same time, placing the boards in a more responsible and visible public role.

The new school boards take responsibility for the budget and levy taxes directly to ratepayers; the municipalities are only tax collectors and are not held responsible for any board decision as had been the case. The legislative changes, implemented by Robarts' government, expanded the resource base of boards and, at the same time, tried to organize these bodies as more democratic structures of government. These changes were readily accepted by local councils which were tiring over the bitter budget battles with the school boards. Traditionally each of these boards had to report to a municipality as to the annual tax need for education; however, the council was not bound to accept the school board's submission as education formed an integrated part of the entire tax bill. If council felt the need for limited expenditures and if other priorities took precedent over education, it would not hesitate to return the budget to the board for further cuts. This resulted in frequent arguments between these two bodies but the school board was at a distinct disadvantage. Although it was as much an elected body as the council, it lacked the recourse of going directly to the voters with its budget proposals. It had no statutory independence in raising revenue; instead it was entirely dependent on the council for co-operation. The position was not enviable for the local councils. In the fifteen years previous to regionalization, education had reached the level of top priority in the minds of many citizens; consequently, education took a significant slice of a local council's resources. Yet the tax bill did not acknowledge, at least in the minds of councillors, that the school board, not the council,

was responsible for the increased tax load. One aim of the new provincial legislation was to eliminate this friction between school boards and councils by having municipalities collect the board of education's share of taxes but as an identified separate expenditure on a ratepayer's tax notice for which the municipality was not responsible.

There has been no statement made by a provincial official which would indicate that regional education was consciously worked out as an integrated part of an overall strategy for economic growth. The policy direction of the provincial government during the sixties does, however, suggest an abandoning of the idea that local councils and small school boards could be effective decision-making structures. This dissatisfaction was generated by a series of provincial studies all of which decided against defending the existing framework, choosing to advocate regional units for economic development, local government and education. Of these, only the regional economic development councils (such as the Niagara Region Development Council) failed in their effort to quicken economic activity or to build a satisfactory organization to support research projects and to work up a political consensus in favour of planning major public and private development ventures. These councils were abandoned in 1973 and economic development once again was a centrally organized and controlled concept within the Ontario Ministry of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs. Regional government and county education did survive and by 1970 both were functioning actively within the Niagara area.

The Reaction in Pelham[45]

When questions were raised in interviews about regional government to find out how Pelhamites remembered their own thoughts during the long discussions and debates being carried on in the region, most replied that they had accepted the idea, although various degrees of intensity of support were expressed.

The most enthusiastic supporters of regional government were the two officials who were most involved (and still are) in the administration of the municipal corporation. Both Mayor Black (at that time reeve of Fonthill) and the Clerk-Treasurer Hunt (also formerly of Fonthill) spoke at length about their original support for the new regional plans. The mayor was anxious to point out that he has been involved in council activities since 1948 at which time he won a seat as councillor. He never lost an election as a councillor or as a reeve, a position he gained

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[45] The categories ('enthusiasts', 'supporters' and 'opponents') are used to show that there was no one reaction in Pelham. There was no communal consensus as to whether the changes in the structures of local government would be 'good' or 'bad' for the town. It is not possible to attach numbers to these terms. They simply represent the categorization used locally to recall how interviewees and others viewed the changes. The majority of citizens never expressed their views in public (through letters to the newspaper, communications with the provincial Mayo Commission, communications with the politically active, etc.). There were no mass meetings to air support or opposition (in Pelham a large meeting is between 150-250 persons), nor was any opinion survey taken at the time. These categories only indicate that a few were very supportive, more were neutral and inclined to accept the reforms and a few were hostile and opposed from the beginning.

in 1958 after winning the flip of a coin.[46]

The reeve and deputy reeve from each municipality automatically sat on county councils, giving these two an added involvement in local government not shared by many others in the village. Thus, Black's opinion was more valuable because of his experience. He agreed wholeheartedly with the interpretation of provincial researchers and area politicians that "changes were needed for both areas, north and south. Because of the separation of cities and counties, counties had become a dead end; cities had put a wall around themselves pretending that they had little to do with the surrounding county." Feeling as he did, the mayor readily joined a special committee formed by the municipalities and counties at D'arcy McKeough's (by then the new Minister of Municipal Affairs) request to see the "discussions through and to meet regularly with provincial officials working on draft legislation. Some of our suggestions were accepted." The implementation of regional government had not been a major decision as far as the mayor was concerned. It simply meant putting the cities back into the county and transferring the authority for some services to the upper tier. The more active politicians and administrators were frequently anxious to point out in the interviews that a second tier had always existed; therefore, regional government represents

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[46] His story is that the incumbent reeve died in office, so rather than waste the public's money on a by-election, he and another councillor who was also interested in the office, tossed a coin and he won. The mayor, having some difficulty in recalling these dates, pulled out a note-pad on which every detail was noted because 'sometimes I get asked about the past'.

less a change than is generally thought. Black argued that the less involved citizens were not aware of the county's influence in the villages and the township, partly because it reinforced the lifestyles of rural residents, whereas the purpose of regional government was to change the established pattern of politics.

The mayor acknowledged that his attitude towards regional government was different from others in the town: "I guess that it is bound to be. You are a lot closer than the average citizen. You have the background (while) the average person perceives politics either from the newspapers or from his tax bill. There wasn't that much difference in the township and in the village. People in the most southern and northern parts of the town, those who are really rural, probably feel that they don't need any changes but most residents recognized the need."[47]

The second official endorses regional government as it has increased the size of the municipality into a more efficient administrative unit. Before moving to Fonthill seven years ago, the clerk was the clerk treasurer of a small municipality outside of Niagara Falls. Willoughby Township, according to the preliminary plans of the Mayo Commission, was about to be split into two sections with the more urbanized section joining the city of Niagara Falls. He could see "the writing on the wall and besides, Willoughby is only a stepping stone". When a simi-

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[47] Interview with Mayor Black.

lar administrative position in Fonthill was offered, he gladly accepted.[48] When comparing his old municipality to Pelham, he claimed that "There was no backlash in that township compared to what there was around Fonthill; however, even here it was at most a quiet resistance." The drawing together of people from three distinct municipalities (Thorold Township, Pelham Township and Fonthill) was opposed because people perceived themselves as having different interests and different lifestyles. The animosity is now frequently expressed in the town as an urban-rural conflict. Continuing with his recollection of local attitudes, the official noted that, while people might have cared, they did not bring forth their opinions and openly expressed their opposition. The Fonthill citizenry were flattered, at first, by the naming of the new borough, 'Fonthill'. This appeasement led some to think that they were not losing a community but enlarging the one they had. The name change to Pelham in the final legislation, without warning, was a blow to their prestige but by then it was too late to act. Residents in Fenwick, who had a known strong dislike for involving themselves with other communities, according to this official, took an immediate dislike to regional government proposals uniting them with Fonthill.[49]

As has been pointed out in an earlier chapter, by 1970 Fonthill

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[48] The response to regional government in Willoughby Township was mild; no one was especially upset at the splitting up of the old municipality except that "what feeling they did have wasn't entirely in favour of regional government mostly because they didn't understand it and anything you don't understand you tend to fear."

[49] Interview with Leonard Hunt.

had emerged as the largest of the settlements to be incorporated into Pelham. Fenwick, Pelham Centre, and North Pelham were considerably smaller than Fonthill due mainly to the steady influx of commuters into Fonthill. With so many transient people passing through the village, this sense of community, which was antagonistic to others in the district, was shared only by a "hard core" according to the same official. Adapting to new municipal structures, from his perspective, was not a widespread problem but one restricted to the few in each section of Pelham who felt attachment to the old jurisdiction. Each village had its traditionalists, resisting change, anxious to remain independent from the other as, all their lives, they were told that they were better than the 'snobs in Fonthill' or 'the farmers in Fenwick'. Transients, while loyal to places like Fonthill, were not antagonistic to others in the surrounding district and were more apt to go along with the idea of a new municipality.[50]

Apart from these justifications (and others which centred on

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[50] Further evidence that the idea of regional government was acceptable to the townspeople is the fact that no one ran for office in 1969, for the new Pelham council, on an anti-regional government platform.

The politicians who managed to win seats on regional council were, like Mayor Black, none other than the same county politicians who initiated the discussions and studies favouring regional government as far back as 1961-62. The first regional council was in large part a collection of its long time advocates and supporters.

Regional officials, as can be expected, shared this enthusiasm for change in local government. They saw municipal government in decline because of competition among local politicians for assessment, little effective planning, inadequate financing and area-wide problems escaping the territorially limited municipal governments. The only alternative was to regionalize, to reorganize the entire peninsula into a single or two tier council system. There was little use in going half way by trying to revitalize the old counties as a more basic change was needed to save the Niagara region.

claims of increased efficiency through centralization), one other theme was always expressed by the strongest advocates of the regional form of government. The former structure of government, according to this viewpoint, was not only a costly and clumsy administrative dinosaur but also a political anachronism. Local democracy had no meaning except through the duly elected representatives on council. No one paid any attention to council, no one went to meetings, far less than half of the electorate bothered to vote, and no one spoke to council members, individually or as a group, unless it was to air a grievance, to make a specific demand. To accept this perspective on the state of local democracy leaves no alternative except to stress the administrative role of councils. If the primary role of council is to administer, then the province and the municipalities are bound to find a set of institutions which will minimize the utilization of available resources including professional staff, time and finances.

One official at Regional Niagara spoke in detail about this aspect of reform. During the Mayo Commission hearings, he went to several meetings to hear what citizens might be saying about local government, only to find that few bothered to show up at the open sessions. This reinforced his theory about local politics which he formed during his first involvement, over twenty years ago,in one of the small towns on the peninsula. There he found that people were not interested in local government until it affected them directly, then, "suddenly, you would find that everyone was interested." Issues which affected the tax rate were bound to excite ratepayers the most. Instead of being involved in politics, the majority were concerned with making a living. They did have a

concern for the community although their concern was expressed in other ways (left unspecified). "They get involved when someone's big toe gets stepped on but even then they recognize that they elected the council to make decisions and that is their responsibility." Councils were elected with the expectations that they would make the tough decisions that needed to be made; yet, over the years, council members in small towns were found lacking in this respect; they were unable to impose unpopular decisions on the community. One purpose of regional government, he said, was to develop a level of government which would be able to withstand these pressures and make the tough decisions. "To think that citizens have an interest in local government was a myth and remember that I've been involved a long time."[51] Their hostility, if it existed at all, towards regional government was transitory and in a few years there would be no problems at all. It was quite acceptable to go ahead with plans for regional government because the great majority were uninterested in what was happening. As long as the new council set a reasonable tax rate and was careful about smoothing over ruffled feelings, it could be assumed that regional government would be a success.

This attitude towards local politics is not uncommon among Pelham's public officials. According to one, no one pays attention to council which is just as well as he is not at all convinced that citizens and citizen groups are helpful to council. Citizens tend "to throw sand in the gears" although, at times, their participation is needed for council to have a complete understanding of a problem. Most groups wait too long

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[51] Interview with J. Campbell.

and try to confront council instead of involving themselves in preliminary discussions. Council has to be able to sit back, see what demands have to be made and then "fit these into a very tight budget."[52] Citizens do not have the broad view of council as they represent the interest of a hamlet or neighbourhood. As an example of the declining interest in municipal politics, he pointed out that the province has discontinued the nomination meeting and has substituted a process of filing nomination papers with ten signatures. This is a good idea to him because in Fonthill no one was showing up at the meetings any more, leaving candidates to nominate each other. His memory of these meetings is that they were a bygone tradition no longer honoured by citizens locally.[53] For him it reinforces an image of politics which minimizes citizen participation, council being the democratic ('it is elected') body responsible for municipal decisions.

Regional education was accepted for the same reasons: the delivery of services was the primary function of elected boards. When it had become apparent that an older structure had lost its capacity to meet the demands of changes in society, the only alternative was to reject it in favour of a more modern method of administration. A member of the Fonthill Public School Board, who was involved with a regional committee advising the provincial government of possible alternatives for a new board, spoke in detail about the potential of these large boards and their capacity to help students from small towns such as Pelham by making

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[52] Interview with town official.

[53] Later, it is noted how this is not entirely agreed to by others.

available to each student the resources of an entire county. "How can that be compared to what each small board was doing on its own?"[54] If the reaction to regional government was quiet in 1970, the reaction to the formation of the Niagara South Board of Education was even quieter.

Some citizens supported the changes because they accepted the idea that the implementation of Regional Niagara was a necessary innovation in local government. It was progress. One had to expect such changes and few wanted to be known as opposing a new system for which provincial and municipal officials, generally accepted to be knowledgeable experts, were almost unanimous in their enthusiasm and support. The wisest strategy might be to go along with the proposals and adopt a "let's wait and see" attitude before judging it worthwhile or not. Little difference in attitudes were noted among council members as they recalled their thoughts immediately before regional government came into effect. All expected some benefits for the town, probably in the form of reduced taxes, perhaps better services. The attraction of a regional government before it began operations was that it could mean many things to many people.

For the alderman who saw local politics as a conflict of interests with issues being solved in an unorganized fashion based on favouritism, regional government offered a promise of impartiality, "honesty in decision making based on objective facts and statistical measurement."[55] For the former councillor who had watched the villagers argue against

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[54] Interview with Glyn Green.

[55] Interview with Alderman Keith Crick.

sewers and then change their minds only to be frustrated by unco-operative neighbouring municipalities, regional government appeared to be the type of organization which might be able to impose a more co-operative atmosphere.[56] For the alderman, who was a school trustee at the time, there might be better educational facilities for the town's children because of the new board of education.[57]

All of these citizens had one reservation about regional government and the county school board and that was the taking away of the right to make decisions which would have a negative impact on the town. A former deputy reeve fought against regional government because "he knew that we would lose our identity. Before you just had to go to the mayor, now he has to go elsewhere. It is important that decisions be made locally because each of us knows what is best for his home."[58] One school trustee fought the board of education as, although its ideas of an equalized system for urban and rural students would be beneficial, the one tier structure would eventually be destructive. "I opposed it because of its remoteness from the common people, the one tier system relies too heavily on staff who have a job to do and a job to protect. The politicians don't know what's going on, staff reports are biased and not in favour of what people might think."[59] Another comment by the alder-

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[56] Interview with Joe Fletcher.

[57] Interview with Alderman Gerry Shields.

[58] Interview with J. Fletcher.

[59] Interview with G. Shields.

man who was anxious for an impartial level of government confirmed that even he "regretted that so much is now being done outside the community over which they now have so little control."[60]

The explanation offered by one politician who was a long-time farmer in the town explains beautifully the mixed emotions with which regional government was anticipated. "When it came out, when they put it to us and it was changed and I was willing to go along with something new, I'd give it a shot. I suppose that, I don't know if it's a foolish attitude, but I don't know, if you take anyone that's been a farmer or rather a fruit grower, you're always using some new varieties, new types of seeds and so on, new equipment, new types of equipment, and all that sort of stuff, so you're kind of used to trying something new I guess, and maybe that sounds like an excuse but I don't think any of us fully grasped, I know I didn't, what the thing was all about. Well, I had vague understandings. Why you imagine it's going to work one way and it works exactly the opposite."[61]

The opponents to regional government used arguments already discussed, only they saw no benefits. They opposed regional government and the county-size school board because they readily recognized a loss in power, a loss in their ability to control local institutions and the tradition of making decisions in the community by responsible local leaders. Secondly, they questioned whether the larger unit would actually be as efficient as its advocates claimed. Those who were active in the town

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[60] Interview with K. Crick.

[61] Interview with Alderman Douglas Beamer.

of Pelham rarely expressed this totally negative attitude. Typically they found some grounds on which to be optimistic that the new way of doing things would accomplish more than they themselves had been able to do on their own in the old municipalities.

The one set of officials cautioning others to be careful was the Pelham and District High School Board. As one official expressed it, when questioned about his expectations of the new school board, "Well, I don't know, the politics of it kind of escaped me at the time because I didn't know that politics and education were such strange bedfellows. We were warned ahead of time if we ever went to a county size board, that we would have all the problems that the big boards had up to that time (such as) difficulty in filling orders, the chain of command would be broadened and lengthened and we just didn't have any concept of what would possibly happen. . . . Every time we complained about the advantages of Welland and Niagara Falls, he (the superintendent of education) cautioned us that things were a whole lot better out in this particular jurisdiction than they were there, and if we wanted to wait two weeks, six weeks, ten weeks to get orders filled, why the thing to do was to join the big boards. I guess, looking back, that only stands to reason . . . "[62]

Any decision to oppose regionalization programmes was not taken lightly. People quickly recognized that it was the 'coming thing' and to oppose it would be out of step with others, perhaps running the risk of being branded as 'opposing progress'.[63] This impression is drastically

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[62] Interview with Principal E. A. Ker, Pelham Secondary School.

[63] Interview with D. Beamer.

different from the view expressed by a regional official who described those "opposing regional government as modern 'do nothings', that if (one) prodded beneath the surface of this opposition, there is little there." These opponents were described as having not thought out their position and being unwilling to get involved enough to understand the problems of the region.[64]

Another reason for opposing regionalization was the effect that it would have on local democracy, on the access that small town people enjoyed, and on the responsiveness of council to local demands. The removal of decision making in certain policy spheres, affecting the entire community, was regretted by the opponents because they thought that people would lose their sense of togetherness and their sense of community. Local councils were the forum in which citizens expressed their ideas as to what direction the community should go[65] and how the resources should be allocated. Councils in small municipalities enjoyed some prestige as members were known to everyone, were accessible and accommodating, and not to be ignored, they were numerous; that is, most councils in a small town, village or township had representatives for every few hundred residents while the ratio in the larger centres ranged in the thousands. For example, previous to regional government, the following ratio existed between elected representatives and councillors: Pelham Township had a reeve, deputy reeve and three councillors, elected at large, for two year terms at large for a ratio of one elected representative for 951 resi-

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[64] Interview with J. Campbell.

[65] Interview with Alderman Ernest Brown.

dents, and Fonthill, with a similar council make-up, had one representative for every 524 persons. The regional average in 1965 was one representative for every 1,715 persons.[66] This gave Fonthill a ratio over three times and Pelham slightly under twice the regional average. Since 1970 there has been a mayor and six councillors for 10,000 people in Pelham or a ratio of one for every 1,429 citizens. (This excludes representation on the public school boards, now reduced to one.) The old personal quality was reinforced by the local town office which could usually satisfy a wide range of enquiries and requests, from policing to by-laws to assessment, without the citizen needing to travel to another municipality to deal with an office of unknown officials.[67]

Local Government Responses

That regional government would destroy local democracy was an opinion expressed by only one council, the Township of Wainfleet (a neighbouring municipality), in a hostile, poorly worded and awkwardly phrased submission to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Hon. J. W. Spooner. The council expressed the following opinion in its eight page brief in rejecting the Mayo Report in its entirety: "In the present structure of local government, the essential touchstones of this workable, responsive form of democratic government are locally elected councils possessing intimate knowledge of local problems, and a citizenry able to reach out and

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[66] Ontario, Local Government Review Commission, Niagara Data Book (Toronto, 1966), p. 42.

[67] An oft mentioned complaint is that citizens now have to travel to other municipalities for service enquiries.

affect directly its selected council."[68] The brief also questioned the current belief that a centralized authority is 'necessarily better' and worried about the "likely inability of the public to effectively communicate with and deal with this complex, geographically and structurally remote metro government."[69] The municipality was not urban, as the Mayo Commission contended, but rural, and it did not have the same interests as the cities. Although it admitted that its planning board had been less than adequate, the council doubted that regionalization was the only alternative. The thrust behind regional government would ultimately disfranchise citizens in favour of a powerful bureaucracy, a situation which the Wainfleet council wished to avoid.

The council of the Township of Pelham had no reaction to the Commission. The reaction of the Fonthill Village council, on the other hand, was the direct opposite to the position taken by Wainfleet. In its brief, the Fonthill council endorsed almost every suggestion made by Professor Mayo about regionalization of public services (adding a comment from the librarian about the state of the library which, in her mind, was inadequate.) The council also stated its position on the fruitlands in what was to be a long struggle with regional government. "The fruitlands should be maintained but not at the expense of the individual property owners, and should be entitled to subsidies from the higher levels of gov-

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[68] Wainfleet Council, "Submission to the Hon. J. W. Spooner, Minister of Municipal Affairs re Mayo Report," (Wainfleet, n.d.), p. 1.

[69] Wainfleet Council, p. 2.

ernment."[70] Council favoured a regional wide assessment of industrial and commercial property and, as services came available, it wanted Fonthill to expand and be developed. The only argument that the village council had with the Commission was the easterly boundary which excluded those houses which the town had recently annexed.[71] The children from these homes would be forced to ride buses whereas the town thought that Fonthill schools could easily provide space within walking distance. The council asked that the boundary be changed so that all people living close to the present built-up Fonthill community, and considering themselves 'in Fonthill' will be indeed residents of the Fonthill Borough."[72] (Council, in a last paragraph aside, noted that Fonthill, as it was centrally located, was an ideal location for the administrative headquarters of the new municipality).

The Pelham and District School Board also submitted a brief, and expressed more reservations than did the councils. It objected to the implication that school boundaries would be redrawn in such a manner as to reduce the student population of its three high schools. Students coming from Lincoln County would be transferred to schools in that

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[70] "Submission of the Council of the Village of Fonthill", found in Volume Five of the Niagara Local Government Review Commission (Toronto November 1966), p. 1 (of the submission).

[71] In 1959 Fonthill had added 4.732 acres from Pelham Township and .982 acres from Thorold Township, which lies to the east of the village. Niagara Data Book, p. 37.

[72] Fonthill Council Submission, p. 5.

Board's jurisdiction. This proposal was thought unfair because the school board had a reputation throughout the province for its 'progressive' school policies.[73] The public school board (Pelham Township School Board) also wrote to object to the new borough being named Fonthill rather than Pelham: "we request the retention of the name Pelham. Pelham Township was incorporated as a police village in 1915 and an incorporated village in 1924. Taking into consideration age, size, and population, we feel sure it is enough to warrant (that) the borough should be known as the Borough of Pelham."[74]

Summary

This impact study of the effect of regional government on Pelham has been divided into two preliminary steps. In chapters two and three, the history and the structure of the town and the activity and lifestyles of its citizens are analyzed to provide background detail as to the nature of community life in Pelham. In this chapter, the provincial position concerning the structure of local public policy making is explained to show what the officials intended to do (as expressed in speeches, documents and legislation) and why regional government was an attractive alternative. This information now sets the stage for interpreting and evaluating the impacts of these policies for Pelham citizens.

The assumption underlying provincial policies is that people have

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[73] Pelham and District School Board, "Submission to the Minister of Municipal Affairs," (Fenwick, n.d.), n.p.

[74] Pelham Township School Area, "Ontario, L.G.R. Commission, Niagara", (Fenwick, Nov. 29, 1966), p. 1.

little interest in local councils as democratic institutions other than their being elected. What most expect is the provision of services in the least expensive fashion and if they have a complaint, residents want to be heard. Regional government, from this perspective, does not represent a major shift in the structure of representative local government. It adds another level which has support in each of the participating communities through a system of direct and indirect representation. Complaints of aloofness or unresponsiveness were anticipated to be minor when compared to the appreciation which would be expressed once the efficient structure was operating. The benefit to the region would be threefold: (1) avoiding tax hikes which were eminent under the old system, (2) increasing co-operation among municipalities and (3) implementing an official plan. Ultimately, according to the intentions of the initiators, the concept of regional government would reinforce established lifestyles by diminishing the threats of urbanization and industrialization. Regionalization of government services might appear to be destructive on a short term basis but this should be expected and tolerated in a common effort to achieve long-range goals. While planning might also appear to be a radical departure from previous governmental approaches, the appeal by the government was that it was a conservative policy because planning promises to conserve all that local residents think is valuable about their community.

The people of Pelham calmly accepted the implementation of regional government. The most active politicians and administrators, regardless of how long they had lived in Pelham, were excited by the new municipal structure. The least politically active were apathetic or, if they

were long time residents, resented the intrusion into their communities by outsiders intent on reshaping their village life without their permission. In between, most citizens awaited regional government with neither anticipation for a better government nor antagonism. They hoped that it would work out--they had no reason to expect it would not--so why not stand back and let them try it their way. In all, Pelham was a town in which regional government would be given a fair chance. The verdict would be reserved until the municipality and the school board were observed in action.

Chapter V

Regional Government: The Impact on Pelham

Changes in the structures of local government have had an unfavourable effect on the town's political life which the citizens have noticed and have accepted with hesitation or with confusion. While none are as yet expressing open hostility, a majority of those interviewed are not enthusiastic about what has been happening. The complaints are twofold. First, the structure of local government, stressing as it does the notion of administrative efficiency rather than democracy,[1] has alienated some who think that the political authority held by local and regional administrators is destructive to their town. That is, the structure itself is alienating and antithetical to their idea of democratic politics. Secondly, many expressed hostility because of the character of the decisions being made, and the methods being used to develop and enforce these policies. Planning, in particular, is one sphere of activity which has antagonized Pelham citizens, not only because farmers are being restricted as to future uses of their land but also because residents think that the way in which the plan has been developed is antagonistic to the traditional and respected style of local politics. Other services such as policing, while not as central to the future of the town as is planning, reveal that the townspeople distrust

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[1] The concept of democracy, as it was used locally, can mean the dominance of council in policy matters, the citizen's access to municipal officials and/or the administration's (regional and local) responsiveness to citizen demands that they 'be taken into account' in policy matters.

those outside authorities who presently control the most significant activities related to municipal government. Although provincial officials had argued that a new political consensus would be attained, such is not the case in Pelham. If anything, council is less able to resolve major differences (such as the controversy over the construction of a new arena) than were the old councils.

The new politics, if such a phrase can be applied to the political style of public officials since 1970, has disrupted local politics because the technical structure, or 'technocracy', which defines what political activity will be successful, excludes more citizens than did previous local governments. More importantly, the citizens who were interviewed feel that they are being ignored more now than they were in the past. They no longer believe that the municipality is their own government, there to respond primarily to local demands. The meaning of this is that local government is outside their framework of community activity. If the notion of community incorporates participation (i.e, to belong to a community implies that a citizen is involved in communal activities directed, in part, at working out common problems), then the new structures of local government can be said to be adversely affecting the Pelham community. This chapter introduces a number of examples to show how this has happened, emphasizing that citizens are critical about both the way in which councils have structured their activity and the policies that have been formulated.

Pelham Council: Citizen Views of the New Institution

The question of how regional government has affected politics in Pelham can be investigated by examining how the municipality has struct-

ured its activities and how citizens, particularly those actively involved, have interpreted these changes.

Council meetings are organized in such a fashion as to exclude citizens from direct participation; that is, the decision making apparatus is designed to facilitate the needs of elected and appointed officials. This has not always been the case. In their reflections about the past, citizens made the general comment that the relationship between council and the townspeople had previously been based on familiarity, face to face contact, openness, public awareness of important decisions, accessibility, and informality.[2] This type of relationship was more often recalled by people living outside of Fonthill rather than inside the former village.[3] However, the council as it was operating in 1970-74 bore little resemblance to anything suggested about the operations of former councils under the old system. Firstly, it is now extremely rare for anyone to attend a council meeting out of curiosity or general interest. While this project was in progress, I regularly attended the twice monthly Monday council meetings and was consistently the only spectator except for one who was a new resident, a mechanic in his mid-twenties, living on the southern

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[2] The town reporter for the Tribune made a further distinction between the informal atmosphere of the Pelham Township council and the formal atmosphere in Fonthill. The council in Fonthill had begun to operate in a more businesslike fashion in the nineteen fifties.

[3] This can be explained partly by the fact that the rural people tend to be native sons and perhaps slightly older while those in Fonthill are younger and more likely to have moved to Fonthill even if it were more than twenty years ago. The new town council represented more of a change for the rural citizen of Pelham Township because he was dealing with a new group of officials as well as a set of foreign problems.

edge of town.[4] Typically a council meeting is attended by the mayor and the six aldermen (the rate of absenteeism, without cause such as attending to council business elsewhere, is quite low), the clerk-treasurer, the superintendent of public works, three experienced female reporters representing the Pelham Herald, the Welland Evening Tribune, and the St. Catherines Standard, two inexperienced male reporters from two local radio stations, including one in St. Catherines (partly owned by one of the aldermen) and one in Welland. The latter two reporters were usually young, lacking any knowledge about local politics and obviously bored by the performance of council. The new and spartan like council chamber is arranged so that the mayor faces the non-existent audience, while the two officials at his side face each other as do the councillors along a narrow table stretching lengthways away from the mayor. To the sides are the reporters, also always in the same seats, the women on one side, the men on the other. Twenty-five seats are available for interested citizens.

The council treats its meetings as theatre. Few aldermen are concerned that no other citizens show up, week after week. Councillors and officials are there to publicize and legitimize private decisions,

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[4] Before moving to Pelham in 1972, Wayne had owned land in another peninsula municipality. When he was about to begin building his own home, he found out that a building permit could not be issued as the land was being held for a possible roadway. Feeling quite 'burned' by his own negligence and official 'disregard for his rights', he was now committed to watching council closely so that nothing similar would happen in Pelham. He followed aldermanic activities as closely as one could at these sessions and quietly noted any promises which were not fulfilled. By September 1974, he had found other interests and began taking Monday night classes at a nearby college.

decisions made in council committee meetings or by the staff.[5] Council is therefore dependent on the media for transmitting its decision to the residents of Pelham and, consequently, the officials make sure that the reporters all receive copies of council minutes, committee reports, and other reports submitted to council.[6] The meeting is for the press to record and interpret for the people. There is no sense of drama nor are competing opinions expressed when reports are tabled at the open meeting. Most of the hour during which the council meeting is open to the public is consumed by the routine reviewing of correspondence, the tabling of committee reports, the following up of previously discussed business and the passing, without comment, of numerous financial accounts. This is followed by new business, a time in which councillors attempt to air individual constituent problems (garbage collection missed, 'enormous' potholes, etc.) as town wide, general crises which "council must deal with immediately". Aldermen frequently refer to 'numerous' complaints which, as far as can be determined, means some five or six telephone calls.

If an issue appears to be devisive or controversial, the mayor is quick to terminate public debate as he did on at least two significant occasions in 1973. In the first instance, a newly elected alderman, but one who had sat on a previous Fonthill council, accused the mayor of sel-

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[5] Interview with town official.

[6] Although all of the regular participants have ready access to these documents, no citizen sitting in on the meeting has similar copies so that the impression from the gallery is that of a closed club seriously contemplating a series of unintelligible reports and recommendations.

ecting council committees and committee chairmen in secret and in response to private lobbying by aldermen.[7] This protest, nervously read at the first January 1973 meeting, brought a hasty retort from the mayor that he was not about to discuss local gossip, so ending that issue. The second issue arose during the summer of 1973 as a result of quiet but steady discontent about the police service provided by regional government. This culminated in the council meeting with regional police officials to discuss policing; the mayor quickly dismissed the press from the council chambers, despite their protests, simply stating that he did not want them there. Both issues were widely reported in the media but drew no public protest from the townspeople.

The mayor and clerk are usually busy at the open council meetings, shuffling papers and preparing for the next item on the agenda, and they look bored, especially if an alderman slows down the flow of decisions by asking a series of questions. These questions are rarely of any importance, often raising matters of grammar and spelling in reports.[8] Another alderman, always aware of the media, was quick to assert, in a loud and abrupt fashion, the need for austerity and proper budgeting and was duly reported by the media people. The aldermen admitted to finding the meetings boring and uneventful; certainly, that was the impression they created on those Monday evenings. To them, the duties of aldermen are fulfilling

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[7] "Town Appointments Undemocratic," Pelham Herald, (January 23, 1973), p. 1.

[8] My fellow spectator pointed out that this was good as it indicated that this alderman who specialized in such questions was paying attention to the detail of the business at hand.

only inasmuch as "I'm able to help people."[9] The satisfaction that they receive from participating in local politics originates from this feeling that they are indeed helping other members of the community. Open council meetings are dull to them because they are essentially an act, the playing out of roles and arguments previously cast in committee. It has to be a serious clash on policy to force council members to re-debate matters in public. All agreed that important decisions are made during council committee meetings, while the Committee of the Whole, which follows immediately after the open council meeting, is designed to handle relatively routine business such as personnel policy, which council decides should be discussed privately. Each of the three committees has four aldermen, meaning that most issues have been discussed by a majority of aldermen before being presented to council. If it is approved in a committee, a policy usually receives the support of council. The aldermen enjoy the private sessions both among themselves and with invited citizens groups. "In a committee you can say what you want and ask all the stupid questions (you want) but wouldn't dare in public. It's more informal and you can try out some of your wild ideas. In private someone might pick up your idea and try to make something out of it. Because of this, committees are both more conflictive and more co-operative. The tossing of ideas from everyone makes it more conflictive but eventually the solution reflects a little of the ideas from each."[10] Another argued that citizens are more relaxed and straightforward when the media is not

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[9] Interview with Alderman Shields.

[10] Interview with Alderman Shields.

around "to jump on every word they said" and to report their demands sensationally."[11] No one feels the necessity to perform in the committees; they are not on stage as they are at council meetings.

Anyone wishing to discuss council policy with council is, after a written application is received, referred to one of the three (planning and development, finance, and public works) committees unless they demand to be heard in public in front of the entire council.[12] The draft committee reports are never read aloud verbatim at open council meetings so that someone sitting in the room without a copy has no idea of what is being discussed. For example, one alderman always began his verbal committee (planning) reports by saying "Well, there's really nothing to discuss, it's pretty straightforward." During the first year in which the council was observed, only four presentations were made directly to council. On one occasion, there was the presentation of a safe swimming poster campaign prize to a separate school student; on a second evening, a petition was presented by senior citizens in Fenwick asking that the council aid in their setting up their own drop-in centre (the matter was re-

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[11] Interview with Alderman Crick.

[12] During the course of this study, the researcher had reason to attend a meeting of the Planning and Development Committee (October, 1973). A phone call to the chairman was sufficient and no questions were raised. Interestingly enough, there was divergent opinion as to who could attend committee meetings with even the mayor unsure whether they were open to the public. According to the clerk-treasurer, who perhaps knows the town's by-laws better than anyone else, meetings are only open to those wishing to make a presentation and even they are requested to leave when finished (though they may sit and listen to other briefs). The tradition, according to the clerk, has been to hold committee meetings in private, as is the council's option in the Ontario Municipal Act. Although reports were not generally available, the council did respond to the request of the Environmentalists that Planning and Development reports be sent to the chairman.

ferred to committee); thirdly, a citizens' group submitted a brief advocating a controlled growth strategy in Pelham, and finally, there was a local real estate agent who came quickly to the following council meeting to reply to the 'no growth' brief. When the Environmentalists[13] presented their brief on the Draft Regional Plan on September 11, 1973, council gave some indication of its collective attitude towards citizen groups. Once two representatives of the eight-member delegation had made short speeches, Mayor Black thanked them, then immediately read a motion sponsored by two aldermen that the report be accepted and referred to the Committee on Planning and Development. This motion had passed without comment when one alderman, Douglas Beamer, chairman of this committee, decided to speak at length and not without bitterness about those who wished to block the sale of fruitlands after the farmers suffered for so long without support. The citizens' group was assured by the mayor that they would be invited to appear at a committee meeting but were given no opportunity to reply to Beamer's comments. The symbolic ceremony was over in less than fifteen minutes.

Even more revealing was the following meeting, September 25, 1973 during which a real estate broker stood up to speak about the environmental group's brief. Mr. Alsop, a former councillor in the village of Fonthill and the Town of Pelham, was anxious that the anti-development arguments of this group not be given much credence. His battle began publicly with a

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[13] The Environmental Action Group of the Pelham Conference on Community Concerns.

front page letter in the Herald during July 1973.[14] (The Herald had given the Environmentalists, from May until September, as much space as they wanted in order to publicize this perspective on local planning and the group had made extensive use of these opportunities;[15] consequently, their appearance at the council meeting had been given prominent media coverage.) Mr. Alsop, approaching council about the one-sided nature of this presentation, read a two page brief criticizing their proposals and questioning whether they represented more than a few people in the town.[16] The mayor quickly called Mr. Alsop to join them at the council table during his presentation, the first time that such an invitation had been observed. After the brief was read, discussion continued on for five minutes in a relaxed manner, without antagonism and without the abruptness which marked the previous presentation. Finally the mayor suggested that Mr. Alsop appear at the same meeting of the Planning and Development Committee as were the Environmentalists.[17] The different atmosphere was obvious, demonstrating the nervousness of councillors and officials in dealing with community organizations not fitting the mold of traditional local poli-

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[14] Donald Alsop, "Lack of Development causes Alarm, in Letter to Editor," Pelham Herald (July 3, 1973), p. 1.

[15] This weekly newspaper suffered from a lack of local news. It was my experience with citizen groups that any article submitted was published (usually on the first page) without any changes.

[16] Donald Alsop, a brief presented to Pelham Council, September 24, 1973, pp. 1-2.

[17] "Action Group Oppose Blind Growth," Pelham Herald (September 18, 1973), p. 1.

tics. Organizations, which in the past sought to influence councils, were typically ratepayers associations, which restricted their demands and strategies to more specific neighbourhood-type issues than the nebulous and difficult questions of growth and comprehensive planning raised by this new citizen group.

While referring briefs and petitions to council committee might be an effective way of utilizing council time, it does represent a substantially different routine from previous councils, where open meetings would sometimes carry on into the early hours of the morning. It is the rural aldermen who find the new system the most harmful to the local citizenry: "I think that it's (the lack of public acceptance for the new council) half the politicians' fault, I think it's half the council's fault, we've got away from the people. (In the) township days you didn't fiddle around with this business of sending a letter in, it's our own fault, we got in there a procedure by-law, this business of sending letters in. Ratepayers come in, sometimes they're hostile. Sometimes they're a family, most of the people had a problem, so they came in, they sat down and discussed with council. You had that direct, I always liked that, you had a direct contact with the ratepayer. Nine times out of ten you knew them and you knew them on a first name basis, but they came in and they discussed their problems and if you could help them fine, but if you couldn't maybe they went away a little disgruntled, but at least they knew why you couldn't. Now, shoot, we don't have enough delegations to shake a fist at, yeah, you make for a nice short council meeting, all kind of cozy and it's all well prepared and it gives the appearance of a nice smooth operation but, there are all kinds of ratepayers I talk to, I try to en-

courage them to come but nine times out of ten they get steered into a committee and they're sent away empty handed. They go away mad and then there's no satisfactory explanation (from council). They sort of give them the brush-off, they feel, and I've had some of them say that's the first time and the last time I'll ever go into that place. They're mad about it, it's wrong, we've gotten away from the local ratepayer and I think it's partly our own rules and procedure, I think they've got to be changed. I don't know if you can get council to agree to change it, that's the point, it's a false sort of efficiency syndrome they have, you know, getting things done quietly seems to be our great fault, it seems to be the way you do things. Yeah, do it quietly, do it quick and after it's done no one knew about it." He continued, in the same interview, "I think that comes back to our own rules of procedure (which) have a tendency to bar the public so you lose contact with the public and when you lose contact with the people you represent, you don't know what they're thinking, and so you go on your own and maybe you're going in a direction that the majority of people approve of, maybe you're so far wrong that it isn't even funny. You've lost contact, with I think, the people at the local level. The whole object of local government is to give local people the say in politics, and it's a long-standing problem. Yes, they'll go through the rigmarole, send in a letter, get it in by Tuesday, and then Friday it's put on the agenda, then the following Monday you go to council. Big deal! The most things (that) come up, come up kind of fast--a ditch plugs up, or somebody gets into trouble with a building permit, or something like that. Quite often these things will flare up fast and nine times out of ten it's a two or three week delay before they get any satis-

faction and by that time they're pretty well cheesed off. It either gets sloughed into a committee or else they just don't bother coming into council, send in a letter and going through all the red tape. It's very nice. Sure its nice for the members of council, they knew what's coming, the mayor and everyone can stack (the deck) and get all boned up. They have a real good answer and it's good for the politician, I suppose. It's a helluva way to serve the public."[18]

Given this style of decision making, it is not surprising to find that few citizens are involved in council. Council has structured its work so that others are excluded and so that the council controls the atmosphere in which discussion with other citizens in the community takes place. The citizenry is forced to rely on the mass media for coverage which, fortunately, is reasonably complete, except that reporters tend to concentrate on the sensational (which just does not happen too often). No councillor could recall any citizens calling them to find out what was going on in council; in fact, the question tended to surprise most councillors. Aldermen are contacted for their usefulness as ombudsmen, to fix sewers, roads, improve services or sort out which government is responsible where the constituent is confused.[19] Streamlining council procedure was a result of an increased workload within the new town to the extent that conversations and debates now have to be severely limited if

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[18] Interview with Alderman Beamer.

[19] Interview with Alderman Shields.

council is to get through its business in one evening.[20] Not so long ago, the councils met without even so much as an agenda to guide discussions and anyone sitting in the audience felt free to contribute his opinion. Under the new rules, delegations are required to name one or two representatives who alone are allowed to state the views of the delegation.[21] Committee sessions are intended to be more free-wheeling than the open meetings but, again, these sessions are shielded from public scrutiny.

Council is changed in one other significant fashion. Instead of being elected at large as previous councils were, the new one is based on a ward structure, three wards each having two representatives. Two wards are Fonthill centred, with one extending somewhat into the countryside, while the third is entirely rural. Both rural aldermen were disappointed in the ward system, believing that it has put them in a perpetual minority situation. Neither thought they had won a major vote since this council was formed in 1970. A third alderman, whose ward encompassed both Fonthill and long stretches of farmland, argued that the ward structure should be abandoned because it encourages sectional politics. His argument was that even though most politicians are willing to discuss questions of general interest to the community and recognize what policies serve that general interest, they are inclined to vote in a way which is reflective

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[20] Interview with Mayor Black.

[21] When a group of rural residents went to council in the spring of 1974 to present a six hundred name petition concerning the selected location of a proposed arena, only one of the eight was allowed to speak. The rest left the meeting muttering their anger and frustration at not being given the chance to participate.

of the demands of constituents in their own wards. Thus, it is his interpretation that local politics is not inherently selfish but is affected by the electoral system which encourages aldermen to take a myopic and selfish position in order to preserve their political strength. Although this antagonism is not always visible, he offered examples, such as road construction, where, even though one neighbourhood had an obvious need for improvement, he had to vote to ensure that his people were being looked after sufficiently.[22] Another alderman, whose business is located in downtown Fonthill, indicated that few persons with complaints have any idea which ward they live in or who is their proper representative. Instead they come to whoever they know best, personally or by reputation, or simply telephone around until they find someone at home.[23] This means that even when the aldermen are called upon to perform their important role as fixer or ombudsman, the association with a specific ward is not strong and perhaps only exists at election time.

At the same time, the rural representatives have argued that the oft mentioned urban rural cleavage is aggravated by the ward structure[24] and prevents a political and social consensus from developing.[25] The

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[22] Interview with Alderman Shields.

[23] Interview with Alderman Crick.

[24] Interview with Alderman Beamer.

[25] The town officials reject this argument as unrealistic. Their view is that, because there are so many voters living an urban lifestyle and asking for urban services, each alderman would attempt to represent this group around Fonthill, leaving the rural residents with no one actively and consistently seeking out their support. The ward system is a protection for the rural people.

concentration in the Fonthill area of large numbers of persons whose lifestyle is 'urban' in character, inasmuch as their housing, occupation, education and consumption patterns are much more in character with what is normally conceived of as urban, has produced a conception of local government which is different from those who live a more rural lifestyle. Those members who claim that they represent a distinct rural constituency are hostile to the service demands of those representing the Fonthill area.[26] This opposition, traditional Ontario conservatism, expressed over an array of policy decisions including planning, roads, policing, and land ownership. The ward system was originally designed by the former councils and their staffs in recognition that differences did exist which needed to be accommodated; however, by instituting social distinctions into political units the council has, in fact, reinforced this social distinction. Instead of rural and urban representatives getting along better, the fourth year of council had been one of increased conflict, a mood noted by three officials.[27]

In addition to their complaints about the 'unfair' ward structure, rural residents expressed some anxiety over the fact that in the process of their uniting with Fonthill, they suffered a loss of representation. Their reeve was defeated in the 1969 election by Fonthill's reeve while their clerk-treasurer, nearing retirement, was made assistant (and then he soon retired) to the new clerk treasurer, also from

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[26] Interview with Alderman Brown.

[27] Interview with Clerk Hunt, Aldermen Beamer and Brown.

Fonthill. In an immediate sense, then, it was apparent to the residents of Fenwick and Pelham Township that they suffered as a result of their most visible municipal officials being forced out and their new representatives being immediately reduced to a minority situation on the Pelham council. On the other hand, local government officials in Fonthill found themselves administering and controlling an area vastly more resourceful than the former village. Thus, the obvious urban-rural division on council is further aggravated by a rural 'loser's complex' derived from this integration with Fonthill; it is not only an urban versus rural perspective but also winner versus loser.[28] The anxiety about this change in political status was bound to express itself in the way council went about its business and the resultant arguments have been caused by more than personality or ward clashes. There are competing belief systems as to the role of council and the future of the town which are substantially antagonistic to each other. In this respect regional government is resented by those living in the old township area because it has changed the centre of power and the terms on which this power is exercised.

There has been no remarkable change in competition for local elected positions. Some positions were contested; for example, in the first election there was intense competition for every council position while in the second (December, 1972), the mayor and the two rural aldermen were acclaimed. Only one public meeting was held during the 1972

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[28] Interviews with Alderman Beamer and Mrs. H. T. Elliot.

election to give the candidates a chance to speak together to the townspeople. As the following description of that meeting indicates, campaigns are not central events in the local political life. About fifty citizens turned out, mostly couples, middle-aged or older, and a number of high school teachers, in the old town hall in Pelham Centre which could have easily seated one hundred and fifty. The Kinsmen-sponsored meeting quickly focussed in on the Pelham High School issue--the major battlefield of the municipal campaign. E. A. 'Bud' Ker, principal of Pelham Secondary School, was busily distributing a fact sheet showing how little the Niagara South Board of Education had spent in the town since 1969, but only one of the aldermanic candidates distributed anything at the meeting. It was generally felt that the lack of a mayoralty race dampened the usual enthusiasm for these elections.[29] As in the first election, no one expressed open hostility during the campaign about regional government, choosing instead, to emphasize accountability, fiscal responsibility, their expertise in such fields as planning, participation in other aspects of local life (Parks and Recreation Committee was considered prestigious), long time residency in the community, the appeal of village life, the benefits and imperatives of growth, openness and accessibility, and, above all, their practicality. The twelve candidates were, with two exceptions[30], male, middle income businessmen, industrial

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[29] A view expressed in every interview with local officials.

[30] The ultimate winner for the Board of Education seat and a defeated aldermanic candidate who was also the town reporter for the Welland Evening Tribune were both women.

managers or farmers and over thirty-five years old. As public speakers, they were nervous, awkward and obviously not enjoying this aspect of local politics. Voting, on a snowy December Monday, was below normal as about 2200 of 6700 eligible voters participated.[31] Two candidates were returned to office, the two others elected were both experienced in Fonthill politics, while Mardi Collins, the school board trustee candidate was the surprise victor, beating a long time incumbent (uninterrupted school board membership for twenty years) by one hundred votes.

Little interest is expressed between elections in council activity. Although several citizens commented that public interest is usually at its highest during council elections there was no indication that the people of Pelham were overly concerned about the 1972 election outcome. Given that the sudden burst of interest and participation around elections is thought to be the high mark for public concern about council's role in the community, the lack of enthusiasm, with the exception of the quiet but competitive race for the Board of Education, shows that council is not central to the concerns of the townspeople.[32]

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[31] "Election Results," Pelham Herald (December 5, 1972), p.1.

[32] The following complaint made immediately after the new council took office illustrates how town officials accept that council conducts its affairs with little 'interference'. Many councils within Regional Niagara hold an inaugural party, luncheon or dinner after councillors are sworn into office. The Pelham council held a simple ceremony one morning without any banquet or reception. One official is of the opinion that, for $400 or $500 the municipality could have put on a "nice affair" which the ratepayers would not mind, because they, the council, were no longer that 'visible', even though it was less than one month after election. They had already begun their two years of anonymous work. Interview with Clerk Hunt.

An Evaluation of the New Council

Council meetings are without interest to citizens for a number of reasons, including the fact that some of the most controversial decision areas affecting the townspeople, such as land use and taxes, two critical resources, are determined, for the most part, at the regional level. Because council's workload has increased, due to a greater number of people living in a larger area, and because greater detail is needed to fulfill its assigned responsibilities, council has structured its activities so that it proceeds in as orderly a fashion as possible. What this means is a shift in decision-making situations from the public and highly accessible council meeting to council committees, to governmental committees (regional-local) and to the staff acting independently with the knowledge of the mayor. Whether or not this is very different from previous councils is difficult to assess as local opinion is divided according to individual interpretations of the past. However, it does appear that former councils were more inclined to discuss issues in public. The increasing complexity of council work was having its effect by the late sixties so that by the time regional government was introduced, the proliferation of committees and the prolonging of council discussions were creating too great a load for the energies of both staff and elected members.[33] The regionalization of local government had presented an excellent opportunity for officials to streamline council procedures, to construct a more efficient and bureaucratic process for local decisions and administration, and to construct new rules of the game as soon as the municipality was formed.

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[33] Interview with Clerk Hunt.

The relationship between regional government and the people of Pelham is even more abstract and tenuous than that described between the local council and citizens. Unlike the cities in Regional Niagara which elect their own regional representatives independent of local council,[34] Pelham's mayor became the regional member ex officio. The local newspaper (the Herald) rarely reports the twice monthly regional council meetings. The mayor has never reported publicly on a regular basis about the activities of regional council and little is discussed about regional government at the open local council meeting. Few know how the mayor votes at Regional Niagara although he was chairman of one of the four committees, Public Works, during the 1973-74 Regional Council. Municipal officials interpret an indifferent public as justification for continuing policies which exclude public involvement in policy making. People, as an official with the Region patiently explained, are primarily concerned with earning a living and living a normal (i.e., non-political) life with their families. "They get involved when someone's big toe gets stepped on but even then they recognize that a council has been elected to make a decision and that is their responsibility. Along the way you have to make compromises between groups or between yourself as a politician and a group but this is politics. No one has a monopoly on the truth. When you get elected you expect to make tough decisions. People were never that interested in local councils. That is all a myth and don't forget that I've been involved for a long time."[35]

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[34] In addition to the mayor who sits on Regional Council ex officio.

[35] Interview with Regional Chairman John Campbell.

The Service Function

Regional government has been introduced primarily to organize the delivery of services on a more efficient scale than the province decided was possible within the old municipal system. The service function is structured so that public officials have the chance to plan their work over a time frame of several years. It is intended that local government should be changed along the lines of administrative reforms at senior level of governments.[36] However, in order to gain a more rational organization of the administrative machinery, officials decided to co-ordinate and centralize a number of services, and to ensure that the regional and local municipalities would not venture into capital expenditures unless they conformed to an explicit overall regional development plan. The reform of local government meant that administrative services, routine functions, public projects and land use controls would be drawn together into a new planning process. The description of Pelham's council is but one example of the effects that this has had. The following examples indicate that the provision of services, and the development of a land use plan, have been the most contentious problems of the new regional system. The argument is made that regional government has introduced new techniques of decision making which the people of Pelham are not convinced that they need nor are they sure that they are appropriate for their community. Yet services are the concrete and most visible manifestations of these new governments.

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[36] For instance, programme planning budgetary systems and cost-benefit analysis were commonly used within the federal and provincial governments by 1970 but rarely applied within municipal governments.

(a) Sewers

One idea which aptly describes how townspeople have in the past provided public services is 'getting by'. Nothing was approved or allowed to happen without a long fight unless the immediacy was obvious to all concerned. In the case of sewers, the residents of Fonthill began to discuss the need for a common sewage disposal system as far back as 1947; however, the idea was so unpopular that a councillor was defeated, partly he thought because he had advocated such a project.[37] Discussions began anew in the sixties only to have every general public meeting talk out the latest proposals. The opponents in Fonthill also had allies in the townships of Pelham and Thorold, none of which were overly enthused about the prospects of having an open lagoon in their backyard. In the meantime the village was growing steadily, filling in the limited open space which added more and, in some cases, too many private sewer systems per acre. In 1968, the city of Welland began to expand its own sewage disposal plants and Fonthill council sought to be included on a cost-sharing basis. The two municipalities were unable to come to an agreement as both were suspicious of the intentions of the other to fulfill any agreement. During its first year of operation, Regional Niagara imposed an agreement on Welland and Pelham whereby the designated residents in the Fonthill urban services area would be connected to the sewers which would in turn be connected to the Welland disposal system, on a cost sharing basis paid through the Town of Pelham. Only those living inside the urban service

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[37] Interview with J. Fletcher.

district paid for the sewers, although several others in the town were convinced that they, too, were paying for Fonthill.[38] The Region did not reduce the cost to the town but simply ensured a prompt construction programme by imposing its own priorities on the reticent municipalities. By applying this policy across the peninsula, substantial progress had been made by 1974 in bringing a reasonable pollution control system to each section of that area of the province.

(b) Policing

Policing is a service which traditionally was the centre of attention in a village like Fenwick where most people knew, or knew of, each other. Being caught for a traffic offence, or having one's children picked up for some juvenile crime, was an embarrassment as the whole community quickly learned of your wrongdoing. Fenwick had a life of its own apart from the laws and regulations designed in Toronto and Ottawa; a local constable could only be familiar with what was permissible if he were a part of the local culture, a permanent feature rather than someone driving a cruiser through the village. The controversy which has emerged over police service in Pelham illustrates, as much as any service area, the differences between what is considered 'good' service by regional officials and what is considered 'good' by the townspeople.

A policeman's work in a small village was mostly enforcing traffic regulations, liquor laws and protecting property from theft and vandalism.[39] The force which operated in Pelham Township consisted of five

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[38] Interview with Alderman Beamer.

[39] Interview with a police officer who had been assigned to Pelham at the outset of regional policing.

officers, who were usually native to the area. In the view of many, policemen knew which residents had to be sent home because they were on a one-night drunk but had never been into trouble before and probably never would be again. Officers used discretion in charging minor offenses, finding out, for instance, why they were speeding and under what conditions. Whether or not they were as fair and as impartial as some remembered these constables, is questionable. In any case it is obvious that their style was to be visible, conscious of their role as helper as well as enforcer, and to be aware of local mores and customs.[40]

Fonthill had been patrolled by the Ontario Provincial Police, under a contract system used by the provincial authorities to provide small settlements with adequate policing, subsidized by the province. The O.P.P. had assigned three officers with two cars to cover the village, which meant that the town was not patrolled between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. If an emergency arose, a citizen would contact a woman who knew which officer was last on duty--he took the car home with him--and would call him out of bed to answer the alarm. Again, as in the township and in Fenwick, these officers were spending a lot of time patrolling the streets on foot, a familiar and friendly figure of authority. The cost for both municipalities was in the neighbourhood of $56,000 in 1968, and $63,000 in 1969,

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[40] For example, the township and the village were, until 1973, legally 'dry' inasmuch as alcoholic beverages were not available without special banquet licences; yet, on a hot day, one could always find an off duty policeman in the Fenwick Lion's Club basement pulling a beer out of the 'soft drink' cooler.

not including extensive provincial subsidy.[41]

In 1971, local forces were taken over by the Regional Municipality of Niagara and immediately two problems arose which caused dissatisfaction about police work in Pelham. The idea of policing changed from the principles of familiarity and discretion to enforcement and prevention. No longer are officers inclined to look and see if they know the driver who is driving home in the middle of the night a little drunk--they would not know each other anyway--nor is he inclined to overlook someone not coming to a complete stop at an intersection as, after all, a stop sign is a stop sign no matter where it is located. No police office has been set up in Pelham; cars are dispatched from Welland or St. Catharines, where the major co-ordinating centres, equipped with large electronic boards indicating the location of every cruiser, available or engaged in the region, are located. The system is oriented towards crime prevention in the industrial centres. The Town of Pelham was promised that a policeman would be within the municipal boundaries at all times and frequent radar surveillance would be implemented on busy roadways.

Several complaints have been aired about the quality of service despite an obvious technical improvement.[42] Yet the regional police force

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[41] Figures made available from the Town of Pelham, April 1973. The regionalization of police forces was delayed a year after the implementation of regional government so, for the transition period, a town police force was put together consisting of a chief, a sergeant and three officers with two cars.

[42] For instance, a false alarm at the bank of Fenwick in 1972 produced five police cars within minutes and the town is now patrolled twenty-four hours each day, a service it never had before.

did not have its policemen interacting as fellow citizens. They were not walking around the villages exchanging pleasantries with people they met on the street. With the introduction of regional police, all officers were required to change municipalities, thereby quickly establishing (it was hoped) a uniform anonymity (and, therefore, impartial application of the law); however, few citizens then knew who was patrolling in Pelham. In many small matters, such as problems of speeding, due either to gravel trucks travelling through Fonthill or to improved residential streets, the police department had not responded quickly enough to satisfy local demands for better traffic control.

The second source of complaints with the policing has been the cost for Pelham. The withdrawing of direct provincial support through the O.P.P. has greatly increased Pelham's costs and, in addition, the type of policing thought to be necessary for the peninsula is different and more expensive than what is needed for Pelham alone, both in the rural areas and in Fonthill. One of the dissident rural aldermen gave his opinion of the new police service: "it was more personalized, and (while) I think our four or five guys would be lost in the case of a riot, why I imagine the regional police could control it because riots have never broken out, and the trouble is there isn't too many riots out here (laugh). They've got a lot of sophisticated equipment that they use now and then, yes, but as far as the rural area is concerned, I don't suppose they will ever use it."[43] Or, as another rural resident expressed his discontent, "we really

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[43] Interview with Alderman Beamer.

don't need a flying squad of Lieutenant Columbo's in Pelham."[44] The cost in 1971 for policing was $137,000, in 1972, $173,000 and in 1973 approximately $196,000, considerably more expensive than the pre-regional government service.[45]

Although there were dissident opinions about the new police system almost as soon as it began, little was done by officials who dismissed complaints as 'adjustment' problems which would gradually be overcome.[46] By early 1973, the opposition was growing, not disappearing. For example, citizens who wanted the Fonthill recreation park patrolled occasionally by the police were originally told by regional police to hire their own security force. When the issue arose again in the spring of 1973, the mayor was quick to inform council that the proper channel was through council and that he would take care of this problem. This was a concession on his part for, earlier, he had dismissed the police issue as symbolic, being taken out of perspective. By May, when council had an opportunity to present a brief to an Ontario government commission studying policing in the province, the staff wrote a report indicating its dissatisfaction with regional costs and servicing. The brief read in part, that "Council of

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[44] Interview with Frank Pratten.

[45] The cost to Regional Niagara has been cushioned by the provincial government with significant extraordinary grants so that the real cost is difficult to determine. It should be noted that the figures for Pelham are not as dramatic as they appear. The cost to Pelham had traditionally been kept at an artificial low by the provincial government. The increased cost reflects a 'better' level of service and a shift to the local property tax for a bigger share of the tax burden.

[46] Interview with Mayor Black.

Pelham is very alarmed about the increase in cost and the general lack of public relations within the Town of Pelham respecting the Regional Police Force. In fact, Council is of the opinion that policing within the boundaries of the Town of Pelham has deteriorated to what was previously provided by a local force. In our area, Region appears to have a lack of public enthusiasm over the efficiencies of policing within the Region and it is not uncommon to see a daily article in the letters to the editor section of the paper respecting policing." The officials questioned the fairness of using the property tax as the primary tax base: "When the Regional Police Force was developed it was indicated that a more urban level of service would be provided; however, this is not necessarily needed or wanted in the smaller less populated municipalities. In (this) case . . . we have large rural areas coupled with pockets of high density . . . it would be approximately 6,000 ratepayers who should receive a higher level of service than the rural area."[47] This was accepted by council though not unanimously. In the summer of 1973, council finally had a private meeting with police officials to resolve some of the complaints including speed surveillance and street patrolling on foot (begun in the spring) in the hope that the majority of citizens would be satisfied by these measures. The foot patrol is likely to be the more important accommodation, as it marks a concession to the traditional com-

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[47] The Corporation of the Town of Pelham, "Brief to the Task Force on Policing in Ontario", pp. 1 - 2, not dated but presented to the Task Force in May, 1973.

munity value of familiarity[48] and can be reinforced by fewer rotations of staff.[49]

(c) Roads

The state of Pelham roads is a topic every politician would like to avoid while every citizen would like to speak about it for hours. The condition of many roads is inadequate but why this is so and what citizens want to do about them is somewhat revealing about Pelham and the difficulties in creating a political consensus in a new town.

Major roads have traditionally been the responsibility of the county so that if these roads needed upgrading, paving and regular maintenance, this service had been supervised and paid for out of county (which, of course, the township and the village paid into) and provincial funds.[50] The two municipalities, however, had different attitudes toward their own road system. Fonthill had surfaced roads, mostly because it had concentrated residential development, a relatively few number of streets and an electorate which wanted its streets kept up, but, as the

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[48] This writer, while studying in England in the summer of 1973, noted a similar issue there where the regionalization of police forces caused anxiety in smaller settlements. Some authorities had decided to get the officers out of their autos and back on foot patrol for part of their work day.

[49] On the other hand, speeding was causing such frustration among young Fonthill families who feared for their children on formerly quiet residential streets that in some sections, parents are seen yelling at fast moving cars and have threatened to start throwing rotten produce if the police do not step up radar traps.

[50] Highway #20, Canboro Road, Webber Road, and South Pelham Street are examples of township roads being adequately kept up by other authorities.

roadways were not designed for intense traffic, they ultimately collapsed under the heavy traffic generated by developers. The township, on the other hand, had few streets which led anywhere in particular except to join farms and houses on strip developments. The streets in Fenwick were surfaced but few in the township were. Depending on who one spoke with, the township either kept up its repair work or was negligent.[51] Although the least expensive material was used (sand not gravel), the township did own a grader and other machinery for road work. In any case, the farmers felt that they were able to get by with the level of maintenance offered by the township, perhaps because no one road was used too frequently.

By the time that the new town assumed responsibility for the roads, several began to decline in their usefulness. This was due to several factors, including increased use from residential building in Fonthill and in the township, the increased regular vehicular traffic following completion of house building (such as increased school bus traffic as a result of the bussing policies of the Niagara South Board of Education), a decrease in provincial grants as road construction was no longer a priority at that level and a thin local road budget not capable of supporting immediate or extensive rebuilding. Because the sudden demand for improved road conditions can not be handled by the Town of Pelham, the council has generated some hostility, especially among the more frustrated rural citizens.[52] Roads are their lifeline so that if they

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[51] Interviews with Clerk Hunt and Alderman Beamer.

[52] Interview with Alderman Shields.

cannot get out during the spring because of potholes and flooding and so forth, they complain bitterly to their representatives.[53] One alderman, whose ward is both rural and urban, remarked that while 65 per cent of the people in his ward are urban, 90 per cent of complaints are from the rural people, almost entirely about roads.[54] The Region has not helped out much. Like other centres, Pelham has been fitted into a long range road building scheme and it is difficult to obtain relief for short term crisis such as the one Pelham council thinks it is experiencing. The province also has not been sympathetic to these demands and has turned down repeated requests by officials for additional funds.

An unresolved issue such as this has hurt the status of the new town and regional councils. The failure to solve a service problem, as obvious to everyone as the roads are, has damaged the credibility of this new structure of government designed particularly to overcome the pitfalls, which reformers have attributed to the old style of politics. Officials try to dismiss poor roads as a seasonal problem or one which occurred every seven years or so ("it's just that few have been around here long enough to remember it")[55] but the problem remains. There are certainly reasonable explanations for this, such as a lack of outside financial support, but citizens are anxious that someone accept the responsibility and recognize the road programme as a failure.

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[53] Interview with Alderman Brown.

[54] Interview with Alderman Shields.

[55] Interview with Clerk Hunt.

(d) Recreation

One other service, the building of an enclosed arena, further illustrates the difficulty the council is having in resolving conflicts between groups in Pelham. A study group, working at first with the Parks and Recreation Committee and later with council, had been working for two years (1971-73) on a project which might become the new family centre of the town. The council was at first very reticent to commit itself, but the political pressure was sufficient that it finally agreed that the arena should be supported by public funds. Once there was agreement that a recreation centre (it was really no more than a covered ice surface) should be built, a decision had to be made as to where to build. The advisory committee, after considering many sites, chose the municipal square, an undeveloped area beside the municipal offices, in downtown Fonthill and next to a proposed shopping centre. The advantage to the municipality would be the saving of several thousands of dollars, because the land was already publicly owned; however, the announcement created political chaos during the spring of 1974. A group of architects, living in the Effingham Short Hills, objected to the site because of its development implications and because of the lack of aesthetics in such a building. The mayor dismissed them in public because "they were not paying business taxes." The Environmentalists objected for many of the same reasons, arguing that a shopping centre and an arena had little in common. Meanwhile service organizations such as the Fonthill Lions Club announced their support in the form of financial pledges, petitions and the organization of a walkathon.

These campaigns were mild compared to the reaction of the rural

residents, who interpreted the choosing of the Fonthill site another decision discriminating against them. Some even argued that those who wanted the arena should organize work parties, raffles, fund raising drives, etc., as had happened in neighbouring Wainfleet, and build the arena out of volunteer commitments. The rural citizens organized a petition and presented it to council only to be received in the most formal and polite manner. When council decided to go ahead with its decision to build, one of the aldermen, Doug Beamer, filed an objection with the Ontario Municipal Board to block its construction.[56] This means that two of the council's major decisions, the arena and the official plan, were not settled locally and, because of this lack of political consensus, citizens have twice needed to ask a central authority to intervene and settle the dispute.

Planning

The most crucial activity undertaken by the new Region and Town has been the development of an official land use plan for the area. Planning, because it involves intensive negotiations between local, regional and provincial officials and, because citizens are also participating, is a sphere of activity which offers an ideal opportunity to learn about the impact that regional politics has had for Pelham citizens. Regional government was introduced into the Niagara Peninsula in order to change

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[56] After the field work in Pelham was completed, the O.M.B. began hearings on the arena. So much evidence was presented in August, 1974, that another session was held in October. Immediately after the second session, the O.M.B. declined to accept the council's application for the arena, mostly on the grounds of costs.

the substance of the policy outcomes of the former municipalities and counties. This would be most effectively achieved, it was thought, by changing the political structure, by shifting local boundaries around cities, by eliminating the smallest of municipalities, by changing the relationship between municipalities and by introducing a new superstructure, the Regional Municipality of Niagara. The new structure would have new priorities, most obviously indicated by a new division of labour between the two tiers of local government and would, as an overall strategy, be guided by the implementation of a strong and comprehensive planning process. Planning had too often been avoided in the older municipalities, as it was considered as an arbitrary and foreign style of politics with which few participants felt comfortable. Regional government, on the other hand, is designed on the principles of the comprehensive planning concept and can only succeed if its service function is guided by an acceptable official plan. A plan is no longer an adjunct to policy making, but assumes a dominant position as the central document determining allocation of funds, services and personnel. In elevating the planning function to this level of significance, provincial officials have introduced a new concept of government, one which will succeed only inasmuch as its planners and politicians are able to develop an acceptable official plan. Initiated and directed by Regional Niagara, the plan represents the first concrete and widely recognized intervention of regional government into Pelham's political life. For some citizens it is a welcomed protection against development, while for others it is a needless restriction, but for both groups the planning process has been a bewildering experience.

Previous to regional government, few local municipalities had developed their own land use plans. Most had zoning by-laws that in a limited way sought to control land use patterns which were increasingly developing conflicting patterns. The end result of this haphazard process is strip development in the rural areas and the stringing out of individual homes and small businesses along highways and back roads with no consideration to filling in the open spaces, nor the possible future costs due to an increase in the demand for public services. After a few years of unorganized growth, townships find their costs rising because of inadequate roads, long school bus routes, more schools and a series of other service demands. If the development happens to be over-crowded or situated on poor soil, there might be a need for water and sewage systems, a costly adventure under the best circumstances. Pelham Township was finding itself in such a position in the nineteen sixties. Since the mid-sixties the provincial government had stepped in to stop most building permits, even appealing severance decisions, until the township instituted proper planning procedures. In Fonthill, residential development has been more orderly, perhaps simply because of the smaller land space. The village was in the midst of adopting an official plan when regional government came into effect. Even in the village, however, there were problems because of poorly controlled development schemes.[57]

The Town and Regional Draft Plans: a contrast in goals

At a glance, one can pick out a number of differences between the

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[57] For example, the tightly built subdivisions did not allow sufficient room for each homeowner to operate a septic system of his own; hence, increased building precipitated a crisis whereby sewers had to be installed.

town's original Official Plan and the proposals for Pelham found in the Regional Draft Official Plan. The underlying assumptions of the two planning bodies called for substantially different futures for the town. The Pelham councils' position was based on (1) an expected decline in agriculture, based on a past continuous decline in the rural farming population and in acreage used for farming, (2) a belief that those holding land which was no longer profitable for farming should be able to divide and sell (at a profit) for more intensive residential use, (3) a belief that residential growth in Fonthill should be encouraged in order to pay for urban type services already available or being installed, but expensive to operate with the existing small population, (4) a concept of public space which minimized the amount of public land put aside by government for protection and non-development on a firm long range basis, and (5) a concept of the future which encouraged a number of different land uses in order to diversify the town and maximize revenue from property tax. The Regional plan, on the other hand, was based on a different set of assumptions: (1) the farming industry was healthy and, where it was not healthy, definite federal and provincial government action would be recommended so that farming might be maintained and encouraged to grow. One aim of the plan would be to protect the farmer from development, to keep the price of farmland low so that new farmers would be able to get started; (2) building homes in rural areas was poor use of scarce land, an ultimate strain on municipal services and a potential sewage pollution problem; (3) the Town of Pelham was rich in valuable ecological growths and formations which would be destroyed if not specifically protected by planning regulations and (4) the town should be content to grow

mainly as a residential centre, not as a miniature city with competing industrial, commercial, and residential land uses. How were these conflicts to be resolved?

The Town Plan

The Village of Fonthill made its first effort at planning in 1959 with a proposed official plan which never went beyond the discussion stage.[58] In 1967 the Welland Planning Area, including both the township and the village, introduced to the public its official plan allowing for very low density and high population growth in the Pelham area (extensive rural residential growth). This plan, like the first, never became the official policy of any government. When Regional Niagara began operation in 1970, the village of Fonthill had a zoning by-law, comprehensive in scope but hindered by an accumulated mixture of commercial and residential land uses, while the township had only a planning by-law covering development adjacent to Fonthill, leaving the remaining township land open to the whims of individual land owners. Both municipalities had, however, subdivision control by-laws.[59]

The first draft of the town's official plan was prepared and presented by a firm of Toronto planning specialists (Procter, Redfern, Bousfield and Bacon) in May, 1970. The purpose of the plan was to map out the policy of the municipality toward growth and development in order "to con-

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[58] The plan was weak, dealing only with land use, parks and schools, avoiding the more demanding issues of public works, the provision of sewers, roads, garbage disposal in an organized and efficient development scheme.

[59] Based on a summary of planning in the Pelham area in the Town of Pelham, Official Plan prepared by Procter, Redfern, Bousfield, and Bacon Consulting Engineers and Planners, (Toronto, May, 1970), p. 45.

tribute toward an attractive environment by organizing the pattern of land use and the provision of public works and the aspects of development that are related to these. In doing this, the Plan is a deliberate attempt to reduce the element of speculation arising from uncertainties as to the manner and sequence of development."[60]

The argument put forward by the planners for the adoption of this version of the official plan was that, if planning was implemented, at that time, the town would be better able to judge what services would be needed in the immediate and distant future. The challenge to Pelham, according to the planners, was to handle 'the pressures of urbanization' that the town was about to be subjected to because of growth in the industrial centres, particularly Welland, and the attractiveness (topography and amenable living conditions) of Pelham, especially Fonthill, for residential development. "To accomodate these pressures will be one of the most challenging links of the new administration . . . curbing and directing growth to make it less expensive to service."[61]

Unlike the Regional Plan which later would be used to draw up a twenty year, or long range, strategy for the Region, the Town of Pelham was operating within a five year, or short term, perspective. Assuming a population growth of two to three thousand persons, the planners proceeded to organize growth around Fonthill, yet allowing widespread rural residential development to continue. Rural residential growth has been welcomed by most municipal officials, including those in Pelham, for it provides

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[60] Ibid., p. 1

[61] Ibid., p. 3.

assessment in the old township area; however, recent calculations by provincial officials had led both planning consultants and municipal authorities to question the overall benefit of this pattern of settlement.[62] The argument against extensive rural development is that those people who move into rural areas are more often than not from an urban environment, taking for granted public services such as sewers, water supply, quick snow removal, garbage collection, paved roads and even street numbers, all of which traditionally had not been available in the township.[63] Because several residences have been built and occupied in the countryside, the municipality has been faced with a constant demand for costly improvements in public services. The assessment never fully pays the cost of servicing yet municipal officials are always hoping to catch up, to one day bring in more income than expenditures. The obstacles to changing the policy of land development in the rural section have been the landowners' waiting for the opportunity to develop and a laissez-faire attitude which dominated former councils. The planners hired by the town chose to allow for maximum opportunities to build in the rural areas but suggested controls which might in the long run minimize public expenditure. Even though council would set minimum lot size[64] and institute subdivision controls

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[62] These views were expressed in the interviews by local councillors and in council, such as at the October 29, 1973, meeting of the Planning and Development Committee. Most of the aldermen did not know whether to believe this new interpretation of the cost of growth.

[63] Interview with Clerk Hunt.

[64] Ranging from two acres to ten acres, although around the villages of Fenwick, North Pelham and Pelham Centre it could have been as small as 15,000 square feet.

over the division of two or more lots, landowners would still be able to sell their land (alleviating that political problem) while the town would have some effective control over the total number of lots available (alleviating another political problem, that of maintaining low taxes and a little open space).[65]

The future pattern of development was gradually being clarified by the council. The greatest population growth would be concentrated around Fonthill by providing public services to undeveloped land and allowing builders to divide their land into subdivision size lots. Growth would be restricted somewhat in other areas: Fenwick's populations would be limited to 1,000, and North Pelham and Pelham Centre each to 500. If, at a future date, the municipality would like to expand these villages, council would need to make a number of decisions about public services and the costs involved in such an extension. The rural area would continue to be dominated by farming, although housing development by individuals would not be hampered by many municipal regulations.[66]

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[65] In the town's original official plan, rural residential development was permitted in the centre of the town; that is, the farmland (mostly tender fruit and market farms still in production) between Fonthill and Fenwick, on both sides of Camboro Road, and north as far as North Pelham would gradually be lost as it was transformed into residential lots, albeit large ones. Land north of this and to the west and east was designated green or open space. The small grouping of industries along Weber Road, not far from the Welland Airport, would be the nucleus of an expanded industrial park, while another industrial area would be set up east of Fonthill along highway #20 and serviced by an existing railroad siding.

[66] The planners recommended that four of the seven public elementary schools be closed, as part of the centralization of public services, but decided that both secondary schools were needed. Ironically, the Niagara South Board of Education decided to close one of the secondary schools but improved Fonthill Public School, one of the schools recommended for closure.

Transportation, although not a major problem in the drawing up of Pelham's plan, has been worrisome inasmuch as a major highway is planned for vehicles pressing through the town.[67] Citizens, anxious to protect their own residential area, effectively stopped any decision from being carried out though the planners are still committed to some improvement to traffic congestion. Downtown merchants and centrally located villagers are convinced that the old core is threatened by the heavy and quick moving vehicular traffic travelling on Highway #20 and South Pelham Street. Other groups, while perhaps grudgingly acknowledging that the traffic in the downtown area is destroying the traditional quiet of the village, are adamant that their own tranquility is not about to be sacrificed to correct that situation. The planning consultants, in a very restrained manner, noted that the by-pass could not be avoided although the council must be sure that it appreciated the disruptive nature of such a change. As the planners hinted, a new highway corridor does not simply disturb a neighbourhood or disrupt a pleasant environment; it can, if it is a major route, generate development much more quickly than indicated in the official plan. The building of the by-pass might resolve one service problem (through transportation) but would create a number of others equally difficult to resolve.

Although the town council quickly adopted the proposals of Procter and Redfern as their Official Plan, it was not until four years later, May 23, 1974, that the Official Plan was approved by the Ontario government.

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[67] The provincial transportation planners were, in 1970-71, proposing new route to by-pass Fonthill's business district by re-routing highway #20 either to the north or to the south.

The provincial government refused to approve the original Official Plan because of the extensive rural residential development permitted and in particular the small rural lots. Pelham's plan, the first submitted to the Regional Council by an area municipality, was also denied acceptance at this level for most of the same reasons inasmuch as regional planners argued that the Town of Pelham was permitting too much housing development in the rural areas, a process which Regional Niagara was anxious to control to the point of eliminating.

The Regional Planners

The primary mandate of the Regional Municipality of Niagara is to see that an official plan is developed for the entire region and accepted by the provincial government.[68] Unlike the Pelham official plan which was originally drawn up without the participation of local citizens, the consultants hired by the Region designed their strategy to include public participation and private consultation, and then repeated these same steps, after the first draft had been released, to see if a consensus could be found as to what was most acceptable locally and to the provincial authorities. The Region's planning officials originally intended that their plan would be more comprehensive than former local efforts and were quite willing to interfere with traditional politics in order to impose new priorities and policies concerning land uses. For example, whereas the rural spokesmen in Pelham were of the opinion that farmland was not sacred and should not be subjected to undue controls,[69] the regional planners were

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[68] Interview with John Campbell.

[69] Interview with Alderman Beamer and Frank Pratten.

assuming a scarcity in such resources that should be managed carefully by public regulations.[70]

Successful planning requires that government officials resolve the two separate problems of public participation and compatible land uses.[71] The former problem is now recognized by regional and provincial planners as significantly affecting the eventual outcome of the actual plan so that most large planning units, such as Regional Niagara, incorporated specific stages in which citizen demands were taken into account. Public meetings were held, planners expressed concern for the public's viewpoints and everyone was urged to speak out or submit a brief. The provincial government supports a more participatory process by supplying literature and staff to facilitate the development of citizens' groups, and by judging a planning submission in part on its input from citizens in the area.

The most sensitive task, according to the regional director of planning, is evaluating the comments of citizens and incorporating them into the plan. The planners recognize, as a professional value, that their responsibility includes a protection of the public interest which they ultimately try to crystalize for the community.[72] The question is not who speaks for the people; in many areas, there were many claiming to speak for interests in the community. The question in the minds of many

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[70] Interview with A. Greaves.

[71] Interview with A. Greaves.

[72] Interview with A. Greaves. For example, the Niagara Escarpment Act, which is designed to 'freeze' large tracts of farm and rural lands in the public interest came as no surprise to the regional planners (although it did surprise people in Pelham) because this had been discussed at length with provincial bureaucrats.

planners is who speaks for those who are not yet born. "(T)he need for a long time horizon continues to exist . . . In fact, there is only one body in government who can afford to take a longer view: the technocrats. Protected by their civil service status and committed to their 'professional standards', they can and do think in terms of the long-range and city (or metro) wide 'public interest'--as they see it."[73] The regional planning department had recognized that there were 'obvious' problems in the region which needed to be resolved and from there began to develop and modify a plan according to reactions expressed in public and in private. The process was accessible to active Pelham citizens but the townspeople did not portray it as a 'wide open ball game' as was argued by most Regional politicians and planners, both in public and in private.[74] This is an inaccurate and unfair description as it promises to accommodate all who make representation. This is impossible for, in the apt description of a Pelham official, "a plan is meant to hurt some people."[75] The question is who is to be hurt.

Regional Planning Proposals

The goals for the region were first suggested by the planners and politicians most closely associated with Regional Niagara, despite

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[73] Hans Blumenfeld, "Bureaucracy, and the Long View," in Alan Powell (ed.), The City: Attacking Modern Myths (Toronto, 1972), p. 220.

[74] Interviews with A. Greaves, J. Campbell, and a public comment by R. Bell, a regional councillor.

[75] Interview with Town official, April 1973.

the protest of planners that these goals originated with the people.[76] Given the general and rather vague goals expressed in that document, what were the real concerns of the planners? In another document, it was suggested that concerned citizens might ask themselves the following questions:

" 1. Do we protect the fruit lands from further urban growth?
2. Do we provide more public lands along the lake shores?
3. Do we prevent development along the Niagara Escarpment?
4. Do we halt growth of existing urban area?
5. Do we build new expressways?
6. Do we establish new regional methods of transportation?
7. Do we preserve historic buildings and areas?
8. Do we preserve areas of special scientific historic or geographic interest?
9. Do we establish new recreation areas?
10. Do we control the size, location and numbers of commercial developments?
11. Do we encourage industrial and economic development?
12. Do we encourage tourism developments?" [77]

In order to clarify the service needs of the Niagara region, the planners investigated the trends and problems in each area of regional re-

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[76] Regional Municipality of Niagara, Regional Niagara Official Plan, Working Draft Prepared by Philips Planning Engineering Ltd. (St. Catharines, 1972), p. 1-3.

The general purposes of the plan were noted in the introduction of the 'Working Draft' submitted to Regional Council, November, 1972: "The essential characteristics of the plan are that it should be:-

- comprehensive and deal with those matters bearing on all Regional concerns
- long range, i.e. approximately twenty years
- general rather than oriented to details of local concern
- development oriented
- based on agreed Regional goals that embrace economic, social and environmental factors
- an action-oriented policy instrument which provides a regional approach to the problems and issues of the Regional Area."

[77] Regional Municipality of Niagara, "What Can I Do", a document circulated at public meetings during 1973. (n.p., n.d.), n.p.

sponsibility that were of 'regional concern'.[78] Goals were then formed, based on a professional interpretation of this data, and articulated in order to "guide the research necessary and to enable the formulation of more detailed objectives and standards which are then used to formulate and evaluate alternate development concepts for the Region."[79] The more specific goals of the preliminary plan were not intended to be firm but would change and evolve as the Region reacted to changing trends in local development.[80] These specific goals and strategies eventually surfaced from in-depth studies of the physical and economic bases, existing land use patterns, and the planners' projections of urban residential and industrial requirements until 1991. The development of serviced areas was singled out as the major governmental weapon to control and direct new development, especially where good farmland was endangered. Studies concerned about the benefits of future developments would take into account the usefulness of the land and the viability of each segment of the ag-

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[78] Including industrial and economic development, air and water pollution, preservation of cultural and historic features, provincial highways and public transportation systems, provision of various community facilities, development and use of shorelines and rivers, preservation of the Niagara Escarpment, the Welland Canal, parks and recreation facilities, tourism, public housing and urban renewal. Regional Niagara, 'Working Draft', p. 1-2.

[79] Ibid., p. 1-6.

[80] The goals of the plan are stated in a summary of regional objectives distributed to citizens to aid in their participation, although some, such as the achieving of "a level of Regional public service which adequately meets the needs of the Region", are discreetly deleted. Ibid., p. 1-6.

riculture industry, a significant change from past policies.[81] The Niagara planning problem, as defined by the professionals, was to balance the demands of organized interests for land, keeping in mind some conception of the public interest, the value of which was never clear, nor agreed to by many participants.[82]

The planners have assumed that growth in the Niagara Region will be most affected by developments outside the area, such as the expansion of the Hamilton-Toronto industrial complex, the demand for better transportation systems from those centres to the United States through the peninsula, and the planning of a large new public-private energy-industrial-residential complex at Nanticoke on Lake Erie, south west of the Region. The economic base within Niagara is analyzed as being weak inasmuch as local industries will probably have lower than average (provincial) growth rates, while the locational attraction, once a prime factor in industrial location decisions, has now diminished in importance, [83] re-

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[81] This was necessary, if for no other reason than farmers have traditionally been a major political, economic and cultural influence in the region. The major competitors for space are (1) the urban developers including municipal officials, landowners, builders, real estate agents and local businessmen, all demanding a maximum of available serviced land, (2) the environmentalists, mostly urban dwellers, who are increasingly articulating demands for open space and public accessibility, and (3) the farmers who are divided, often according to age, location and type of farming, (according to Mr. Greaves) between selling their land at a comfortable profit and maintaining the agricultural industry. Generally, according to Frank Pratten and Doug Beamer, the Pelham farmer wants the freedom to decide this himself.

[82] Interview with A. Greaves.

[83] Ibid., pp. 1-10.

moving the strongest traditional selling point for developers. Any new development will be a result of natural growth of the population, attracted to the area due to factors such as its scenic qualities or its good climate. Land will be needed more for residential development than for industrial purposes.

With this set of assumptions for priority development the planners refined their proposals to three distinct goals: the separate City Concept, the New Highway Corridor Concept and the Trends Concept.[84] The Separate Cities Concept would enable each municipality to retain its own 'identity' and 'character' by imposing a greenbelt between its residential sprawl and that of a neighbouring municipality. The New Highway Concept indicated in an offhand and vague manner that land would be required in the next twenty years to build multi-lane, high speed roadways across the peninsula to connect the industrialized centres of Southern Ontario with the northern United States. The thorn in the side of the planners, what to do with farmland, was to be resolved by the 'Special Rural Areas' designation to protect the physical base of agriculture, to provide a buffer between large urban areas. Each municipality would be assigned acreage for commercial, industrial and residential land use according to its predicted (controlled) 1991 population.[85] Finally, the Region was

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[84] Ibid., pp. 1-16. Together these were known as the Refined Long Range Concept.

[85] To accommodate those goals, the planners decided that it would be necessary to plan for a population of 500,000 and to move the centres of growth from below the escarpment to above, along the Pelham--Thorold--Welland--Niagara Falls axis, an east west development corridor delineated by the new highway. This, of course, means that Pelham will grow quickly as a residential centre.

dependent on the provincial government planning in accordance with these goals and the 'co-operation' of local municipalities to settle any conflicts in land use arrangements.

Few spheres of local life were missed as the planners sought to articulate as many goals as possibly could be accommodated in the plan. Several policy assertions indicated the direction that interested the planners but citizens had to contend with the lack of specificity in trying to understand the total impact of what the planners were saying. Only occasionally in the preliminary reports were specific sites in a town openly mentioned. Land allocations were placed on maps which the non-professional citizens were expected to interpret and understand. Since the planners were insisting that the borders for each area designation were open to discussion and bargaining, no one was altogether sure where anything was to be located. For example, the directing of urban growth along an east-west axis would probably need a growth incentive such as the highway corridor, mentioned in the plan, to join Hamilton with the Canadian-American border. Between the original public meeting held in Pelham, September, 1972, and the second one, May, 1973, the highway corridor had been moved noticeably on the planning maps. Those attending the second meeting and voicing concern over this shift were informed that neither the road itself nor its location had been confirmed but citizens were not to worry about that.

This off-handed approach illustrates the insensitivity perceived by Pelham's citizens toward their local needs.[86] The building of a major

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[86] Comments made in a meeting of the Environmental Action Group which was by then seeking to influence local and regional land use plans.

highway is a disruptive experience whether people anticipate it in one year, in five years or in twenty years. Farmers develop their land and invest in crops--such as vineyards or tender fruit orchards--which do not yield a profitable income for a number of years. The threat of an impending highway is an impediment to their continuing to invest in their farms, contributing still further to a declining morale among the local farmers. The nature of the planning process is such that, although its purposes are conservative, to stabilize the environment and provide for orderly and predictable growth, the process has quite the opposite effect. Because planning involves the competing of numerous diverse interests and the open discussion of alternatives, citizens who are unsure of what is happening, who feel that planning imposes arbitrary restrictions on them, are anxious that problems such as the highway be settled quickly so that they can continue to pursue the normal affairs of life.

The original Regional Draft Official Plan sought to design the future of Pelham as follows: (1) it would have a growth increase of 7,500 between 1971-1991, a rate of four percent per annum or double the expected rate for the peninsula as a whole;[87] (2) most of this growth would be encouraged and directed to develop in the Fonthill area and southward towards Welland; (3) some expansion would be permitted in the Fenwick area; (4) the vast remaining area would be designated as rural, implying that little rural residential development would be approved; (5) the only industrial development would be limited to what already existed on Webber Road in the south of Pelham; (6) much of the north-east

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[87] Regional Niagara, Official Plan, Working Draft, op. cit. table 2, pp. 1-23.

corner of the town would be designated as parks and open spaces, environmental protection and 'hazard' areas, again restricted or no growth zones and (7) the suggestions for strict control of intensive animal operations would, in essence, prevent that industry from expansion.[88] The character of the town would be dormitory, maintaining its 'rural' character with considerable open space and recreational land accessible to the entire Region.[89]

Pelham Participation in the Plan

The regional plan had been developed and presented to the public in the following fashion: (1) survey and analysis by professional staff and consultants, (2) opinion leader panels, (3) the circulation of the first draft of the Official Plan, and (4) public involvement in the form of town hall meetings, group sessions and correspondence during 1972 and

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[88] At least according to a brief presented to the Region by a small group of Fenwick farmers, Spring, 1973.

[89] The 'draft Official Plan' was completely re-written by the Regional Planning staff in 1973 when that department assumed control of the plan's development. The 'Regional Niagara Policy Plan' was submitted to the Ontario government on schedule but without the all important maps. This document was considered by many, including provincial authorities, (according to the comments of a town official), to be weak as it avoided concrete controls in favour of policy guidelines. Bargaining with citizens and municipalities, as outlined here, was based upon the 'draft Official Plan'.

In the midst of this already confusing plan development, the provincial government legislated The Niagara Escarpment Act, 1973, authorizing the Niagara Escarpment Commission, a body of eight provincial and eight local government appointees (including Councillor Brussese of Pelham), to prepare a land protection plan by 1976. The Town of Pelham is subjected to the authority of this new Commission, meaning that the commission will screen local developmental proposals, in addition to other governmental departments, boards and authorities.

and 1973.[90] A councillor, or perhaps a citizen who was prestigious and close to council, had four formal occasions in which to present his views to regional planners: on his own in writing, in private with council, and twice in public. A citizen's group was able to make its views known at either public meeting, in writing, and to the local council.[91]

At the first public meeting held in Pelham at the Ridgeville Community Hall, September 25, 1973, to deal with the regional plan, the planners and the planning consultants sat on a stage, patiently and condescendingly answering questions from the audience of one hundred people from Pelham and Thorold municipalities.[92] Some of the citizens were organized into ratepayers' associations, farmers' organizations and a conservation group, although a good number were there as curious, suspicious and nervous individuals. The Pelham council made one of several presentations it was to make to Regional Niagara concerning the future of the town, about what the region was expecting and, particularly, "what are the planners intending to do about the farm lands?" This presentation was followed by comments by

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[90] Regional Niagara, "What Can I Do?" op. cit., n.p.

[91] Also, the planning office kept a record of every telephone caller and letter writer requesting information or a meeting (or simply stating an opinion) so that an individual or group taking the initiative had another opportunity to put forward their case.

[92] The Thorold council was arguing the view that the town needed to grow and that council would like the proposals for greenbelts drastically cut back. "Could the planners please tell everyone what is a greenbelt?" The reply was that a greenbelt was land to be held for a use which could be determined at some future time. This pleased neither the conservationists nor the developers.

several local residents, most of them rural land holders not wanting to see many controls introduced and, although they were all warmly applauded, the speaker who received the most attention and loudest applause was an articulate conservationist living in Pelham.[93] A concern for community was raised twice. Both times the planners responded by insisting that community preservation was one of their primary concerns but they evaded a specific reply as to how planning preserved community, except through the separate cities concept which surrounded each municipality with a greenbelt. One planner insisted that citizens had a natural right for peace and quiet, that that was the 'heart of the matter'. However, many citizens were finding it difficult to adjust to thinking twenty or thirty years ahead as the planners were suggesting was necessary if Pelham were to survive.[94]

The second meeting, well advertised like the first, was held May 14, 1973, at the newly opened Pelham council chambers at the municipal building in Fonthill. This meeting, attended by about fifty people, was intended primarily for Pelham residents. Unlike the previous meeting, this time citizens came prepared to discuss details of the plan and to suggest their own alternatives. During this stage four, Regional Niagara was represented by Councillor Bell, chairman of the Planning and Develop-

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[93] The audience, however, tended to show their appreciation for style and intensity rather than content for opposing views were received with equal approval.

[94] In fact, one old farmer, sitting near the rear of the hall, leaned over to a friend of the same age and declared "He's worried about what will happen here in 1991, I'm worried about seeing breakfast tomorrow!"

ment Committee, assisted by two other councillors, one from Grimsby and one from St. Catharines. Three Regional planning staff members presented a slide show of problems facing the area such as conservation and industry, transportation (but no mention of public transportation), and controlled growth. Only planning could provide the answer to questions like 'what sections of the agricultural industry needed protection?' and 'Who should own the waterfront land?' This was an impressive array of questions and puzzles designed to impress on the audience that planning was indeed a complex balance of different values, a positive not a restrictive societal force. The presentation was subsequently ignored in the discussions that followed.[95]

When the meeting was turned over to the audience for comments and questions, the farmers were the largest and most aggressive group to indicate their anxiety over regulation, not only with the usual 'freedom to do what we want' argument but also with technical briefs arguing against proposed regional policies such as that concerning intensive animal operations.[96]

The meeting continued on like this: criticism by farmers which were never directly challenged by regional officials as their strategy was to claim openness and to accept the legitimacy of every complaint which

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[95] The mood set by Councillor Bell was that nothing in the plan had been settled and that his committee was open to suggestions and criticisms. "Remember" he commented, "that a plan never really stops growing and changing." This reflected a similar view expressed by the Director of Planning.

[96] This brief was presented on behalf of the Concerned Citizens of Pelham, a farmer's organization, by a young, nervous Roger Miller, after he was introduced by his father. The planners asked that he submit his brief but he hesitated. After all, it was single spaced hand written and, surely, they would not want to read that sort of submission; however, they insisted that it was needed.

was aired at the public sessions. The meeting, while not as antagonistic as the previous one in September, 1972, was an angry one with the rural people as convinced as ever that they were getting the worst of the deal. The attitude of the farmer was well expressed by the question of a Pelham resident: "When all is said and done, is it not true that 90 percent of this plan is designed to tell the farmer what he can and cannot do with his land? Right?" Chairman: "I would pretty well have to agree with that."[97]

The third forum for expression of support and dissent for the draft official plan was to contact the Regional Planning Office in St. Catharines to register comments and complaints. Beginning in February, 1973, the planning staff kept a record of all incoming letters or telephone calls, either commenting on the plan or asking specific questions about its intentions. Between February 1973 - June 19, 1973, they had made sixty-six entries into the log of which only five were from the Town of Pelham: (1) one Ridgeville man wrote to congratulate their intention to save the Wainfleet marshes 'as a major natural area'; (2) a farmer in Fenwick wrote and then submitted a brief about intensive animal operation; (3) the town's most active environmentalist, a woman, enquired about protection of designated 'hazard lands' and whether there would be compensation to ensure that they would not be developed. The planners could give no such assurance (the office staff followed up every request, although the answers were often as evasive as the plan itself); (4) a third environmentalist, a friend of the second, wished to speak to the planners, but they

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[97] Yet when the director of planning was interviewed the following month(he was not at this meeting), he refused to answer this question, waving it away with his hand. Interview with A. Greaves.

begged off, claiming no time for individual meetings; (5) a Fenwick woman, living in a designated greenbelt, questioned whether or not her house would be 'taken away'. Six weeks later there still was no reply recorded in the log.[98]

These inquiries disclose some of the worries and anxieties of the people of Pelham concerning the official plan. Most are concerned with their own land and what they will be permitted to use it for after the plan takes effect. A few, determined and articulate, but short in numerical strength (which is so important in local planning politics if one is attempting to establish new priorities),[99] continually raise questions of growth and environmental protection and are politely heard by all involved in the planning process. If nothing else, these views are desperately needed by planners to create support for their own conception of the public good, to allow them to argue in public that conservation and green space are widely supported concepts across the region. The evidence in Pelham suggests that this 'public interest' view is actively supported only by approximately twenty citizens.[100]

The Planning Bargaining Process

Following the November 1972 release of the Regional Draft Official

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[98] This log was made available during a visit to the Regional Planning Office, June, 1973. In addition, two absentee landowners phoned to make sure that their land would not be subjected to many controls.

[99] The question used by public officials against new groups always is "Yes, but who do they represent?"

[100] Almost all of these activists live in Fonthill or in the more prestigious area of the Effingham Hills.

Plan, several discussions and meetings were held between Pelham and Regional officials to find some compromise position between the two plans. Most sessions, with the exception of the May 1973 open meeting previously noted, were held in private. The main issue, according to information obtained in the interviews, had been centred on rural residential development with the town council ardently bargaining for larger areas of development and each severance having a smaller minimum lot size limit. To strengthen its criticism against the Regional proposals, the council instructed its planning consultants to consider the impact of the Draft Plan on its own Plan and on the future of the town.

The tone of the planners' report submitted to council in September 1973 was very critical of the Region for its intentions and the vagueness in which it made these proposals. The language of the Draft Plan, according to this criticism, was such that it indicated certain thrusts but left the actual intent and designated areas deliberately obscure in order to retain a bargaining position with other governmental authorities, private groups and individuals. The consultants raised questions in four major spheres of the Plan: projected population growth, the dormitory image of the future, land use controls and the new trunk road.[101]

Because the regional plan implied a quicker rate of residential growth than the town had originally intended, the council faced three alternate growth patterns: (1) it could accept a target population 25,000

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[101] In addition, the report brought up the question of what impact the Niagara Escarpment Act would have on the town, suggesting that it would probably hamper any major developments in the municipality until at least 1976.

and encourage the present trend; (2) it could adopt a moderate approach and follow the 17,500 Regional projected population, implying a slowdown set of policies, resisting present trends; or (3) the town might deliberately choose to remain a relatively small and largely rural community. It would be quite feasible, wrote the consultants, to resist the trend and preserve the present character of Pelham. The planners avoided making any recommendation concerning future population growth, as this question was perhaps one "where public involvement might most usefully be solicited."[102] The most controversial issue to emerge was whether land use controls should be imposed in conformity with the Regional Official Plan, restricting the structure of growth to maintain the rural character, or whether these should be fought by the town council in favour of more urban and rural residential development with an assortment of industrial, commercial and institutional land uses.[103]

The town's planning consultants argued that the impact of the plan could not be estimated until each public authority sorted out what authority would be delegated to supervise various aspects of land control and supervision and, secondly, the criteria by which these organizations

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[102] The Town of Pelham, Report on the Regional Niagara Draft Official Plan prepared by Proctor, Redferd et al. (Toronto, June 1973), p. 4. This was one of the questions that an alderman (Bergenstein) wanted to talk about but found that few others were interested.

[103] The regional plan excluded the possibility of extending urban services to surrounding rural areas by explicitly declaring that there must be prior, established need (e.g. health crisis due to water shortage or excessive sewage). This is because a provision in Regional Niagara Draft Official Plan (C3 p. 11-51) states that water cannot precede sanitary sewers. In October, 1973, the town council announced its intentions of servicing Fenwick with water within two or three years and, a few months later, Regional officials raised the question of sewers.

would exercise control specified according to what would be permitted conditionally, what would be permitted unconditionally and what would not be permitted at all. The consultants were not impressed by the growing list of authorities, able to intervene at different stages of development proposals, either to be consulted or to approve projects. The following list, extracted from the Draft Official Plan, indicates the numerous agencies which would have some voice in the development of Pelham.

Authority	Subject	Page reference in Draft Official Plan
Regional Municipality	Commercial development over 15 acres, 50,000 sq. ft. gross leasable floor space major industrial developments.	16
Regional Municipality	major industrial developments	19
Regional Municipality	pits and quarries (new) site plans required	22
Provincial legislation	existing pits and quarries (Bill 120), control of operation	22
Regional Parks and Recreational Co-ordinating Committee	to be consulted during development of major parks and recreation facilities, a liaison body, not an approving body	25
Regional Municipality	development in 'Environmental Protection Areas'	28-29
Conservation Authority	development in 'Hazard Land Area'	31
Regional Municipality	services in 'Rural' areas to correct existing problems	34

Authority	Subject	Page reference in Draft Official Plan
Air Management Branch, Water Management Branch, Niagara Health Unit	building permits for 'Intensive Animal Operations'	39
Regional Municipality	development in 'Special Rural' areas	49
Regional Municipality	design criteria for public water and sewage works	51-52
Regional Municipality	public servicing systems for public use	51
Regional Municipality	private wells, sewage systems, septic tanks	51
Regional Municipality	access to Regional Roads	62

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Because so much of Pelham's land is assigned to the 'Hazard Area' or 'Environment Protection Area' categories for long range protection from development, the Region effectively has taken control of much of the town's growth, except the more immediate residential building around Fonthill. These concepts, combined with tight restrictions in the rural areas, limit the role of the town council to approving subdivision designs and planning of support services.[105] Consequently, the power of the council to control local development is strengthened by the plan but the power to initiate,

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[104] Town of Pelham, Report on the Regional Niagara Draft Official Plan, p. 15. It should be remembered that the Niagara Escarpment Act superimposed another set of regulatory agents on this, at least temporarily, although the intention was to give Regional Government most of the authority.

[105] Ibid.

to expand or to somehow depart from a narrow pattern of housing development has been circumscribed.[106] The total impact of this new procedure in planning is to create a complex labyrinth of planning authorities and regulations, suited to professional planners, large scale developers, a few ambitious politicians and a very few local residents. Although the ultimate intent, and perhaps the ultimate result, will be an environment greatly appreciated by the townspeople and regional residents alike, the initial and transitory effect is the alienation of citizens from the political process at a time when, for once, the local level of government is examining issues with a high level of policy content and relevance. Instead of evolving a more public process, one readily open and understandable to the interested citizen, local politics, when dominated by a complex planning process, retreats still further into a process of consultation and bargaining among representatives of municipalities, the Region, the province, and private development corporations.

One sign of the tensions created by planning imposed by a central authority is that citizens are forced to take their grievance to the Ontario Municipal Board for a hearing. In this case, there was neither agreement between the council and other governments nor was there political

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[106] This is presented more simply than it was for the town council viewed itself as having a more active role than this interpretation; however, the intention of the Regional Draft Official Plan was clear inasmuch as Pelham's function was three-fold: (1) a limited (in space) but high density residential area, (2) an agricultural producer and (3) a provider of green space. Note that these purposes, while taking into account local opinion, did represent the ideas of urban people and relegated the town to a provider of space, food and recreation for the cities.

consensus within the new town as to how it should be developed. As soon as council passed a motion in December, 1973, approving the plan, Frank Pratten, a fruit farmer owning land north of Highway #20 and near the gravel pits, filed an objection about the restrictions on his land. After several weeks of further negotiation among the three governments and the farmers, restrictions around Fenwick and North Pelham were relaxed sufficiently to appease the council and some of the farmers, thus avoiding O.M.B. intervention. Frank Pratten explained that, until November 1973, his rural ratepayers' association and the council had a good relationship but then the council decided to go ahead with the official plan, despite its restriction on the rural landowners. "Our committee went down on December third when the mayor and the council was going to decide to pass all these things and we got listened to, but didn't make the slightest impression on council, except the rural alderman Doug Beamer and Ernest Brown voted against it and that was that. Then I learned at a fruit growers' meeting in Niagara Falls that you could object to an official plan just like a by-law."[107] . . . "I told them, quite frankly, that I was prepared to withdraw my objection if Pelham would really allow severance for land not suitable for agriculture. There are several examples, so that after several hours of going at it pretty heavy, we drafted a resolution for the Planning Committee to put to council which, in effect, said that (all groups involved), including the Environmentalists, agreed that the Official Plan would carry on, but a really decent effort will be going on (to look

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[107] Through the officials in the Ministry of Treasury, Economic and Intergovernmental Affairs, Pratten learned that he could file a partial objection, dealing only with the sections of the plan that he opposed.

at farmland). There was no doubt that the main resistance came from outside the town. The Region had three or four planners there and I guess there was a half dozen from Queen's Park. For the first time we got the idea that (council) asked a thousand times for ten acre lots and the province said a thousand times twenty-five . . . . This is grossly unfair to the rural landowner . . . a dollar and cents right has been taken away from us . . . There is no use in fighting planning--this has been accepted by everyone--although it would be best for us if all the planners became unemployed."[108]

Summary

Local government in the province of Ontario has, in the last decade, evolved into a highly technical administrative process emphasizing competence and expertise, rather than democratic or participatory values. The restructuring of Niagara municipal government into a more integrated two tier structure with more officials and fewer politicians has, in fact, decreased opportunities for involvement, unless a citizen has a readily identifiable and needed skill.[109] Thus, for the fewer representatives engaged in local politics, the policy matters under discussion have become more complex and time consuming, but for the many who have been excluded and continue to be excluded because they are not representatives, local government has become both more complicated and less visible. Yet, inter-

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[108] Interview with Frank Pratten.

[109] Such as professional, environmental or planning skills. Pelham citizens sat on a number of committees in this context including the Niagara Regional Police Commission, the Short Hill Provincial Park Advisory Committee and the Niagara Regional Parks Commission.

estingly enough, there is a more concerted effort on the part of regional planners to generate participation and enthusiasm about 'important' (to the planners) issues although little evidence is found to suggest that they have been very successful. The best attended meeting (concerning municipal and/or regional government) during the course of the study was the first public planning meeting in Pelham, attended by some one hundred townspeople. Out of a town population of 10,000 this implies that about one percent attended, hardly an argument for Pelham being a politically active or participatory community. Despite local reservations expressed about regional government, people are attracted to its planning meetings more so than local council meetings, though it must be pointed out that it is somewhat unfair to compare public interest and scrutiny of routine council meetings, designed to exclude spontaneous 'crowd' reaction, with 'once in a lifetime' regional meetings, designed to evoke reaction in order to record individual and group opinions.

Local government is constantly evaluated by area residents on the grounds of its general efficiency and its democratic character. This perception of the dual roles to be assumed by local officials often leads to a schizophrenic political culture in which citizens, other than the elected representatives and staff, are alternately worried about council doing what they want it to do, and being anxious that council get on with its job whatever that might be. More often than not, the question of financial efficiency receives the higher priority in the minds of many. "What is council doing with our tax dollar?"[110] is a very common question heard in Pelham. If residents are reasonably certain that expenses are being mini-

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[110] A phrase used by the Mayor.

mized or that policy decisions reflect the elusive town public opinion, then council can rest assured that its work will be carried out without much public scrutiny. The essence of the council-citizen relationship is trust, although the lack of general participation might lead the sceptical observer to suggest that apathy might be a better description of local politics. Nevertheless, that might be too hasty and superficial a judgment. People are inclined to trust the judgment and character of the representatives they elect. In communities the size of Fonthill, Fenwick and Pelham Township, it was not difficult to get to know the elected representatives on council and, given the low rate of turnover in office, it can be suggested that most councillors knew most citizens in their community. If, however, citizens lost confidence in the council, or expressed collective anxiety over a particular decision, past or upcoming, then the quiet atmosphere of council meetings was quickly transformed into noisy open forums as the issue was lively debated for an evening or, perhaps, many evenings. Politics was an aspect of local life which was entrusted to council to look after because it was too time consuming, and, for the most part, of minimal interest for many citizens. This is far from saying that residents had been alienated from council or were totally disinterested in council decisions. Only as long as council decisions were thought reasonable did the calm atmosphere persist. The fact that a hostile decision activated large numbers illustrates that rather than being disinterested in community politics, most were informed and willing to participate. Occasionally the council would find itself confronted for the first time in several months (or years) due to a miscalculation in public opinion or its perceiving that it needed to act immediately on an 'obvious' problem. It

was in this atmosphere that one could observe acrimonious debate and cutting comments among neighbours. The meetings were enjoyed for they offered a rare chance of public debate but were sometimes regretted because of harsh words said in public, and in private, about other members of the community.

Each of the former municipalities in what is now called Pelham was characterized by this type of political activity. Councils would meet several times with few if any spectators in the room. Suddenly the room would be packed with anxious residents all demanding to know what council intended to do about a particular service such as Fenwick's water supply, Fonthill's sewage system or the township roads. In many cases such as these, those seeking to minimize expenses by avoiding doing anything, won the debate, delaying public action at least for a few years. Councillors themselves, as suggested previously, were not forward looking in their politics, as a result of legislative restrictions, frequent elections, and a belief that a good council spent as little as possible.[111] The style of council activity was reactive; that is, councils were satisfied to find solutions, typically short term and inexpensive, to cope with the series of mini-crises that confronted councillors continually. Councils were rarely preoccupied with debating general problems such as planning or contemplating what the impact of their decisions would be in five years. Hence, council agendas looked more like a local grumbling session than anything else. In the winter the great debate might be snow ploughing, in the spring, flooded back yards, in the summer, dusty roads, while in the fall, everyone worried

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[111] Interviews with town officials.

about their re-election in December. Thus, it is easy to understand why most citizens did not take their councils seriously; little serious work had traditionally been done at this level. One would expect to involve oneself in local politics if a complaint had not been quickly disposed of by the clerk treasurer, the reeve or a councillor. Only if one or more of these avenues had failed would a citizen proceed to speak to the council as a whole. This attitude, found frequently in Pelham throughout the interviews, is revealed lucidly by a school teacher who had been living in the Fenwick area for some fourteen years. "I suppose that most people don't go because of apathy, but that's common everywhere . . . Well, I never went to council meetings before; in fact, I have been, I think I've been, to one council meeting because I had a personal problem to solve, with a flooding problem we had here that I was trying to get them to do something about. But to take an interest to just going for the sake of going I think people do this if there is controversial issues, if it effects them personally, but that's all. I think over the years, at least as I see it, I don't know if I'm accurate in my judgment or not, but affluence has a great deal to do with it. The more affluent the people become, the more independent and the more aloof they become."[112]

Successful planning in Niagara Region is dependent on the planners' and politicians' reassurances to the public that the planning process is designed to strengthen and maintain the independent character of each separate municipality. The planners have to be able to claim some knowledge about this 'character' they wish to preserve and some idea of

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[112] Interview with Gerry Benner.

how to preserve it. The easiest method is to establish the physical identity of each community by excluding continuous inter city development whenever possible. The quality or structure of a municipality that makes it unique or someway obviously different from another is a more elusive question to answer and, hence, less frequently suggested by the planner. There are certainly some major differences which are glibly referred to, such as rural and urban, historic character, ecological formations, size of municipality and so on, which are mentioned in order to illustrate the uniqueness of each municipality. The planners did not elaborate on the qualities in group lifestyles which either make a municipality into a community or leave it as individuals coincidentally having something in common, such as being serviced by the same municipal officials. People from Pelham who turned up at the open planning meetings were never excited over a discussion of community and were more worried about talking about farming and development. The only group to bring forward ideas on the protection of a local 'sense of community' is the Environmental Action Group of the Community Concerns of Pelham who have expressed a clear understanding of the relationship between land protection, growth and maintenance of the present community but are under the misconception that they live in a village with a 'rural flavour'. Pelham has long since stopped being a village or agricultural community except in the images of the urban middle income newcomers. The farmers no longer pretend that this is mainly a rural town and only laugh cynically[113] at those who insist otherwise. The farmers accept that the rural style of life has already disintegrated, a

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[113] Interview with Alderman Beamer.

fact which they think should influence the policy makers to allow each farmer to withdraw and sell his land whenever he chooses. The argument of the environmentalists that the land is worth saving puts them in the position of defending the marginal farmer who no longer wants to be saved. The planning process, while involving more citizens than the routine political discussions and decision making in Pelham, is not structured in such a fashion that brings out the elements of community common to the town. Instead matters of public policy are reduced to the scale of individual and interest group demands. Throughout the entire planning process, citizens, politicians and planners were unable to create a situation in which the idea of the community and the possibilities of its future could be discussed. One is forced to conclude, because the interviews uncovered a concern about community in individual perceptions of local problems, that this type of planning exercise fails to capture what community implies for Pelham dwellers. However, the responsibility for this failure is shared by the citizenry.

The shift in spectator interest, accompanied by the occasional outburst of participation, follows a recognized shift in power and authority from area or local municipalities to the regional level. This manifests itself most plainly in the planning process where it is obvious that the region is dominating the development of a binding official plan. Planning represents a deviation from normal participation patterns in local government viewed during the course of the study and, more than any other policy sphere, exemplifies how the 'reactive' character of local participation is a part of that political life. Under normal circumstance people are not inclined to involve themselves in a readily identifiable manner--

such as attending meetings or organizing ratepayers associations. There are, however, other means of expressing political interest, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, in a town in which representatives are known and available for discussion. If one is able to communicate in a quiet fashion, as many are able to, then the reasons for playing a more visibly active role in local politics disappears. The commonality of experience, felt most strongly in the rural areas and in Fenwick, eliminated the need to be formal about questions of representation and interest groups.

The evidence gathered certainly indicates that council business is organized and managed by a few individuals, implying that those who feel excluded more than likely are correct.[114] The justification for control by those who do run council is that the problems of administering the municipality are complex and demand more expertise and time than the average citizen is willing or capable of offering.[115] Those who participate and dominate on a continuous basis in the town, in political matters concerning regional or local government, number around ten and probably never more than twenty. Why it is such a small number actively participating was not mentioned by anyone except the rural representatives who, as noted before, believe that their constituents are the real losers in the new political structures. When the stakes are high, as they are in the planning process, the level of expertise needed to participate effectively is raised such that many residents are baffled by the proposals

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[114] A feeling most intensely expressed by Alderman Beamer.

[115] This attitude was found in the interviews with the town clerk and mayor, regional officials, former public school principal and the former school trustee.

offered by the planners and the techniques used to present these proposals.

Finally, planning symbolizes the taking over by the professionals --bureaucrats, planners and fulltime politicians, of critical decision areas of the political life of Pelham. There has been little resistance in the Fonthill area but strong opposition has been expressed in the rural areas, perhaps due to the fact that several, including the local representatives, interpret planning not as a social tool for consenual organization (as the professional planners argue) but as a means used by the new urban powerholders to gain control of undeveloped, open land, the essence of the rural belief system and lifestyle. Planning marks the ruin of this old landed middle class and its replacement with the new, urban middle classes seeking access to, and control over, lands which they themselves do not own.[116]

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[116] This distinction is based on C. Wright Mills' dichotomy of the old middle class ("it heroes; the independent farmers and the small businessmen") and the new middle class which has gained power because of a dominance in the labour market. "Labour markets, not control of property, determine their chances to receive income, exercise power, enjoy prestige, learn and use skills." C. Wright Mills, White Collar: The American Middle Classes (New York, 1956), pp. 13, 63.

Chapter Six

Education: The Closure of Valued Schools

Education in the villages serves two purposes. It is designed to give students a set of skills which makes them valuable on the labour market as tradesmen or prepares them for post-secondary school training. The secondary school is also important because it is an institution through which one generation is able to transfer its values and aspirations onto the community's next generation. Students are encouraged to appreciate family and village life, and to accept a particular style of citizenship which stresses respectability, responsibility, family life, hard work, Christianity, community participation and personal happiness. Such an approach to education was evident at Pelham Secondary School, one of the central institutions in traditional Pelham. On June 28, 1974, the school was closed by the Niagara South Board of Education after three years of harsh battles with local citizens. At no time during the conflict did any Board official express an appreciation of what was at stake for Pelhamites. In fact, the educators were continually astounded by the intensity of the opposition because they were unaware of the role of the school in the Pelham community.

This analysis of the Pelham - Niagara South dispute is based on the idea that the new Board is so designed that the purposes of education are now different from what they were under the old boards. Small public elementary and secondary schools are not closed, as they have been in Pelham, merely because they are too expensive to operate, although that is often the principle justification offered to the taxpayer. Small schools are closed because the liberal educators no longer believe that

they are viable. The reform of Ontario education follows the theory that schools should be designed to service the needs and aspirations of the individual student. The ideal setting for such an education is one which provides the student with the maximum number of options early in the child's development. Therefore, schools are built large enough to accommodate a multiplicity of activities and courses for the normal student while the problem children are removed and segregated into special units. Furthermore, schools are divided to deal only with a limited age group so that, as the student progresses, he moves from one building to the next.

The Board's approach to education is different from that found in old Pelham. Community educators in the past applied different standards in judging the ideally education citizen. For instance, one practical difference is that the latter valued farming skills more than the former. However, more fundamental to that, the old system emphasized that students should be integrated in their programmes and that the societal ideals taught within the schools should be shared by the family and the community. The school was a part of that community; it was not an institution or a factory run by politicians and officials who were not living in Pelham. The question raised by citizens during the study was straightforward: how could these Board officials educate their children when they knew nothing about the local citizenry nor about their culture. Thus, the confrontation over the school closures is a confrontation between citizens who see schools as the central institution in their community (and, by implication, their future) and education officials who see little of intrinsic value from one community setting to another and who have a set of education goals signifi-

cantly different from Pelhamites.

Of the school closings, Pelham Secondary School offers the most poignant example of the destructive impact of regional education. Since my research involved looking at education problems more than any other sphere of activity, it struck me as being the best example of how recent changes in the structure and philosophy of government in Ontario have had adverse effects on the citizenry. It is of real concern to find out how the youth have reacted to a system at odds with their family and social life. The evidence indicates that the confrontation over the future of Pelham Secondary School was not solely a battle between parents and Board officials. The struggle was shared by students; for example, they constantly went to the principal asking for ways in which they might help. They put on plays which threw acrimonious barbs at the Board and one week after the school was closed, in July 1974, they guarded the building so that the furniture could not be removed by anxious Board employees.

This view of what has happened in education in Pelham is founded on the assumption that a good indicator of community is whether or not communal activity is observed. This being the case, then the conflict over the schools clearly indicates that a community has existed in Pelham because the people, in reacting to the Board in solid opposition have been able to organize themselves to fight effectively against a commonly perceived enemy. This is not to argue that the entire population of Pelham is involved in such a community; rather, evidence is presented to show that membership is limited to those who have lived there for a long time or to those who, in moving into the rural areas (but not usually into Fonthill), felt that they had become a part of that community. The chapter is organ-

ized to explain the overall strategy of the new Board, the first round of school closings, and then the long conflict over Pelham Secondary School.

The Reform Strategy of the Niagara South Board of Education

Two types of changes have been brought into this analysis of local political participation: changes in the policy making process and changes in policy intentions or outcomes. The suggestion offered in the last chapter is that citizens in Pelham disregarded changes in the policy structures and were willing to await the action of Regional Niagara before judging its worth. In other words, the new structure of power was not nearly as interesting as the distribution of goods and services. Similarly, few citizens opposed the re-organization of education in the peninsula but as the new boards began to function citizens then began to react. However, unlike Regional Niagara, the Niagara South Board of Education began an immediate investigation of how it might change the education system in Pelham. This, in turn, promptly involved the Board in a way which affected a majority of Pelham's citizens.

The town is dominated by families and, as such, each family is sooner or later touched by decisions made by school officials. Whereas decisions in other government spheres often escape public scrutiny because they have no immediate effect, parents can count off the years when their child will be subjected to an 'adverse' educational decision. Citizens are more future oriented in considering educational matters than when evaluating other policies. In a predominantly middle class area, particularly in Fonthill, children dominate the home life, and important decisions (such as location of homes) revolve around their needs (such as recreation

and education).[1] For the parent who is anxious about the future of his or her children (e.g., career opportunities) it is mandatory that the local school system provide a high level of competent teachers and support facilities. For the parent who is more concerned about the values obtained in school; that is, is more concerned about the school as a socialization institution rather than a knowledge factory, it is crucial that the school remain in touch with the value goals of the parents and of the local community. These are the main concerns of parents: that the child receive the best possible education in the best possible environment. Those responsible for education policy need to be responsive to the parents as individuals concerned about their child's knowledge and as a community concerned about their children's values.

The provincial decision to introduce county sized school boards to replace numerous small boards[2] is consistent with the Progressive Conservative government's strategy of centralizing public bodies in order to increase efficiency through bureaucratization, professionalism and a larger scale of operations, including servicing, buildings, buying, etc. The philosophy of education, which involves school complexes and school specialization, is expensive to realize; moreover, since 1970, school officials have been facing a shortage of funds. By the beginning of the seventies, education in Ontario was nearing the end of its 'golden age'.[3]

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[1] This has been examined elsewhere in studies of the middle classes including John Porter, The Vertical Mosaic (Toronto, 1965), pp. 125-128 and Chapter VI, pp. 165-198.

[2] See Chapter Three.

[3] To use the phrase of R. A. McLeod, the Director of Education.

After twelve years of continuous growth in their field, education officials found themselves facing significant drops in enrollment, partly as a result of a predicted demographic decline in school age children and partly as a result of an unpredicted higher drop out rate among senior secondary school and post secondary school students. Each board of education had to make new rules for utilizing scarce resources, who and what to eliminate. The decision of Niagara South officials was to eliminate small schools.[4] The Board's strategy was to review the use of all elementary schools in the area to determine which had adequate facilities and which had a large enough student population to support a number of activities and specialization among the teaching staff.[5] Using this study as a guide, the Board began its program of rationalizing the use of school facilities and teaching staff. At first, it involved only a review of elementary schools where the decline in student population was most serious, but was later extended to include secondary schools.

Pelham School Closures 1970-71

After one year in operation, the new Board began to close schools in Pelham, including one which was used for secondary purposes.[6] At the

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[4] The Pelham schools were not the only schools closed down within the jurisdiction of the Niagara South Board of Education as other elementary schools in the rural area outside of Niagara Falls were phased out in 1970-71.

[5] Interview with R. A. McLeod.

[6] It is perhaps incorrect to describe this board decision as a 'closure'. The Board proposed to change the function of the building from a high school to a senior elementary school; however, it was always described as a closure by the townspeople.

time that the Welland County Board of Education took office, January 1, 1969, there were nine elementary schools and three secondary schools in what was to become the new Town of Pelham. Of the nine elementary schools, five had less than five rooms and three were built prior to 1891; it was proposed to close all of these.[7] The Board's officials decided that if one of the three secondary schools, Thorold-Fonthill High School, was converted to a senior public school, it would be possible to close the five smallest schools in Pelham.[8]

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[7] PROPOSED SCHOOL CLOSURES

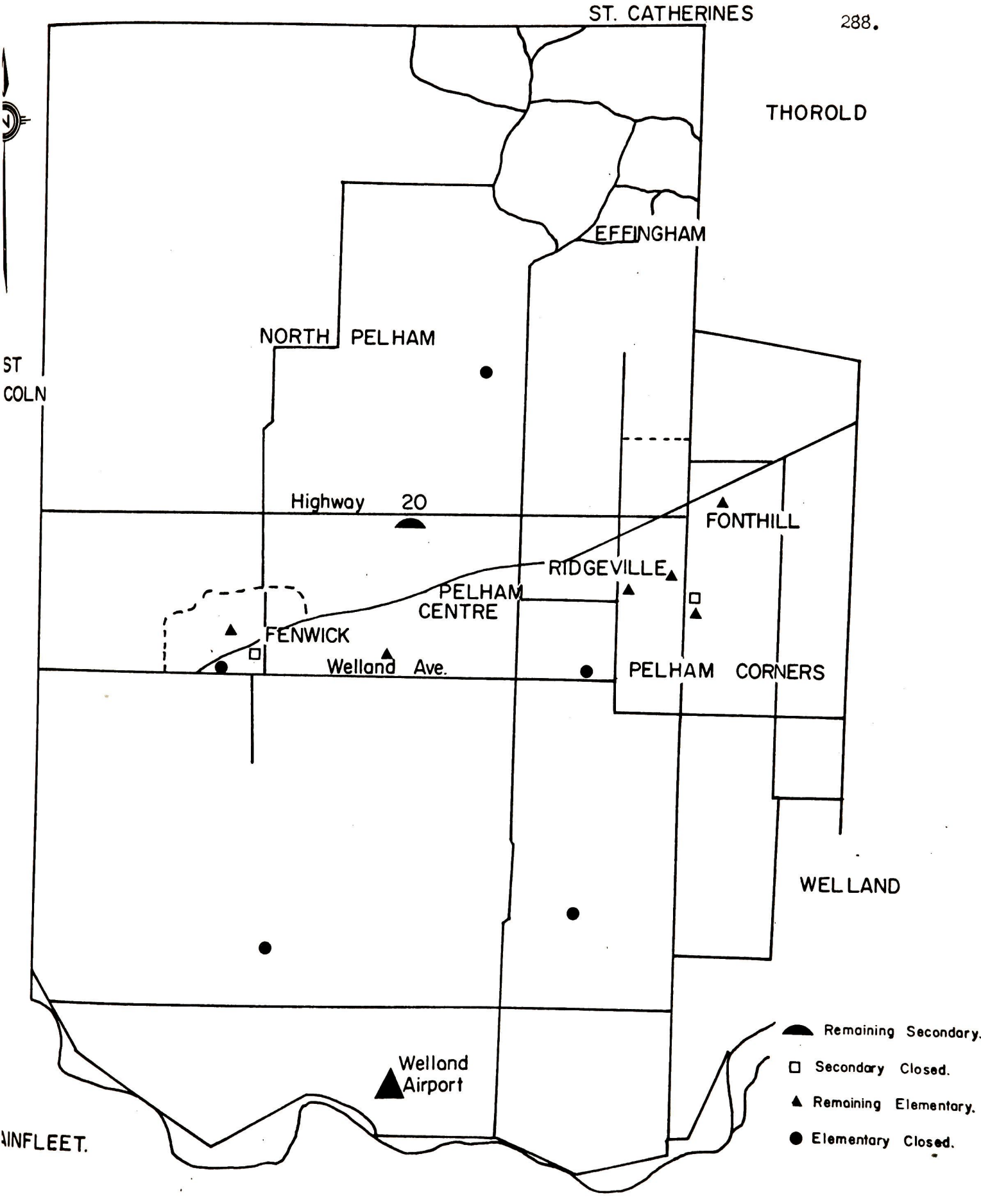
School	Location	Rooms	Built	Additions
E. W. Farr Primary	Fenwick	3	1890	-----
Pelham Corners	Township, South of Fonthill	4	1878	1950-53
Chantler	Township, Southern part	2	1885	1961
Hansler	Township, Northern part	2	1958	-----
South Pelham	Township, Southern part	3	1956	-----

The Welland County Board of Education, "Reorganization of schools - Area D', (an unsigned staff memorandum), (Welland, December 29, 1969), p. 6. The category 'location' is added to give the reader a clearer understanding of where these schools were located. That they were all in the township is noteworthy as it was not forgotten by residents during the fight to close Pelham Secondary School. Note also that during the first year, the Board was known as the 'Welland County Board of Education', a name which was later changed to the 'Niagara South Board of Education' (January 1, 1970).

[8] The Welland County Board of Education, "To Students, Parents and Staff", (an open letter to students, parents and staff of Thorold-Fonthill High School), (Welland, January 8, 1970), p. 1. This was signed by F. J. Rutland, Chairman of the Board and R. A. McLeod, Director of Education.

Map No. 5

TOWN OF PELHAM: SCHOOL CLOSURES



Savings[9] could be further justified because, despite some cutback in personnel, the quality of education in Pelham would be better. "Small public schools can no longer offer the same program opportunities as larger ones. If the change is made, all public school students in Pelham would have the same program opportunities as elsewhere in the Board's jurisdiction."[10] Problems encountered as a result of relocating staff and finding suitable positions for administrative personnel, students changing schools, and increased transportation costs, were minimized:

> "The Board is fully appreciative of the feelings of staff, students and parents in regard to a change of this kind. However, it believes that any fair assessment of the present situation even by those most concerned, would arrive at the same conclusions as the Board has. Certainly, as stated previously, as we move into the future the changes must be made if Pelham is to move forward as it should educationally. The Board believes that delay beyond September 1970 would only complicate matters and serve no useful purpose." 11

The closure of Thorold-Fonthill as a secondary school implied a total restructuring of secondary schools in Pelham, Thorold, Welland and the

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[9] The Board officials had estimated that the streamlining could save up to $85,500 within one year of implementation, including $70,000 in salaries and $15,000 in maintenance costs. The increased cost of transporting the students to their new schools would be $7,000. "Reorganization of Schools - Area D," pp. 2-3.

[10] "An Open Letter," p. 4.

[11] "An Open Letter," p. 5.

south west part of neighbouring Lincoln Board of Education.[12] The two remaining high schools could handle the projected enrollment for several years, while the transformation of the Thorold-Fonthill building into a senior elementary school would save the Board the expense of building a new structure specifically for that purpose.

Parent reaction to these plans was hostile and made known at a public meeting held January 14, 1970, only six days after the Board announced its plan. During this first confrontation between the Board and residents, attended by approximately 500-600 local citizens, there was unanimous opposition to the announced changes on the grounds that the quality of education would likely suffer while there would not be any compensating saving to the taxpayer. A few expressed hostility over the losing of yet another institution: "we lost our village, lets not lose our school."[13] One reporter, claiming that most of the residents "came spoiling for a fight," described the meeting as theatre " . . . . the meeting burst wide open. At times, it sounded a bit like a theatre showing an old-time silent movie, the crowd cheered when one of their own spokesmen made a good point and snickered and booed when one of

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[12] 290 students from Gainsborough, South Grimsby, Caistor Township and Smithsville were attending Pelham High School. The original intention of the Board was to transfer some (40) of the Thorold students to Thorold Secondary School, some of the occupational - slow learners to a new Welland school planned for September 1971, some (66) to E. L. Crossley in Pelham, a technical secondary school, and the majority to Pelham Secondary School, four miles away in Fenwick. 150 students previously were able to walk to school.

[13] Sophie Homenuck, "Close to 600 Hear Views on Pelham School Changes," Welland Evening Tribune, (January 15, 1970), p. 5.

the board representatives failed to answer a question adequately."[14] The only persons recorded as supporting the Board were two elementary school principals.

After a few weeks of manoeuvering, a second open Board meeting was held, January 27th, 1970, in front of another gathering of six hundred people but this ended without any concrete decision being made by the Board. The briefs continued to be submitted while the two or three residents who had emerged as spokesmen hammered away at the inappropriateness of the Board's hasty and unthinking strategy towards education in Pelham. Their ploy was to argue in absolutes - their school was excellent and run with a high degree of efficiency - and to bargain for time, for a year's delay before the Board reached its final decision. The citizen's position was complicated by the fact that their only Board representative, a lawyer living in Fonthill and who had served for sixteen years on the old and new school boards, firmly believed that the Board was correct in its policy of school reorganization. The trustee, Glyn Green, stated that the local demand for stability was unreasonable as throughout their lives students would be contending with change. "What is important is that we do the best for the students that are going to be affected not just next year but in the years after that. We seemed to be opposed to change but I can assure you that these children are going to be disrupted along the course of their lives and I think we are going to have to get accustomed to upsetting the 'status quo'. Your

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[14] Dick Sadlier, "School Board Officials Booed at Public Meeting in Pelham," St. Catharines Standard, (January 15, 1970), p. 40.

problems are my problems, we have a common interest as parents."[15]

The Board did, however, manage to impose its own will on the townspeople when the final settlement was approved at its February 3, 1970 meeting. The five point program adopted involved: (1) changing E. L. Crossley from a vocation secondary school to a composite one, to utilize its accommodation to the fullest practical extent, (2) designating E. L. Crossley as the school where as many students as possible would be accommodated,[16] (3) determining the student allotment for Crossley and Pelham by geographical boundaries which would serve to give students from the Fonthill area access to the newer and more appealing Crossley building, (4) using the Thorold-Fonthill building as a senior elementary school and (5) closing four small elementary schools while a fifth, South Pelham, would be used as an audio visual resource centre,[17] subject to further consideration by the Board.[18] Only one hundred citizens from Pelham attended this Board meeting, held in Welland, perhaps indicating already the effort required of such a confrontation with the

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[15] A letter from Glyn A. Green to R. G. Ohler "re: Board of Education," (Fonthill, February 4, 1970), p. 5.

[16] Originally Pelham Secondary School was to be the main alternative, a fact which was soon to become significant when the Board decided to close it the next year.

[17] This was one of the 'side' issues being fought at the same time. See, for example, Mabel Davison (Public school principal), "An Appeal on Behalf of Pelham Children in Special Education Classes," Fonthill Herald, (January 27, 1970), p. 3.

[18] "School Bd. Proceeds with Pelham Changes," Welland Evening Tribune, (February 4, 1970), p. 1.

Board. The people of Pelham lost the original intention of their protest. They were unable to stop the arbitrary closure of five schools and the drastic shift in function of another, and generally failed to convince the Board to take their views into account. The minor concessions of the Board did not alter the intention of its policy which was to change the pattern of education within Pelham from that based on small schools, Drawing at least some students from the neighbourhood to one based on an integrated, specialized system relying on students being bussed from one area to another.

The protest continued after the decisive Board meeting but to no avail. By the end of January many had become discouraged and distraught over a commonly perceived arrogance on the part of the Board.[19] On March 2, 1970, Mr. D. Knight and Mr. R. M. Ohler submitted a long (twenty-one page) brief to William Davis, then Ontario Minister of Education, explaining the objections of "many citizens living in the Town of Pelham" and to "seek the assistance afforded by your Ministry to ensure that not only are the wishes of the populace to some extent recognized, but that an analytical and logical approach to the whole matter of education be brought to the local level."[20] Nothing happened as a result of this petition for outside help; the Board went about the task of sorting out student option sheets and assigning pupils to either E. L. Crossley or Pelham Secondary Schools.

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[19] I. M. (Fonthill), "The School Issue," Letters to the Editor, Welland Evening Tribune, (January 31, 1970), p. 4, also Mrs. D. Alsop, January 24, 1970 and 'several Area Representatives', January 28, 1970, in the same newspaper.

[20] A letter signed by D. J. Knight and R. M. Ohler to the Honorable William Davis, Minister of Education, (Fonthill, March 2, 1970), pp. 1, 2.

The sudden explosive appearance of concerned citizens illustrates how quickly the townspeople could react to a hostile decision. Yet, this very participation also reveals the contradictions in this pattern of activity. First, as usual, citizens were reacting to a decision made by the Board and were entering the policy process after the important decisions had been made. Secondly, their goals were short term and negative inasmuch as they were attempting to stop a decision. Therefore, they were branded as selfish by officials who, in turn, claimed to be representing a wider interest. This attitude is evident in the following Board document:

> "It is the opinion of the Boards' administrators that the plan is mathematically, and educationally sound, and economically desirable. We would respectfully suggest that the general public, and trustees, show faith in their administrators, and look to the needs of <u>all</u> the students in the area. It can be appreciated that the Board, which is essentially a political body, is not anxious to run contrary to the wishes of a large segment of the population in the area involved. If the objections are primarily due to skepticism involving program, numbers, accommodation, etc., then the Board and the public should be aware that the whole program has been <u>carefully</u> studied by experienced educators and administrators who are in the best position to know what can and cannot be done." 21

Thirdly, citizens were not able to negate the technical and factual information used by officials to interpret the Pelham situation. When faced with this type of challenge, the Board staff forced the public representatives to support them. In other words, the officials took advant-

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[21] The Welland County Board of Education, "Comments re Brief submitted to the Welland County Board of Education, by Mr. D. Knight," (Welland, n.d.), pp. 3-4.

age of the flimsy knowledge base of elected representatives. The detailed and comprehensive briefs presented to the Board of Education by D. Knight, R. G. Ohler, E. Lundman, and E. Bergenstein[22] among others, questioned the authority and competence of the staff to recommend closure, based on their professional assessment of the situation, while the mass turnouts at meetings revealed that the Board had little public support among the more active citizens in Pelham. The Board was then reduced to the odd situation of having its most involved representatives (those from Thorold and Pelham)[23] being opposed by their most active constituents, an impatient staff anxious to get on with the re-organization of the Pelham schools, and a majority of Board members who were inclined to go ahead with staff proposals. Changing the school system introduced an element of uncertainty into local affairs that citizens reacted to with a combination of anger and bitterness.[24] The structural changes involved in developing the new board of education during 1968-69 effectively removed from the townspeople the power to make crucial educational decisions. It cannot be assumed that this battle was as simple as a community versus outside public authority.

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[22] These were presented at various public meetings during the two months of debate. Noted in a file kept by one of the organizers, Donald Knight of Fonthill.

[23] The newly elected Town of Pelham Council also opposed the closure. See "Council Oppose Changing Thorold Fonthill High to Senior Public School," Fonthill Herald (January 20, 1970), p. 1.

[24] At least one citizens' spokesman built his argument for a one year delay around the theme of alienation and uncertainty due to the implementation of county education. "It is our first real contact with big government in the education field . . . We would hope that our fears of government will be allayed and that we have not lost contact with big government." Dick Sadler, "Plan to Inspect School Tuesday, Trustees Delay Decision to Close High School After Protests Heard," St. Catharines Standard (January 21, 1970), p. 15.

The townspeople were not united against the Board.[25] Because the Town of Pelham was only weeks old, there was not yet a core of active citizens from all sections of the settlement. Consequently, the most active participants tended to live in the Fonthill area and not from across the town. In addition, some residents stood to gain from the Board decision as it offered to improve the quality of elementary education. The extensive coverage by the press at the time might be balanced by a general indifference to this battle three years later and the outright dismissal of its importance by the former trustee. What can be said is that the school closure issue generated a higher degree of public participation than any other governmental policy matter recalled in that time period and that the great majority resented the intrusion of the Board into local politics.

By September 1970, the Board had accomplished the main thrust of its new policy for schooling in Pelham. Thorold-Fonthill Secondary School was changed to Fonthill Senior Public School and students attending the former high school were distributed among Pelham, E. L. Crossley and Thorold secondary schools. The four smallest elementary schools were about to be closed. The remaining township schools were divided into primary (kindergarten to grade two) or junior (grades three through six) while the two in Fonthill held classes for the full range of classes (kindergarten through grade six). The rural schools were organized so

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[25] For example, the local trustee claimed that a similar change of school function was being arranged by the Fonthill Public School Board and the Pelham District School Board at the time when the new board assumed office. A letter from Glyn A. Green to R. G. Ohler, "re: Board of Education," (Fonthill, February 4, 1970), p. 1. Green was very insistent about this in the interview. His argument was that the decision had to be made by some authority as it was the only logical course of action.

that a student would likely be transported to primary, junior and senior public schools. Students in Fonthill would most likely be able to walk to a junior elementary school and then to Fonthill Senior Public, also located in the village. The 'feeder' system, adopted by the Niagara South Board of Education, affected families living in the former township the most as they saw their children facing at least nine years of riding the buses and probably fourteen before they finished secondary school. This new education system set the stage for a most fascinating second confrontation.

The Niagara South Board of Education Versus the Concerned Parents of Pelham

(a) The Issues

The original confrontation between the Niagara South Board of Education and Pelhamites lasted a short two months with the Board emerging as a clear victor. The Board was then committed to a policy of economy, efficiency, and an education framework in which older, smaller schools serving thinly populated, slow growth areas were bound to be continuously investigated to determine if they were still viable institutions. It was during such a review in 1971 that Pelham Secondary School was singled out for closure, making it the second secondary school in Pelham to be designated for shutting down in as many years. Before examining this struggle, it is important to point out the irony this decision had for Pelham citizens.

The original proposal of the Board to change Thorold-Fonthill was put forward on the evidence that the remaining two secondary schools

could easily accommodate all students.[26]

The Board originally intended that the students from Thorold-Fonthill Secondary School would be distributed to the other two schools according to student options although Crossley would retain its vocational and technical character. If students chose the arts and science option (intended mostly for those considering going on to university) they were to be assigned to Pelham. As most wanted that program,[27] it was intended that most would end up at Pelham. One objective of the Board's strategy had been to convince parents of the attractiveness of Pelham Secondary School; Chairman Rutland and Director McLeod praised the modern resources centre at Pelham, which was "essential for students to take full advantage of the new programs" and argued that the additional pupils would increase the

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[26] The rated capacity (that is, the number of students who could possibly attend if the schools were used to 100 percent capacity every class period every day) was 580 for Pelham and 1,570 for Crossley, a total of 2,150. The working capacity (90 percent of rated capacity) was 500 and 1,400 respectively or a total of 1,900. In 1969, there were 1,217 students at Crossley, 316 at Thorold-Fonthill and 383 at Pelham District, a total of 1,826. Some 420 students were expected to leave Pelham schools within two years, either to the new technical school in Welland and to schools within the Lincoln County Board of Education. The three secondary schools had approximately 1,500 students who in the Board's view could more effectively be educated in two. J. F. Rutland and R. A. McLeod, Welland County Board of Education, "Reorganization of Schools - Area D", op. cit., p. 6, and Welland County Board of Education, "To Students, Parents and Staff," op. cit., p. 2.

[27] A survey distributed by one of the parents, Donald Knight, to 260 Thorold-Fonthill students and their parents indicated that 197 (from 200 replies) wished to continue an arts and science program similar to that offered at Thorold-Fonthill. Only two wished to take courses then offered at E. L. Crossley. Mr. Donald J. Knight, "Relocation of Thorold-Fonthill High School Students," a brief presented to the Welland County Board of Education, (Ridgeville, January 27, 1970), p. 2. The Board was assuming that 150 would choose Pelham and 66 Crossley.

range of options offered to all students. "This development is important, particularly as it would make the same options available as in all other parts of the Board's jurisdiction."[28] In answering complaints about the condition of Pelham a Board trustee wrote that, although Thorold-Fonthill School was more attractive than Pelham District, "physical plant is secondary to programme. Pelham is adequate, but the Board should make some repairs (e.g. small gym, old science lab). . . . Pelham District High School is not a beautiful school, but people are far more important than physical plant."[29] In addition, as a public relations gesture, the Board opened Pelham Secondary School to the public and media for tours and inspection of facilities.[30] The Board was making every effort to persuade others that Pelham Secondary School was capable of handling upwards to 500 students without any additional costs, except summer remedial maintenance work. The citizens, on the other hand, were never completely satisfied that Pelham was a quality secondary school building. For instance,

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[28] Rutland and McLeod, op. cit., pp. 3,4.

[29] "Questions Raised by Thorold-Fonthill Students, Concerning Educational Disadvantages of Transfer to Other Schools," unsigned, (n.p., n.d.), pp. 1-6. This document is attributed to Mrs. Christine McMillan by D. Knight and R. M. Ohler in their brief to William Davis, op. cit., p. 5. Mrs. McMillan presented this at a Thorold public meeting attended by some 200 persons, January 23, 1970.

[30] Nearly 200 local residents, including several Thorold-Fonthill students, toured the school; both favourable and unfavourable reports were recorded in the press. "P.D.S.S. Facilities Shown Fonthill Area Residents," Welland Evening Tribune, (January 26, 1970), p. 5. In a letter to R. G. Ohler, trustee Green remarked that "it is true that there is a limited use to some of the rooms in the old building. Personally, I consider this additional space for seminar rooms, etc., to be of great value; in fact, if such additional space could be afforded in new schools being built, it would be well worth while but unfortunately economy does not permit this type of luxury." Glyn Green, op. cit., p. 2.

an editorial in the town newspaper arguing against the Board's decision scoffed at statements defending the adequacy of Pelham Secondary School. "When the Thorold-Fonthill High School was built they (the ratepayers) were told that the Pelham District High School was inadequate, etc., etc. They were also given the same story when the E. L. Crossley School was built. Pelham is an old school. Nobody will argue that point. But it hasn't become any younger through the years since these other schools were built. So where is the discrepancy? Just because the Board changes the terminology from 'condemned' to 'substandard' certainly doesn't change the condition."[31] One immediate result of the argument over the adequacy of Pelham Secondary was that the Board agreed to transform E. L. Crossley from a vocational to a composite secondary school. This change permitted students and parents to choose between schools. Most chose Crossley although students attended Pelham from Fonthill and Thorold.[32] Unknown to most residents in Pelham, the school arrangement in Pelham was by no means a long term commitment by the Niagara South Board. Falling enrollments and tighter provincial control over spending levels forced staff members to search for additional measures that would save the Board money. In an important organization of staff assignments, Director McLeod alloted superintendents according to a geographical area; "Area D" included the schools of Pelham, Thorold and Wainfleet. The new superintendent assigned to Pelham was instructed to begin an immediate survey of classroom and school usage in the town to determine future possible savings. Mr. A.

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[31] "What Makes a School Inadequate?" Fonthill Herald, (January 20, 1970), p. 8.

[32] In the end 200 students went to Crossley and 120 to Pelham.

Bridgeman, superintendent of Area D and a resident of Fonthill, prepared a report designed to develop a five year forecast of student enrollment and capital expenditures based on potential accommodation, duplication of facilities, enrollment, salaries paid to principals, vice principals and department heads and maintenance costs. It emerged from this study that the rated capacity for the three secondary schools was 3,600 pupils while the projected enrollment was only to be 2,374.[33] Looking only at the Pelham schools, the following was estimated for future enrollments.

Enrollments in Pelham Secondary Schools[34]

Actual	Pelham	E. L. Crossley	Total
1969	383	1,127	1,826
1970	504	1,301	1,805
1971	444	1,023	1,467
Projected			
1972	385	1,000	1,385
1973	360	980	1,340
1974	325	940	1,265
1975	300	970	1,270
1976	300	975	1,275

At the same time the Lincoln County Board of Education was openly consid-

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[33] This information has been made available through a paper prepared by two Pelham Secondary School teachers (Ker moved in 1972 to a new technical school in Welland). W. Brian Walker and J. Michael Ker, "The Decision Making Process and Communication Involved in the Proposed Closing of a Secondary School," a paper presented in Educational Administration 613, Niagara University, Niagara Falls, N.Y., (mimeo, December 6, 1971), p. 3.

[34] The 1969 total includes 316 pupils who attended Thorold-Fonthill Secondary School. The rated capacity was 610 for Pelham and 1,580 for Crossley, a total of 2,190 substantially above the 1976 estimated attendance (1,275), based on a two percent growth rate for the town. R. A. McLeod, Niagara South Board of Education, "Information Sheet prepared by Staff re: Future of Pelham Secondary School," distributed at Board meeting, mimeo, (Welland, November 2, 1971), item 15, pp. 24-25.

ering whether or not to continue its five year agreement (1966-71), made with the former Pelham District High School Board, to educate secondary students from Gainsborough, South Grimsby and Caistor at Pelham District Secondary School. Its eventual decision to withdraw removed 275 pupils from the Area D school system. Mr. Bridgeman[35] raised the possibility of closing Pelham Secondary School, mainly because of the rapidly declining student population. The withdrawal of Lincoln County students made it feasible to accommodate all Pelham students in E. L. Crossley. The advantages were again those of a liberal education: the facilities at E. L. Crossley would provide pupils with (a) all commercial options, (b) all technical options, (c) art and music options, (d) a computer science option and (e) an improved library with a wider choice of books. Equally important, the small enrollment at Pelham (estimated at four hundred) would eliminate several options and make it difficult to maintain a 'reasonable' pupil-teacher ratio.[36] Other advantages were economic, in-

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[35] In consultation with other staff members including the Director, the Superintendent of Plant, the Superintendent of Finance and the Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee. Walker and Ker, "The Proposed Closing of a School," p. 5.

[36] Ibid., "A Summary of the Area Superintendent's Report, February 23, 1971," Appendix C, n.p.

volving an estimated saving of $81,243.[37] Bus costs would be balanced by increased maintenance costs to upgrade Pelham as the "old wing . . . will require renovation or demolition in the immediate future."[38]

As in the case of the Regional Niagara and the Pelham council meetings, citizens were disturbed about the manner in which Niagara South went about making important decisions. They felt that they were excluded, partly because often there were not enough seats to accommodate unexpected observers[39] and partly because they had little access to information. For

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[37] This estimate was arrived at by the following calculation based on expected 1971-72 costs):

SALARIES -	Principal	$23,000	
	Vice Principal	20,000	
		43,000	
	Less amount alloted for their teaching time	12,000	$31,000
	Eight Department Head allowances		13,000
	One Secretary		5,000
	One part-time Para-professional		2,500
			$51,500
ORDINARY MAINTENANCE			39,100
LESS DEBENTURE GRANT, 3 years (possible, not definite)		$9,357	
NET SAVINGS			$81,243

R. A. McLeod, "Information Sheet re: Future of Pelham Secondary School," p. 26. The Board staff, who prepared this report recommending the closure, of Pelham also pointed out that despite these savings, there might be some political implications if the Board chose to close a second secondary school within a single year and in one municipality.

[38] R. A. McLeod, "Information Sheet re: Future of Pelham Secondary School," p. 26.

[39] The Board of Education meet regularly the first and third Tuesday of each month in a small but expensively decorated room at the Board offices in Welland. The room was always dominated by the seating arrangement for the elected officials while staff members took up all the seats along one wall and at the back beside the press, leaving seating space for less than a dozen citizens.

example, Board members are supplied with agendas, reports and information sheets the Friday preceeding the public meetings, allowing four days for preparation. Any delegation wishing to appear before the Board needs to submit an application no later than Monday which leaves minimal time between the Board's intentions being made public (through 'leaks' of one sort or another as nothing per se is made public prior to the open meeting) and its deciding the problem on Tuesday. The Board was careful as to whom received information about items on the agenda, a style of decision making not generally encountered previously by Pelhamites.[40]

The Pelham Secondary School closure emerged quietly, February 26, 1971, on the information sheets distributed through the office of the Director of Education and was included in the list of proposed elementary school closures which had already been discussed in public. The principal was informed on Monday, March 1, 1971, by an anonymous telephone call at the school;[41] this was the first indication that he had concerning the Board staff report and recommendations.[42] The Board staff had committed itself to the proposal of closing the school rather than listing the alternatives, as was the more common role of school bureaucrats, because their neutral stand in the earlier fight with Pelham citizens had upset

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[40] Interview with James Robertson, a Fenwick fruit farmer and citizen leader in the battle over Pelham Secondary School.

[41] Interview with Bud Ker.

[42] The Pelham trustee, Mr. Green, chose not to tell Mr. Ker and to ensure that he was not invited to meetings where the closing was discussed as this would be like "inviting a person to his own funeral." Walker and Ker, "The Proposed Closing of a School," p. 5.

the elected representatives who were unsure of themselves in resolving complex problems of the new Board.[43] The result was that even before the closure was accepted as official Board policy, and before it surfaced as an issue in the public domain, the staff had committed itself to a particular line of action.[44]

Pelham citizens were quick to react with a vengeance as they perceived this decision as a breach of trust.[45] Throughout the battle over the Thorold-Fonthill building, which ironically had been resolved in the first week of March only one year previously, the Board representatives and staff had argued that students would be transferred only this one time and that the town should be proud of Pelham Secondary School as it was an adequate building with a tradition of exceptional scholarship. Now the Board was claiming the building was not viable and was perhaps even dangerous. Too many in the town interpreted this as an act of ar-

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[43] Interview with R. A. MacLeod.

[44] The original motion at the March 2, 1971 meeting read:
"moved by H. Lottridge (Welland) seconded by F. Gibbs (Niagara Falls)
'That subject to confirmation from the Lincoln County Board of Education re: the removal of their students, that the Pelham Secondary School be closed as of the end of June, 1971, and the students be assigned as indicated in the report.'"
This was followed by another motion:
"moved by G. Green (Pelham) seconded by Mrs. D. McRae (Niagara Falls)
'That the matter be tabled to the March 16th meeting of the Board.'
Carried."
It was agreed to contact the Lincoln County Board of Education to determine its plans. Niagara South Board of Education, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Niagara South Board of Education, March 2, 1971," (Welland, March 2, 1971), p. 9.

[45] Interviews with Ker, Robertson, Irv Muir (also with the Concerned Parents of Pelham) and Alderman Bergenstein.

rogant and irresponsible officialdom.

The Board's deliberations in that March, 1971 meeting were not conducted in the usual quiet atmosphere. Despite the short notice, the principal had managed to alert the school staff and students as to what was happening and, through the students, word was quickly passed through the area about the meeting. At the insistence of the local trustee, the Board agreed to hold its following meeting at E. L. Crossley to consider the proposed motion at further length. The meeting was not, however, to be a public meeting in the style of the Thorold-Fonthill School debates; these had been too bitter and emotional in the view of the Board. By simply having their regular format, the trustees would be able to control delegations and their speakers. This pause, as in the case of a year previously, gave local residents time to put together their briefs, arguments and strategies to stop the Board from passing this motion.

Before the March 16, 1971 meeting, several citizens organized a strategy session to prepare briefs and statements to present to the Board. The Sunday afternoon meeting at Pelham Secondary School brought forward volunteers for briefs, letters and contributions for financing any expenses to be incurred. During the Board meeting at E. L. Crossley, the Board was attacked by all local speakers for breaking their 1970 agreement when they closed Thorold-Fonthill, for trying to close a school with a fine tradition which Board members themselves had previously admired, and, finally, for ignoring the benefits of the education received in a smaller secondary school.[46]

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[46] Walker and Ker, "The Proposed Closing of a School," Appendix C, n.p.

Following several presentations,[47] marked with some critical comments by Board trustees as to the quality of staff reports and the staff's inability to rebuff the arguments expressed that evening, the Board passed a motion, presented by Christina McMillan (Thorold) and seconded by Lloyd E. Emerson (Wainfleet), that "Pelham Secondary School remain open for at least one more year."[48]

To the 750 in attendance, the Board decision was a clear victory for the townspeople; yet, there is some evidence that other factors carried considerable weight in influencing the outcome. For example, Lincoln County Board of Education had not been able to inform Niagara South what it was intending to do with the students attending Pelham Secondary School. At the same time, the principal, Bud Ker, had received a telephone call (at six o'clock on the night of the Board meeting from the provincial Minister of Education) telling him not to worry about the board decision, giving him the impression that the matter had been settled in private.[49]

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[47]The following people were granted the opportunity to speak: Gerald Shields, representing Pelham Council, E. Lundman, Edgar 'Bud' Ker, principal of Pelham, T. Wardle, Mrs. Michael and W. Liebau, President, Pelham Secondary School Students' Council. In addition, Jim Love, presented a brief on the benefits of small schools using his teaching experience at Pelham and his graduate research at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to support his ideas. J. H. Love, "School Size, Student Behaviour, and Academic Performance, A brief presented to the Niagara South Board of Education relevant to the proposal to close Pelham High School," (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, n.d.), 5 pages.

[48] Niagara South Board of Education,"Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Niagara South Board of Education, March 16, 1971, held at E. L. Crossley," (Welland, March 16, 1971), p. 3. In reviewing the transcripts of the meeting, it is quite apparent that Board members were embarrassed by staff research and preparation. At the same time, because they knew that the audience was hostile to Board officials, it was a good occasion to criticize staff and receive public support.

[49] Walker and Ker, p. 7, also mentioned in interview with Mr. Ker.

Lastly, the Director of Education was not eager to impose the closure decision in March, 1971, because of technical difficulties for staff members in seeing one school closed and integrating 450 students into Crossley with so little time (five months) before the next school year began.

It was in October of the same year that the citizens of Pelham were again informed that the Board was about to discuss the future of Pelham High School at its regular meeting on November 2, 1971. The Board then decided that, at its next meeting, November 16, the Board would receive briefs from the community and hear representatives argue their points of view. The Board made available an information sheet, presented by the Director of Education at its November 2, 1971 meeting, in order that citizens recognize the reason for the staff wishing to close the school. The staff had concluded that "a small secondary school is not viable under present day conditions."[50] As in the first school closing, the staff publicly expressed its regret that Pelham had to be closed as it was "recognized that the discontinuance of a long established school stirs many emotions . . . (yet) the re-arrangement of operations to meet new circumstances is a common occurrence in today's society. . . . School systems cannot expect to avoid the impact of what is going on in society."[51]

The Board had asked those wishing to present briefs that they be

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[50] These justifications were the previously mentioned savings of $81,243; a surplus of student places meaning that Crossley could easily accommodate the predicted enrollment of 1200 to 1500; and the provision of more options, with better equipment, especially in technical, commercial and music subjects. Niagara South Board of Education, "Information Sheet," (Welland, November 2, 1971), p. 28.

[51] Ibid., p. 28.

submitted by nine o'clock (a.m.), November 12, 1971 (Friday) so that they could be circulated that day to the trustees along with other information sheets. At eleven o'clock, the same morning staff members released a 'fire marshal report' revealing that if an inspection were made, the school would not meet 1971 regulations and that the costs to the Board of upgrading the school would be considerable, possibly running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.[52] A Board motion was prepared for the closure of the school. This motion was defeated, although a second one, requesting an official Ontario Fire Marshal's report on the school, was carried. Again Board trustees expressed openly their disappointment about staff reports and manoeuvering. These statements were recorded by the media and given full coverage the next day throughout the area,[53] adding to the sense of indignation and righteousness felt by Pelham citizens.

Six months later the Board of Education began anew to study the possibility of closing down Pelham Secondary School. At the May 16, 1972 meeting, the Chairman appointed a seven person ad hoc committee to report back to the Board at an early date about its deliberations on Pelham Secondary School, taking into account questions of enrollment, appli-

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[52] The Board motion, moved by Doug H. Gowan (Welland) and seconded by C. J. Munroe (Niagara Falls), read

> "That the Pelham Secondary School be discontinued as of the close of school in June, 1972, and the students transferred to other appropriate secondary schools, mainly, E. L. Crossley."

Niagara South Board of Education, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Niagara South Board of Education, November 16, 1971," (Welland, November 16, 1971), p. 2.

[53] "Trustee Raps Staff for Pelham Report," Welland Evening Tribune, (November 17, 1971), p. 3.

cation of the Fire Marshal's Report[54] and other "pertinent matters."[55] Although that committee met several times, no action was taken by the Board (the committee report was circulated as a memorandum at the July 4, 1972 meeting), perhaps because of the elections that autumn which otherwise preoccupied the trustees. In Pelham, the school issue was the clearly dominant public concern in an otherwise quiet December, 1972 municipal election. Due mostly to the school issue, the Board incumbent was defeated by a woman, active in school affairs and having her 'roots' in the township rather than in Fonthill.[56] Altogether, six new members were elected to the Board.

At the first (inaugural) meeting of the new Board, January 9, 1973, the newly elected Chairman, A. Spear, nominated five trustees to continue the deliberations of the old ad hoc committee of 1972.[57] In

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[54] The Fire Marshal's Report, as it was referred to locally, was a thirteen page letter from K.G. Reilly, Fire Engineering Section, Office of the Fire Marshal, Department of Justice, Government of Ontario, to K. J. Perkens, Superintendent of Plant, Niagara South Board of Education, "re: Niagara South Board of Education, Pelham District High School, Fire Safety Improvements," (Toronto, December 10, 1971). There were twenty six improvements which had to be undertaken beginning as soon as it was possible.

[55] The committee members were Board Chairman, Dr. R. H. Railton (Welland), trustees G. Green, L. E. Emerson, C. J. Monroe and superintendents A. E. Bridgeman, J. R. Thompson and H. T. Ferguson. Niagara South Board of Education, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting held on Tuesday, May 16, 1972," p. 13.

[56] Interestingly enough, there was an election in 1970 following the school closure in Fonthill but the trustee was not even opposed let alone defeated for his agreeing with the Board.

[57] Included were Christine McMillan (Chairman), Mardi Collins (the new trustee from Pelham), L. E. Emerson, D. C. Farnan, and S. B. Bruce. Niagara South Board of Education, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Niagara South Board of Education, January 9, 1973," p. 8.

two weeks this committee had decided to recommend the closing of Pelham Secondary School as of June, 1974. This motion was accepted by the Board and in a quiet discussion lasting less than five minutes the motion was passed, in a recorded vote, eighteen to one, Mardi Collins being the lone dissenter.[58] The Board had finally accepted the motion, presented to it a number of times since March, 1971, and ended months of suspense for Pelhamites. If the Board had expected this decision to conclude its confrontation with the people of Pelham, it had made a serious miscalculation. The Board had originally tried a number of times to close Pelham Secondary School, only to fail because of stiff public opposition. Between the key meetings,which have been noted here, the Board tried to discredit the school,using two techniques. The first method was a request that the provincial Fire Marshal's Office complete a thorough investigation of the school to determine whether or not it was a threat to staff and students. The report, submitted to the school board in December, 1971, was critical of the state of the school, demanding that officials begin to plan immediately to upgrade the physical plant. Upon receiving the report, the Board had ordered the old wing of the school closed off to lessen the risk of fire and later used their report as support for its position that the

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[58] Niagara South Board of Education, "Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Niagara South Board of Education, January 23, 1973," p. 9.

school was no longer safe for students.[59] Tc support their view that it would be too expensive to upgrade the school, the Board staff commissioned a single tender-estimate to carry out the repairs and renovations suggested in the Fire Marshal's Report. The cost, according to the firm of Stewart and Hinan Construction Ltd. (St. Catharines), was $332,212, without including mechanical and electrical work. The total cost was estimated by Board officials to be $494,325, exclusive of debenture costs.[60] This was not a small sum of money to be saved at a time when budgets were being trimmed, although the Concerned Parents of Pelham did manage to point out that the Board's position and the estimated cost were based in part on misconceptions about the design and condition of the school.[61]

The second technique employed by Board officials was to gradually reduce the boundaries within which students could attend Pelham Secondary School. The loss of Lincoln County students in 1971, while not an unexpected decision, did reduce the school population considerably within a single year. More subtle were the boundary shrinkages within Niagara South which reduced any opportunity for the school to regain a 'viable' student

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[59] A close reading of the Fire Marshal's report shows that contrary to Mr. McLeod's private claims and public statements made by the Board Chairman, it does not state that the old wing of the school was 'condemned' or to be 'closed down,' although many of the specific references dealt with faults in this section. It was the Board's decision, given the evidence in the report, to close first the oldest area and then the whole building. . . Niagara South Board of Education, a letter from R. A. McLeod to E. A. Ker, (Welland, January 26, 1972), p. 1, and "Close Section at Pelham High," Welland Evening Tribune, (January 19, 1972), p. 3.

[60] J. D. H. Wiggin, Manager, Stewart and Hinan Construction Ltd., a letter to Mr. R. A. McLeod "Re: Pelham District High School," (St. Catharines, April 24, 1972), pp. 1-2. This was attached to the Board "Memorandum" op cit., pp. 28-28a. It was the only estimate requested by the Board.

[61] Interview with Robertson and Ker.

population acceptable to the Board. In fact, the principal often argued that the school had been 'strangled' by the Board.[62] One example of how boundaries had been used against the older Pelham school is that, in 1972, after the Board had been committed to leaving the school open for at least another year, the school boundary was fixed such that the great majority of the students would be forced to enroll in E. L. Crossley. In the spring of 1973, after the Board had finally decided to close the school, the boundary was eliminated meaning that families could choose either school, the implication being that, given the choice and the insecurity surrounding Pelham Secondary School, most would choose E. L. Crossley.[63]

One Board memorandum, dated July 4, 1972, listed three other reasons why Board officials were considering the closure of the school:

> "1. In view of the declining enrollment are we justified in continuing two secondary schools in the town of Pelham.

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[62] Interview with Bud Ker.

[63] However, forty-two students entered grade nine at Pelham, necessitating two classes where only one had been planned, causing the Board to hire extra teaching staff. A Board document circulated to the parents after the 1973 decision to close Pelham read,

> "Grade 8 students in consultation with parents may make their own choice. In our opinion, programs in both schools will be equally good. Pelham offers mainly core subjects whereas at E. L. Crossley, in addition to these core subjects, many different options are available. However, if fewer than 20 register for the Pelham School, it will not be possible to give a grade nine course there. You should consider the matter carefully and make your decision. Students can be accommodated in either school." Niagara South Board of Education, "Information re: Closing of Pelham Secondary School," (Welland, February 16, 1973), pp. 1-2.

2. When we consider what the life of the school might be, can we justify an expenditure of the magnitude that will be requiredby the Fire Marshal.

3. An administrative saving of $90,000 per year, which would result in the closing of Pelham Secondary School, represents the salaries of approximately nine teachers." 64

Evidence organized by staff indicated that the Town of Pelham would not be growing much in the next ten years and, in fact, according to the 1971 census, it lost 274 people from its 1970 population.[65] Since this growth was to centre around the urban area (Fonthill) four miles away from Pelham Secondary School, the school was not ideally located, even if the town's population did increase substantially.

To summarize the Board's position, trustees and staff offered four reasons for closing the school. (1) It was fifty years old and no longer functional. This is not an accurate statement as the school was originally built in 1926, making it forty-seven years old in 1973, while the only sections used in 1972-73 for teaching and classrooms had been built, in a series of additions, since 1950. The sections of the school still in use were only twenty-one years old and never described by any official as less than adequate. (2) The Fire Marshal's Report demanded that the Board begin at once to reconstruct the school. The

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64 Niagara South Board of Education, "Memorandum re: Pelham Secondary School," (Welland, July 4, 1972), p. 1.

65 However, this projection was disputed strongly by the local council. Its projections, and those of the Region, showed the town about to grow seventy-five percent in the next ten to twenty years. "Pelham Secondary Closing, Fonthill School Irks Council," Welland Evening Tribune, (January 30, 1973), p. 11. Also, several comments were made by councillors at a meeting of the Planning and Development Commitee, Pelham Council, October 29, 1973.

Board interpreted this as meaning all the work needed to be done at once, thus emphasising the urgency of the problem of deciding the future of Pelham Secondary School.[66] It was eventually decided that the school could be kept open for 1973-74 if the Board completed fire prevention work (mostly fire doors and a new alarm system) costing $18,000, on the understanding, in the words of the Fire Marshal, that the Board "proposes to abandon this building for all school use in June 1974."[67] (3) The third justification was the declining enrollment which convinced officials that it was no longer worthwhile to invest in Pelham Secondary School: "the declining nature of both present and projected secondary school enrollments do not permit this Board to operate two secondary schools in the Town of Pelham."[68] (4) By having extra student places readily available at E. L. Crossley, the Board had yet another reason

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[66] K. G. Reilly, a letter to E. A. Ker, "Re: Niagara South Board of Education, Pelham District High School, Fire Safety Improvements," (Toronto, February 7, 1972), p. 1. It read in part, "The usual procedure when a school board undertakes to improve the fire safety of a school, where extensive work is required, is to schedule the work over a period of time, say 2 to 3 years. This situation applies to this school, as indicated in the second paragraph of my letter of December 10th."

[67] K. G. Reilly, Fire Engineering Section, Fire Marshal's Office, Ministry of Solicitor General, a letter to Mr. R. A. McLeod, Niagara South Board of Education, "Re: Niagara South Board of Education, Pelham District High School Fire Safety Improvements," (Toronto, January 22, 1973), p. 1. This letter is found in the Niagara South Board of Education, "Information Sheet for the February 6, 1973, Board meeting," (Welland, February 6, 1973), p. 40.

[68] Niagara South Board of Education, "Information Sheet for the January 23, 1973, Board Meeting," (Welland, January 23, 1973), n.p. This was the justification given most often in public. See also Niagara South Board of Education, "Information Material re: Closing of Pelham Secondary School," (Welland, February 16, 1973), p. 1.

for closing Pelham. Students could still be educated within the Town at a modern school with no extra capital or operating expenditure: "all studies, including the trial computer timetabling of the combined Pelham - E. L. Crossley student populations, indicate that the quality of the educational programs at both secondary schools will be maintained if the two schools were to amalgamate."[69]

(b) The People

The final decision in January 1974, to close Pelham Secondary School was a hasty one. The two weeks in which the ad hoc committee met to deal with the issue was obviously not enough time to permit, even as a facade, citizens to participate either by speaking at public meetings or by submitting briefs. Nor did it allow time for the new members of the Board to familiarize themselves with all sides of the issue.[70] However, the above historical account of the Board's activity is deceptive inasmuch as it does not incorporate any analysis of the intensely hostile reaction in Pelham. If anything, the importance of the fight over the future of Pelham Secondary School is the fact that one citizens' group managed to oppose the Board for three years with persistent energy, with

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[69] Niagara South Board of Education, "Information Sheet, January 23, 1973," op. cit., n.p.

[70] This denial of the right to be heard did not pass unnoticed and was written and recorded at length by the local media. See, for example, "Battle Far From Over Says Pelham Principal," Welland Evening Tribune, (January 24, 1973), p. 20. In addition, the Globe and Mail which carried several articles and letters about the school, most of which were sympathetic to the local citizens, reported that "The Niagara South Board of Education has decided to close Pelham Secondary School even though the board chairman conceded that the small, rural high school is 'perhaps one of the best in the whole . . . system.'" N. John Adams, "'One of the best', Niagara School to be Closed," The Globe and Mail, (Toronto, January 25, 1973), p. 9.

no leadership crisis and with consistent public support. Unlike those who opposed the closing of the Thorold-Fonthill school, these citizens managed to continue despite a series of political and judicial setbacks. In the next few pages, the people are presented to show that much of the strength of the Concerned Parents of Pelham[71] was derived from the fact that the leaders were members of a community for which they felt a great affection and commitment and, secondly, they were able to decide strategy and maintain support as they went about their daily activities.

The principal, E. A. 'Bud' Ker, is something of a hero to the people of Fenwick and, perhaps, to the people of Pelham. His family dates back three generations in Fenwick and he has lived in the house he now occupies off and on for over fifty years. During the Second World War he served as a flyer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, bringing home a Victoria Cross for outstanding military service, an award which was greatly admired and appreciated in the hometown. Fifteen years after he began to teach at Pelham District High School, Bud Ker was promoted in 1964 to principal. His reputation for handling students was expert for the village and township as he knew family histories and family situations, which youngsters deserved punishment and which needed attention and guidance. To quote one parent: "I would like to hope and I'm sure every other parent would like to hope that their child is one that is noticed. I think that teachers need to recognize that to a parent, there is only one child in that class. It's my child. . . . That to me is very important and I think that's why

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[71] The name was changed to the 'Concerned Parents of Wainfleet, West Lincoln, and Pelham,' October, 1973, in recognition of the support and financial contributions received from these outlying areas.

Bud, for instance, is a great principal, because he is a part of that area. I mean, he knows the people, he understands them. You know, he can finger the kid that's been playing hooky and knows whether their parents would be thrilled with the idea that he was playing hooky, or whether they just don't care. The bigger you get, the less contact you have and as I say, I've always thought (because of the small school) that my children were noticed." 72

In answering a question about the community aspects of the fight over Pelham Secondary School, the principal responded that "the answer to me is so simple that its almost down-grading to ask, in the sense that the pied-piper approach to education surely must indicate the faults right from the outset. If you're to pack up a bunch of kids and load them on buses every morning and cart them out of the community to educate them, then there are three things that automatically come to mind. One is that if you've any experience with a kid waiting for a bus, he is already put in the position of not being wanted by the community, because there he is and he's waiting for the bus, and he has little or no respect for persons or property directly proportional to the time he's got to put in until the bus gets there. If you happen to catch him ten minutes before the bus arrives, he might give you the time of day and you might be able to chat with him. But as the groups congregate, and in numbers lies strength you see, the first thing you know they're telling dirty stories and raising Cain with the fellow bussing passengers and irrespectful, if that's the proper word, to the businesses. It wouldn't be out of the realm of possibility

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72 Interview with Mardi Collins.

for some kid as he boarded the buses that were pulling away to speak unkindly to a merchant or fire an orange at the bank window."[73]

A man who combines a sharp wit, a good public speaking style and a habit of explaining himself in obscure images and stories, the principal has, over his teaching career, commanded the respect of former pupils (of which there are many in Pelham) and parents. Among the teaching staff, he was widely known as 'Our Leader'.[74] A long time member of the staff (over fifteen years) gave this account of the principal, an account repeated again and again by staff members. "How's Bud's leadership holding out? Well, he's actually a subject in himself. He has an amazing personality. Right now he's in one of his confident stages but I don't know what's making him that way. He has no grounds that I can see. He either knows something that we don't know, or . . . . he has an uncanny instinct for knowing when to move, when to feel up and when to feel down, and I'll never figure him out, he's just beyond all analysis that way. I thought once I had him pretty well figured out but he is unpredictable. Things he'll do that I think are rash, almost the rashest, turns out to be the thing to do.

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[73] Interview with Bud Ker.

[74] Although the reader may find this description overly kind to any individual, it is essential to convey his esteemed position in the community. With the exception of a former school trustee, and the Director of Education, no one spoke ill of this man. This certainly added to the political base of the Concerned Parents of Pelham, and his own ability, to fight freely against the Board. For instance, he always referred to his work on behalf of the citizens as "working for the government" and it was widely known in the town that his entire day was often spent trying to keep the school open. He could be seen walking around the town during schools hours on errands but no one ever questioned what he was doing out of the school.

He'll go right ahead and do them. He's just sort of like, like a loner that way, very confident. He'll listen to advice, and he'll consult you, but you know right away he's already made up his mind, but he wants to feel out the general attitude. You can't change him, if he's set himself on a course, he'll do it. He'll only take advice on the trivial, such as the wording for a letter . . . I trust him because he's been right. But I don't understand Bud at all and I'll never claim to understand him."[75]

The Concerned Parents of Pelham were able to operate efficiently, compared to most volunteer citizen groups, as one of the central characters, a highly paid employee of the Board, was willing, in fact, anxious, to give as much of his time as possible to win the battle. As principal, Mr. Ker had access to board documents (although these were later withheld from him), Board committees and school facilities for printing, typing, distributing information, etc.[76] Because he was willing to fight against the Board's decision, others felt obligated to help as much as possible. Given the combination of status, reputation, and resources (time, expertise, and school facilities) concentrated around the principal, it was perhaps natural that the citizens' group should narrow in participation and centre around this man's decisions and intuitions. The battle over Pelham Secondary School always revolved around the principal, a Fenwick merchant, and a fruit farmer. They all had children in the school and were either life

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[75] Interview with Jim Curtis.

[76] Using students to distribute information for meetings and contributions was an excellent way to inform a large number of residents of the latest developments in the situation, quickly, with little cost.

long residents of Fenwick (as was the principal) or were married into old Fenwick families (as were the other two). The committee co-chairmen (Irv Muir, an undertaker and furniture dealer, and Jim Robertson a fruit farmer) were named, as best as anyone could recall, at a clubhouse one evening during a long discussion about the closing of the school.

The clubhouse is no ordinary meeting place. In a village which has traditionally banned the sale of liquor and in a town which now has few outlets[77], the clubhouse at the Fenwick ball park has long served as an informal drinking place. Fonthill has no equivalent, except perhaps the Legion Hall or the Fonthill Kinsmen's clubhouse, where men can casually drop in and discuss the day's business and gossip over a beer. The clubhouse belongs to the Fenwick Lions' Club and the downstairs beer machine (a converted soft drink dispenser) is usually open only to members and a few guests.[78] At the busiest time, between four and six o'clock in the afternoon, there are usually a half dozen men sitting around, discussing whatever is current in the community, from the school issue (a daily topic) to building inspections, to chicken and turkey farming regulations. Typically, a school official, one or two town officials, a couple of merchants, a couple of the unemployed and a few secondary school teachers are there, exchanging information and gossip.[79]

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[77] A liquor store, the Lookout Golf Club, a tavern and the Legion, all in and around Fonthill.

[78] The Fenwick firefighters had a similar set-up but I usually went to the ball park as a guest of the principal.

[79] Occasionally, a police officer drops in to say hello, giving the uninitiated a fright; however, he is most likely a native of Pelham and well known to everyone. Before regional policing came into effect, it was not unusual to see a police shift ended in this 'illegal' drinking spot.

Political action, then, emerges from this background of comradeship and togetherness, nurtured from years of working and living together. This does not mean that personal relationships are without conflict and pettiness but that an important common bond has existed among members of the community prior to their political activism. For instance, the decision to act against a commonly perceived enemy, the Niagara South Board of Education, was readily accepted by everyone at the clubhouse. The more active individuals were constantly encouraged by friends and lent support whenever it was asked for by these activists. The Lions, with its female counterpart, the Lioness, are pivotal voluntary associations in Fenwick. This made it easier to organize in that village for a long term conflict as compared to Fonthill where men came forward from a more complex set of relationships. For example, when Fonthill citizens joined together to fight the Thorold-Fonthill school closure, the only contact was a functional one, to carry out strategy meetings and so forth. Their lives have not been lived out together as they have been in Fenwick. This stands out as being one of the most important differences between political action in old and new Pelham.

The co-chairmen were able to give the organization energy and impetus by their willingness to work and to speak out about their frustration and determination.[80] In one conversation a co-chairman expressed his frustrations as follows: "One thing led to another but the deeper you get into it, the more involved you become and all that. It doesn't make sense. But the more you find out about it, the more it stinks, quite frankly. I

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[80] For example, on one occasion one of the co-chairmen remarked to a reporter that "personally I don't believe them when they (the Board) say hello." J. Carson, "The School Parents Keep Fighting For," The Globe and Mail, (Toronto, November 23, 1972), p. W1.

couldn't put up with a deal like this if I was dealing with a private individual or company, and I see less reasons why you should have to take it when its coming from a public board. Well, we're just plain getting a raw deal out in this area, and you can't convince anybody in authority that we are."[81] To the other chairman, the struggle with the Board was just that - a struggle: "I suppose in a way it's frustrating, I guess, I suppose it's frustrating, isn't it? I think it is, I'm a stubborn Scotsman anyway, and once I've started anything, I hate like hell losing too, even in playing cards, or doing anything. I'm not going to say I'm a poor loser, but I'm close to it, I guess. That's right. I am a poor loser, I like to win and I work like hell to do it too. I don't give a damn what it is, whether it's at my business, or down at the farm or out fishing, playing cards, or football with the kids or baseball or anything. If it's worth doing right and if it doesn't go right the first time, you've done something wrong, then damn it try again. It is frustrating in a way because I think we've been cheated by the school board a few times, because once upon a time they said, well, if there's enough people out there that really want that (school) left open, let us know. So they found that there were a lot of people not only in this area, because we've got support from people all over. We've had these brochures come back from people in Ridgeway, we had a lot from Ridgeway; we've had them from Port Colborne; we've had them from Welland; we've had piles of them from Gainsborough and Wainfleet and it is not just, all right I can narrow it down and say it's not just Fenwick, it's people from all over. I think they're kind of frustrated

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[81]Interview with James Robertson.

at the idea of a big bureaucratic board, because they've got kind of in the back of their mind that it's Pelham that is getting the axe right now, and it's going to be them next, some place, because it's going to happen. I've had this admitted to me by one of the staff members, and this will be just first of the secondary schools to close, because they're going to close more."[82] In the long run, however, their work, both in the family business and on the farm, did not allow them to participate as fully as they would have liked. Moreover, because they lived and spent the day so close to the school they could always be called upon for advice and consultation, and could be informed about the principal's activities.[83]

This reveals a lot about the townspeople and local politics. People involved themselves directly, for instance, by attending meetings when they anticipated that their presence would likely have an affect on possible outcomes or if they recognized that a decision was so threatening that their opposition must be made known in order to express themselves as a community. To have someone such as a principal assume a dominating role in the fight was not an expression of apathy or disinterest. 'The troops are in the wings' is an apt description of how the leaders were continually reminded that whatever they wanted or whenever they needed people to show up, that they, the citizens, would be available. Thus, it is not an elitism

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[82] Interview with Irv. Muir.

[83] A good example of this style of activity was the correspondence coming from the Concerned Parents. Almost every letter and communique distributed to the mass media received publicity as the media were quite interested in this battle. Although all correspondence went out signed by both Muir and Robertson, the principal had been responsible for their intent and wording. On occasion he would sign their names and then tell them the next day. In other words, the citizens' group had become an effective front for the activities and manoeuvering of the principal.

as commonly attributed to interest groups and citizen groups but an acknowledgement that a few can do most of the work efficiently, and that it is best to have the keenest and/or brightest in control. The basis for support was not among a highly participatory membership nor an alienated mass but a subdued and interested people willing to participate as needed. They recognized the value of leaving most of the work to others who were widely thought to be the most qualified.

The third set of factors influencing the activity of those fighting the Board was a commonly held appreciation for the school itself. Some of the reasons for this warm attachment have already been explored: the esteem of the principal, the fact that so many citizens had themselves attended Pelham, its recognition for turning out accomplished graduates,[84] and the fact that many families still had children in the school. For some, the school had come to represent the changes implied in a regional government and county school board system of administration. The closure marked the first intervention into the town which clearly did not benefit anyone; it only took something of their own away. The school, built gradually as money came available, represented a local commitment to providing each generation of children with a quality of education a little better than that enjoyed by the previous. From the interviews: "I'm simply saying that you don't have to go very far back in time to find out it was very uncommon for a farmer in the rural areas of Ontario who was beyond the ability to read and write. You don't have to go very far back, for instance, to find out if the husband could read and write, probably the wife couldn't but the converse could be true. Now lets say you take a

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[84] Jo Carson, "The School Parents Keep Fighting For," op. cit. p. W. 1.

situation of very little education or practically no education. Now the parents are saying that our kids have to have better than we got, but what is better? Well, so all right, our kids are going to have public school education. It was not uncommon in this area where the secondary education was too tough to get, so the kid went to the end of public school, that was the end of the ballgame. I mean, how many could say to the child, now here's trolley fare, you walk to Fonthill (about four miles) and go to Welland High School. Here's train fare you go to Smithville (about ten miles) and so one. So that was the end of it. So all right, these people grew up, and they say, look, we had public school education, but our kids have to have better and they're going to have high school education. So you're into another generation you see, and, all right, we'll work and save our money and so on, in this community we'll have a school, we'll hold it in the township hall or in the Women's Institute's Hall. We'll call it Pelham Continuation School, and, then, in 1927 we'll con the department (provincial department of education) into saying we need a continuation school here. All right, then, every kid has got to go to high school, then that generation came along and they said look we had secondary education, our kids have got to have a university education, and that's where we are today."[85]

Following a similar argument, another citizen expressed disbelief that the Board would close a school in which so much local money had been spent to build and expand, especially when most of the debentures had been paid. "People are getting fed up with so many people telling them you've

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[85] Interview with Bud Ker.

got to do this and you can't do that . . . . There's a lot of local interest here and people are proud of this school. It's been here a long time, and you can't seem to convince people, maybe they don't have any kids going there. People recognize that they have paid to keep that school going and to keep that maintained and up-to-date. They have a lot of money tied up in this, never mind all the smaller ones that they closed. There is a lot of money (that) has gone into it from this area, and they haven't done anything to it since they took over, and they closed up all the other schools. Some of them are sitting boarded up, some are sold for peanuts and they weren't even paid for. And that money is all going in a pot, and away she goes some place else."[86]

It is apparent that the village life in Fenwick helped to facilitate organized community action against the proposed closing. The threat of closure activated members of the community to block the Board's decision because they instantly acknowledged a common value structure of which the school played an intricate role. The school offered the students more than a chance to be educated and to learn a set of skills which might enable them to prosper; the school also socialized the students into accepting the village as a legitimate place in society. They not only had a considerable financial investment but also an important moral commitment. The school served as an institution which re-enforced attitudes and values learned elsewhere in the community. Consequently, parents appreciated being able to send their children to a school in which they knew what they would be taught and how they would be taught.

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[86] Interview with James Robertson.

(c) The Students

The students were, of course, caught in the middle of the parent-Board conflict. They always sided with the principal and protected him from outsiders who insinuated that he was manipulating them.[87] The evidence is that, on many occasions when they voiced their solidarity (such as in the weekly newspaper columns and during annual student theatre productions), the students acted independent of any pressure from teachers or administrators. In fact, they were often asked to restrain themselves. In conversations and interviews, students expressed both a naivete about what was finally happening to the central institution in their lives ('they can't do this') and a fatalism ('well, what can you do?') that is uncharacteristic of teenagers.[88]

Yet the students in Fenwick do not grow up in isolation as the day of the innocent farm lad has long disappeared from this part of Ontario. There are too many television programs, radio stations, newspapers and magazines with contrary and challenging values which cannot be ignored. There are music bands touring, bringing in the sounds of the big city. There are pushers with an endless supply of drugs and there are the Welland hotels for an in-between class glass of beer. The spatial distance experienced by previous generations, fostering an attitude that they were different, apart from the cities, and somehow a little better in the way they lived out their lives, is submerged in the quickness of modern communication. The young, however, are still apart enough from this outside world

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[87] Interview with R. A. McLeod.

[88] Interview with Bud Ker.

to be caught between a stable environment in the locality, suffocating yet reassuring, and a seemingly more exciting life elsewhere. The people in the Fenwick area have recognized this tension and are unsure whether they are willing to surrender their young to a complex and foreign education system, without retaining some control. The students themselves were unsure of how to leave Fenwick. The oft repeated claim that the small school is the best school is restating the need for the personal interaction that is a mark of the Fenwick community and its assurances of continuity.

(d) Court Action

Ultimately, the Concerned Parents were forced to take their opposition out of the area and into Toronto for the courts to settle. The decision to go to the judiciary was arrived at with mixed emotions. On the one hand, they were frustrated and disappointed that the Board finally decided to close the school. Since no other group of politicians would take up their fight, locally or provincially, they had finally concluded that the court, despite the costs and the time, was the only recourse still available. On the other hand, the judiciary was approached with glee as a golden opportunity to put down the Board once and for all. The speed in which pledges were received for a total of $2500[89] amazed the leaders of the Concerned Parents. It also demonstrated the strength of the community's commitment to keep the school open. A St. Catharines

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[89] In March, 1973, six weeks after the Board's decision, the committee circulated a page summary of events and a call for action. They requested that the form be returned indicating support and a pledge for money if it was needed. About 350 - 400 of these were returned and the money pledged here and at other times, totalled $2500.

lawyer was hired in May 1973 to begin to prepare the court case and in June he petitioned the Divisional Court of the Supreme Court of Ontario to present the citizens' case (which was to prevent the Board from closing the school in June, 1974).

The grounds for disputing the Board's decision were very nebulous and difficult to argue in court. Under a new statute, the Judicial Review Procedure Act[90], individuals are allowed to ask the courts to intervene in the area of administrative decisions. The Pelham case was one of the first to come before the courts under this legislation and the first concerning the review of a board of education decision. Unlike the old school boards, the newer regional education structures are independent from both the scrutiny of municipal governments and policy intervention from provincial education authorities.[91] The Concerned Parents were not able to challenge the Board of Education, either in front of more senior politicians or in front of judges, on the merits of the Pelham school. The only chance of reversing the Board's decision was to show that the

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[90] Another act was also used: the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, 1971, Ontario.

[91] For instance, the Department of Education, Department of Municipal Affairs and the Ontario Municipal Board all had opportunities to intervene into local education when it was apparent that a decision needed to be reviewed or whenever a group of citizens requested a review. While the provincial authorities since 1969 have controlled school boards inasmuch as the imposition of spending limits effectively directs education innovation and expansion, the same officials have argued that they could not interfere with local policy decisions. This was made explicit in a letter from cabinet minister Wells to the Concerned Parents and in a public statement by Premier Davis, October 31, 1973, C.B.C. Radio, "Provincial Affairs".

decision was made without due process of law and that the Board ignored 'a sense of fair play'. In their favour was the haste in which the new 1973-74 Board moved to close Pelham, a brief fifteen days after its inaugural meeting in January. Surely, the Concerned Parents' lawyer argued, this indicated that the Board did not take local views into account. There was not enough time to prepare briefs, etc., nor was there any public forum for debate. The Board's argument was that, since 1971, it had made every effort to communicate with the people of Pelham concerning their school and could cite letters and briefs to substantiate this argument. The Board's position was straightforward: it had considered all viewpoints and technical information and had resolved that no other solution was possible.[92] The case turned out to be complex for the justices and forced a second day of argument.[93] The decision, when handed down two weeks later, read two to one for disallowing the appeal; however, because of the uniqueness of the case, costs were to be borne by both parties.

The courts' majority and minority decisions are worth analyzing as they bring into focus the relationship between public bodies and community, where a group of citizens claim to be speaking for the community.[94]

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[92] Affidavit sworn by R. A. McLeod, in the Supreme Court of Ontario, "James Robertson and Irvine Muir v the Niagara South Board of Education," (Toronto, September 10, 1973).

[93] The three judge panel began by questioning whether or not the 'Concerned Parents of Pelham' had more right than the 'unconcerned' to be heard. This took a long fifteen minutes to settle and the case was allowed to be heard.

[94] Justice Wright, In the Supreme Court of Ontario, Divisional Court, James Robertson and Irvine Muir v the Niagara South Board of Education (Toronto, October 16, 1973), assenting decision written by J. Wright and agreed to by D. Wells, p.2.

The court ruled that it had no jurisdiction and, if it did, it would probably have ruled in favour of the Board. The case was of "general application in an era when regional bodies, responsible to a wide electorate, are assuming powers previously exercised by local bodies responsible only to a local electorate."[95] Given this new relationship between boards and citizens, what are the responsibilities of the board and the rights of citizens? The board's obligations are specified[96] and in the opinion of the two justices, left "no doubt (that) the respondent has the power or right by or under the statute to close schools."[97] Furthermore a case before the Ontario courts in 1971 concluded that "the obligation of the Board, shortly stated, is to provide for the pupils, for whom it is responsible, adequate accommodation and an adequate number of qualified teachers. In the discharge of these duties it is required to establish and maintain at least one high or vocational school . . . . By virtue of its general powers of management . . . . discontinue the use of any building for any one or more purposes and in general make such use of its physical facilities and the persons it employs in whatsoever manner as will, in its judgement, best fulfill its overriding obligation to accommodate and teach all of its pupils."[98] The legal rights of the student do not extend to

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[95] Justice Wright, p. 3.

[96] In The Secondary Schools and Boards of Education Act (R.S.O 1970 C.425) and The Schools Administration Act (R.S.O. 1970 C424).

[97] Wright, p. 4.

[98] Crawford et al v Ottawa Board of Education, in which citizens challenged the right of that Board to change an English speaking high school to a French speaking one, confirmed the rights of a board to define the uses of its schools, as quoted in Ibid., pp. 4-5.

include the right to choose any particular school; the student has only the right to attend a school. The character of the Board's decision, was administrative, and not judicial or quasi-judicial as Wilson had argued, simply "because it was openly opposed by the personal applicants and their committee, or the Town of Pelham, or by a substantial number of residents of that town."[99] Finally, Justice Wright ruled that the Board had listened sufficiently to the opinions of the people of Pelham and could not be faulted in that respect. In conclusion, the majority report found the case out of its jurisdiction and sought not "to lay down in advance rules to govern the conflicts inherent in the imposition of regional government on local areas previously enjoying the administration of their own autonomous authorities."[100]

The decision written by Justice Holland directly challenged the legal assumptions of the majority report.[101] While Justices Wright and Welles chose to ignore the significance of the new Board deciding to close Pelham on January 23, 1973, without giving time for citizens to prepare briefs and make presentations, Justice Holland argued that this was a major miscarriage of justice. For example, he pointed out that several new members were involved in this critical decision. Although he concurred with Justice Wright that the decision was not within the scope of the

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[99] Ibid, p. 5.

[100] Ibid, p. 7.

[101] In addition, Justice Holland would have assigned all court costs to the Board.

Statutory Powers Procedure Act, Justice Holland was able to cite a number of situations prior to the previously mentioned acts of the provincial legislature giving the judiciary ample justification to intervene where it saw fit. In particular, he disputed the distinction made between administrative, quasi-judicial, and judicial decisions:

> "For many years distinctions were made between (such decisions) . . . . However, the law, in my view, has changed and must change to recognize the changing circumstances that make the modern day world so complex and make the citizens so much subject to decisions of administrative boards and tribunals." 102

The Justice gathered together a number of decisions and legal comments to argue that this was a decision of "far reaching consequences not only on the students who attend the school and their parents, but on the community as a whole."[103] In conclusion, he stated that

> "the Board knew of the concern of the citizens of the community and, in my view, were under an obligation to give them an opportunity to be heard before the final decision was made. It is, of course, argued that the 'School Board' had given ample opportunity to the citizens of the area to be heard. This is true but the composition of the Board changed and the arguments and submissions were made to the members of the 1972 Board and to the members of the preceding Boards and not to the 1973 Board which made the decision under review. It is all very well to consider a School Board as a separate entity but it is a matter of fact that in this case it was differently composed in 1973

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[102] Justice J. Holland, the Supreme Court of Ontario, in the Division Court, J. Robertson and I. Muir v the Niagara South Board of Education (Toronto, October 16, 1973), the dissenting opinion, p. 4.

[103] Justice Holland, p. 6.

> and it is, to my mind, ridiculous to say that the hearing by the 1972 Board satisfied the requirement of a hearing prior to a decision by the 1973 Board."[104]

These two written judgements reflect the differences noted elsewhere concerning the position of the citizens' group vis-a-vis the Niagara South Board of Education. The majority court ruling held that as long as due process is followed then the board is permitted to pursue the education policy it thinks best within its jurisdiction. The provincial politicians, who had been unwilling to intervene in this complex local dispute, opted for agreeing with the majority decision which, to them, clearly established that local boards were responsible for their own actions.[105] Pelham citizens, of course, saw Justice Holland as somewhat of a hero and were quick to seize upon his decision as justification for their own interpretation of the ongoing struggle with the Board. The different judicial opinions heightened the antagonism between the Board and the dissidents who continued to see themselves as a frustrated minority.

(e) The Last Hurrah

What makes this confrontation so remarkable is the fact that the leaders, and most of their supporters, refused to accept the judicial decision as the final death knell for the school. The mood was reserved

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[104] Justice Holland, p. 7.

[105] This position was asserted by Education Minister Thomas Wells publicly, November 2, 1973, when questioned in the Ontario Legislature by the Welland area Liberal M. L. A. Ron Haggerty. "Ask Wells to Intervene in School Dispute," Welland Evening Tribune, (November 5, 1973), p. 16.

when the court ruling was announced; at the Fenwick Lions' Club, an alderman, a co-chairman of Concerned Parents, the principal and six teachers brooded over the decision for several hours. Later, when the written decisions were read, a happier attitude prevailed; one judge had agreed and that could be the basis of an appeal to a higher court. The question facing the strategist was how best to fight the political battle subtly urged by judiciary. The two pronged fight that followed was intended to demoralize the Board and its staff and,[106] secondly, to convince the provincial government to intervene. It was most difficult to reach the politicians in order to pressure them into changing Pelham's status. Letters were distributed to major newspapers,[107] telegrams were sent to leaders of provincial parties, news items were forwarded to Robert Welsh, a St. Catharines cabinet minister, and Education Minister Wells was continually bombarded with news clippings, petitions and forceful letters. Locally, a public meeting was held at the school on a Sunday afternoon, October 28, 1973, attended by fifty local residents, during which the lawyers urged everyone to write their local representatives. Finally, the Student Council of Pelham Secondary School purchased 2500 bumper stickers ('Keep

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[106] For example, the principal spearheaded an appeal of a Board decision not to pay him, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (O.S.S.T.F.) branch president at Pelham and the O.S.S.T.F. branch president at E. L. Crossley for their attending the court hearing in Toronto for two days. Although this issue was to become a central issue between the school staff, O.S.S.T.F. headquarters, staff lawyers and the Board, it is secondary to the discussion here.

[107] One was published in the Globe and Mail, J. Wilson, Letters to the Editor, "Pelham School Closing," Globe and Mail, (Toronto, October 23, 1973), p. 8.

Pelham Alive'), 2000 of which were to be sold and 500 to be distributed free. All of this activity turned out to be of no avail as no government official was willing to intervene in the affairs of the regional boards.

On November 19, 1973, J. Wilson, the lawyer for the Concerned Parents of Wainfleet, West Lincoln and Pelham, took the case to the Ontario Court of Appeal, asking for permission to appeal the Divisional Court ruling. When the Court of Appeals chose to deny lawyer Wilson, without comment, the right to appeal on December 2, 1973, came as a shock to those most involved and marked the beginning of eight final months of futile and frustrating fighting with the Board. Once again every conceivable avenue of protest was pursued in the hope that the Board's position could be weakened. The intention of the Concerned Parents was to mount sufficient political pressure through publicity campaigns and private lobbying to force the provincial Ministry of Education to intervene and investigate why the school was being closed. The principal and I spent several afternoons writing letters insinuating wrong-doing, unfairness and even corruption on the part of the Board. These letters, distributed to the media, were, without fail, given local publicity but the Board was never provoked into an obviously foolish action, as our strategy had intended. The Chairman, Mr. A. Spear of Fort Erie, was a particular target; however, he maintained a public silence no matter what the provocation.[108] So determined was the principal to force the issue in order to present his side

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[108] Privately, he was often furious. At the July 2, 1974 meeting, I overheard him telling the Director of Education that "Ker is a sick man; he is really sick!"

of the story that he tried to provoke the Board into firing him.[109]

The Minister of Education agreed, after the courts were finished with the case, to meet with the citizens and the Board to see if a solution could not be found. This February 5, 1974 meeting at Niagara Falls turned out to be another frustrating event for the citizen delegation as it became quite clear that the Minister had no intention of intervening in the dispute.[110] During the two hour meeting, each group simply reiterated its position in front of the Minister; consequently, nothing was resolved and the Minister continued to refuse to intervene. Talking outside to reporters and citizens later, Mr. Wells expressed the opinion that his Ministry would give serious consideration to a petition from Pelham residents if they wanted to change school boundaries and become part of the Lincoln County Board of Education jurisdiction.[111]

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[109] This action would have led to a board of reference in front of the Minister of Education, and an ideal opportunity for the principal to expose the whole story as he saw it.

[110] In fact, a memorandum from R. A. McLeod to members of the Board previous to the meeting quoted the Minister as saying that he was not going to intervene: "the Minister made it very clear to the chairman that the decision (to close Pelham Secondary School) was entirely a Board decision and it was not the intention of the Ministry to be a part of it or to interfere with it in any way." Niagara South Board of Education, R. A. McLeod, "Memorandum to Members of the Board re Pelham Secondary School," (January 17, 1974), nineteen days before the scheduled meeting.

[111] A large number of students and senior citizens travelled to Niagara Falls to picket the meeting only to find that such activity needed a permit in the provincially owned Niagara Parkway. As an indicator of the support in the Pelham area, the senior citizens were able to recruit about twenty-five persons for the trip (using free coffee and snack as an incentive) in two hours of phone calling that morning. There would have been more but the Fenwick United Church Women's Auxiliary met that afternoon.

On February 12, one week after the meeting with the Minister, the Concerned Parents began circulating a petition demanding that "the Niagara South Board of Education approach the Minister of Education for a boundary change to place the Town of Pelham under the jurisdiction of Lincoln County for education purposes." Placed in stores and meeting halls, and carried around by students and involved citizens, the petition gained over twenty-four hundred signatures in three weeks, mostly from Pelham but also from Wainfleet and West Lincoln.[112] Buoyed by these signs of support, Jim Robertson presented the petition to the Niagara South Board, March 19, 1974. He was politely heard and in three minutes the presentation was over with no questions being asked by the elected officials.[113]

Despite this obvious setback, Ker and Robertson decided to begin to lobby more intensively with the members of the provincial legislature to see if they could be of any last minute assistance. Here the citizens had their fight complicated by the fact that a Progressive Conservative backbencher represented the Fonthill area and a Liberal opposition member the Fenwick area. The Conservative, Ellis Morningstar, was so inept that

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[112] In addition, the council of West Lincoln passed a motion on February 18, 1974 asking the Minister of Education to initiate a study of education in that area and on March 4th Pelham council reaffirmed its position that the school should be kept opened.

[113] A few days later, Robertson received a letter from Mr. McLeod acknowledging the petition and stating that the Board's position was to not approach the Minister for any boundary changes. An effort in February to involve the Ombudsman, a C.B.C. programme designed to help individuals and groups in conflict with governments, also failed when on March 4, 1974 a researcher Susan Moodie wrote back to Mr. Ker that the "Ombudsman was unable to help."

he was unable to recognize Jim Robertson, even though they had met numerous times previously as Robertson was a Conservative.[114] The Liberal, Ray Haggerty, was apprehensive inasmuch as the members of the Niagara South Board, including Chairman Spear, were mostly Liberals (as many as sixteen out of twenty). Whenever Haggerty stood up in Legislature to ask about the school, he received irate calls from the Chairman telling him to mind his own affairs or his next campaign would be sabotaged.[115]

Pelhamites also travelled to Toronto several times to talk to Members of the Legislature in the hope of gaining political support and having the petition presented to the Legislature.[116] The Pelham question was raised by Haggerty, Liberal Leader Robert Nixon and N.D.P. Leader

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Footnote deleted

115 As told by Ray Haggerty

116 The petition was read into the Legislative records on April 24, 1974 by Mr. Lewis, but as expected, its request for Legislative action was not heeded. That we chose to give the petition to Mr. Lewis instead of Haggerty, despite his request, upset the Liberals and cost the citizens some support; however, it was calculated that Lewis would be effective (which he was). Correspondence from Ray Haggerty to Peter Wilson, of Fenwick dated June 7, 1974.

Stephen Lewis on several occasions between March and June 1974 but the Minister remained firm in his position that he could not intervene in this dispute.[117] Mr. Lewis argued that this was an eleventh hour action which would have no impact; the time to approach him would have been much earlier in the fight when something could have been done.[118] The original decision of the Concerned Parents to use their influence in the local Conservative party had achieved very little, and the group's change in strategy came too late to be of any benefit.

The final hope for the citizens was the interest shown by the neighbouring Lincoln County Board of Education. Faced with a tight capital budget and a need for another secondary school not far from Pelham, that Board was very receptive when a group of ratepayers from West Lincoln suggested that Lincoln take over Pelham Secondary School. The Board agreed to ask the Niagara South Board for a meeting to discuss such a boundary change. When the two Boards met in late June to discuss each other's position papers, the meeting lasted less than ten minutes. As Bud Ker described it, "one came to talk about baseball and the other about hockey. They had nothing to talk about."[119]

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[117] Ellis Morningstar could not arrange any meetings with Premier Davis or Education Minister Wells. Ray Haggerty arranged a five minute meeting with Robert Nixon while Ron Leaven, a defeated federal N.D.P. candidate living in Fonthill, arranged a forty-five minute meeting with provincial leader Stephen Lewis.

[118] Conversation with Stephen Lewis.

[119] Conversation with Mr. Ker and a viewpoint which he repeated on a radio show (C.H.O.W., Welland), July 2, 1974.

This meeting was an affront to those students, teachers and parents involved in the fight to keep the school open. They had fought many months, losing every battle along the way, and now it appeared as if they were finally about to lose the entire struggle. Some were bitter, like Jim Robertson who had left his fruit farm unattended in the spring, and like Bud Ker, who simply threw away any chance of being promoted by that Board.[120] These two men were able to point out instances where they thought the Board was lying; yet, they could not find anyone in authority willing to listen. A final meeting between Jim Robertson, a senior official of the Ministry of Education and myself illustrates the extent of the alienation developed in the townspeople. Mr. Robertson opened the meeting with: "Your Mr. Spear is a goddam liar." The meeting produced no hope. The official was adamant that only the boards of education could change boundaries. Even if some citizens, the Premier of the province,[121] and the Lincoln County Board wanted changes, the Ministry would not intervene to insist on an agreement. Thus, the Ministry of Education stood by the position that, although the province created the boards by an act of the

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[120] He was offered (and he finally accepted) a newly created position of 'Administrator of Continuing Education' for 1974-75; however, he was given no assignment, no responsibilities and no one to report to as of July 13, 1974, although they wanted him to start in September. It should be noted that the Board had already committed itself to paying the current salary of all staff including their administrative allowance for one year after the school had closed.

[121] The Premier indicated in a letter to Art Moss, a teacher of Pelham Secondary School, that if the enrollment went up, the province would pay for the necessary renovations. Correspondence dated June 24, 1974. The cost of the renovations was Niagara South's major justification for closing the school.

Legislature and although their spending was closely supervised (through provincial ceilings), the province no longer had the authority to change even the boundaries unless the boards were agreeable, a questionable position considering the history of central-local authority relations in the province of Ontario. Mr. Robertson left this final meeting more convinced than ever of the wrongdoing and saddened by the prospect that the school had only a few days left.

In the first week of July, a small group of students stood around the school to prevent the Board removing equipment. They showed up at seven in the morning, staying long enough to confuse the Board and demonstrate that they had no plans for the closing.[122] The last weeks in June had been humiliating for the principal as books began to disappear, and as staff members from Crossley and other schools came to look over what was to be gained. Earlier, when the school had been broken into four consecutive weekends, the principal commented that "I feel like I'm being raped. I've got to turn down the Board's job offer to show others that the fight is still going on, that some still care. If they see me take a plush job, it'll be game over for the school. I've got to convince the students that as a community we still care what happens." By the middle of July, as I spent a last lunch with him, he too was finally wearying of three years of setbacks and failures: "I'll give it one more shot and

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[122] As of July Board officials had no use for the school as no one else wanted it and had been forced to allot fourteen hundred dollars for plywood to cover the windows. No one was in charge of the closing as both the principal and the vice principal refused to supervise it. When asked to look after the closing, the principal reminded the Board that they had earlier deducted two days pay (for going to court in Toronto) based on a 197 day work year. That meant he was finished June 28, 1974, and his next appointment began September 1974.

that'll be it. I'm tiring of all this well doing. Perhaps I could organize a meeting to see if there is any support for picketing all summer."[123]

Summary

The description of citizen action during the school closure illustrates the intensity of the commitment towards local educational institutions. An argument can be made that events during the time of this study show that education policies ranked higher in interest and concern than any other sphere of public policy matters, reinforcing the point made earlier that family life dominates many decisions made by individual townspeople. The tenacious battle fought by the supporters of Pelham Secondary School brings out the differences between the new and old community where it was discovered that it was easier in the latter to initiate action and to sustain public support and participation due to established understandings as to the commonality of the life situation.

Determined individuals and intelligent interest group strategies combined to ensure that the Concerned Parents of Pelham would be more effective than most groups, such as those who fought the closing of the Thorold-Fonthill Secondary School. The role of the principal, his choosing to side clearly with the community and not with the Board, gave the Concerned Parents unparalleled assistance, permitting them to confront the Board on many technical grounds. However, despite these obviously important factors it is the fact that the citizens' opposition was founded on an acknowledged community, and the principal's comprehensive understanding of that community, which, in the end, gave the group its contin-

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[123] Interview with Bud Ker.

uous momentum.

The struggle over the future of Pelham Secondary School obviously differs from the earlier description of local political life. The question raised is whether or not this ability to act is an example to outsiders of the intensity felt by many people toward local institutions and the community, or whether this is simply a 'special' case, a deviation unlikely to occur again. Given the most common image of the past is that of independent, sometimes stubborn, concerned men keen on public affairs, some local residents think of themselves as part of a community whose members take an interest in each others affairs.[124] From this perspective, the quiet community, featuring a daily routine which is low key and individualistic, can easily give way to communal expression of dismay and frustration towards outsiders seeking to destroy what is widely thought to be good and to be of real value to the community. Yet, for the most part, the opposition only became visible in concrete circumstances. Local government reform was opposed silently (where it was opposed at all) because the removal of decision making authority, the ability to make at least a few decisions right in Fenwick, was not made obvious by a series of damaging decisions. In that way, regional government has been able to carry out its routine tasks with a minimum of supervision and suspicion. This has not been so with the school board, a body inheriting a difficult situation and one which showed itself as not being capable of adjusting its

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[124] A good example is Mrs. H. T. Elliot, a senior citizen who used her past experiences as an active person as an example of ideal community participation.

policies, or simply understanding the complaints of the townspeople. The function of the local school was such that its removal, even if the students need to travel only two miles away, was thought to be harmful to the town (or, more specifically, the village of Fenwick). The Board had committed itself to an educational policy which was unacceptable to the people of Pelham. Due to the new structure of power, local citizens were bound to be the eventual losers.

Although local politicians and the leaders of the Concerned Parents were sure that this organization represented the vast majority of Pelham citizens, there are indications that except for public meetings at the height of the struggle, no more than three hundred persons expressed an interest in the school by returning questionnaires or contributing money. However, as the following quotation indicates, this is a significant number to be interested in public decisions in Pelham.

"At the first meeting we had over here at the school, there was about 300 there and if you get 300 people out on a Sunday afternoon, in the winter time that's pretty good. They set a waste paper basket down by the door and $300 was just thrown in the pot as they were going out. To me, in this day and age, if you get a response like that, you got to have some backing. I was a little disappointed in this letter we sent out, I think we should have had more replies than we did, but then again, as I say, in this day and age when you get 200 odd people, its getting on to 300 I think, that will sit down and fill this thing out, a lot of them came in the mail, most of them were returned back to the school, some of them I had given to me personally, some brought here to the house and we

could raise $2500 just like that if we call those pledges. I'm sure if we do that they want to because it's all voluntary, and I think, never mind how many we send out, you've got to figure there will be some you won't get replies to, but I think if you get that kind of response, we have enough to go ahead. If it was just a half dozen of us or so you might as well forget it but I think there's enough people behind us that, as things really get going, to back us up."[125]

Concerted community action in the view of the more active has come to mean a few hundred out of ten thousand residents. Politics has no special claim on people's time and must compete for their interest and attention. In Pelham this was achieved only when the battle was entertaining and directly involving a most important aspect of local life. The school issue, in being both of these, captured as high a degree of interest as was thought possible by local leaders.

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[125] Interview with Jim Robertson.

Chapter Seven

Community, Citizenship and Local Government

The original focus of this study to evaluate the impact of the province's regional government reform strategies on Pelham was broadened to include a review of the historical development of the town and a look at selected non-political areas of activity. Through using the various research techniques applied in the project it was hoped that there could be some clarification of (1) the impact of regional government and education on a small town, (2) the meaning that 'community' had for local citizens and (3) the relationship between these notions of community and political action. The thrust was to explore the possible relationship between the structure of government and community activity. Two decision situations, the development of a local land use plan and the closure of Pelham Secondary School, have been analyzed in detail because they best represent the tensions created by the new regional governments. Firstly, there has been a general professionalization of the policy process that needs to be explored in further detail. Regional government necessarily requires a staff technically more competent and professionally committed than previous local governments. In addition, any politician who wants to be aware of the activities of the administrative staff needs to spend many more hours than was required of elected representatives on former councils. The consequence is that citizens have found themselves either excluded from policy making or at a

disadvantage in dealing with authorities.[1] The second major conclusion is that Pelhamites have not benefitted from the new regional authorities. The most intense opposition has been expressed by the traditionalists who have long been involved in local organizations. The newcomers, who are typically not active participants, have not expressed as intense an opposition to these political changes. Moreover, it is explained that the community of the traditionalists has long been in decline and that regional government merely symbolizes yet another sign of their powerlessness.[2]

Significant Historical Influences

The historical summary brought out three issues of concern related to modern Pelham: (1) there have been long standing differences between the Fonthill villagers and township dwellers; (2) citizen memories indicate that Pelhamites were more concerned and more active in the past than they are presently; and (3) a strong sense of community existed

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[1] This point is also raised by Stephen Clarkson in his analysis of Toronto city politics. Stephen Clarkson, "Private Politics, Citizen Politics, and the Public", in Alan Powell, editor, The City Attacking Modern Myths (Toronto, 1972), pp. 225-230.

[2] Although a distinction is made between the old or traditional social organization and the new one, the following analysis is intended to avoid any romanticizing about the past. The difference is that the old community was designed such that citizens needed to participate to survive. This is no longer true, but many regret the passing of the old. It also brings forward the conceptual problem of using the term community. The intention is to distinguish between those who use community in reference to an administrative unit and those who see community as a social reality. This, of course, is the point of the Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft ideal types. Colin Bell and Howard Newby, Community Studies An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community (London, 1971), p. 49.

in old Pelham. The historical differences are related in part to the fact that Fonthill began its transition into a commuter settlement long before the township. The influx of transient families, industrial workers and managers, and the wealthy had an impact on Fonthill but not on Pelham Township including the smaller settlements such as Fenwick. Thus there has been a greater continuity in the rural area of the old middle class than in Fonthill which has seen that group (farmers, merchants, local professionals) gradually diminish in importance since 1900. One manifestation of this different social structure has been voting in provincial and federal elections since the twenties. The data used in chapter three indicates that the villagers have tended to support the Conservatives, especially the provincial Conservatives, whereas the Liberals have been strongest in the rural areas. As the areas have changed, and become more alike since 1945, this difference in electoral behaviour has been less pronounced.

As far as it could be determined through conducting interviews and analyzing historical documents, there was a time in the past when citizens were more likely to take an interest in council and council-related affairs than they were during 1972-74, the years of this study. Much of this difference can be explained by (1) the idealization of the past on the part of the informers, (2) the material wealth in the community and (3) the role of the council. The first point merely serves as a reminder that their memories of a more active past emphasized moments of intense political interest without referring to long periods of disinterest and withdrawal by a majority of citizens. It is obvious that despite this romanticizing there were circumstances and issues which

aroused the interest of great numbers of citizens who would fill up meeting rooms to challenge their politicians. Hence, while the differences between participation patterns during the time frame of this study and that previously are not to be exaggerated, neither are they to be ignored completely. The most fundamental difference between the two periods was the lack of wealth in the town during its formative years compared to its general wealth in the seventies. Although the argument in the second chapter is that Fonthill and sections of Pelham Township were peopled with well-to-do middle class citizens, the flow of cash in Ontario settlements for the greater part of the nineteenth century was small and many transactions were carried out as barter and not as cash exchange.[3] Historical records indicate that people in the Pelham area were never poverty stricken in either relative terms (vis-a-vis other southern Ontario--northern United States settlements in the same historical period) or in absolute terms (no starvation, etc. was ever reported), giving credence to the earlier observation that nineteenth century Pelham was a comfortable place to live and work, at least for the observed majority. The prosperous Pelhamites made their living as merchants, farmers, professionals, clergymen, etc. who formed the nucleus of that century's Canadian middle class. There is some evidence, however, that despite this security, local government began in an era in which men paid their taxes with their time (road building, for instance) as fre-

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[3] G. P. deT. Glazebrook, Life in Ontario a Social History (Toronto, 1968), p. 104. This type of economic exchange was used by Tonnies to differentiate between the ideal types of social organization. Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Society, Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft (New York, 1957), pp. 244-245.

quently as they did with their monies. Farmers were often forced to depend on barter or part-time non-farm labour to bring in needed goods and services. The historical material situation of the farmers was such that local government officials could not spend a lot of cash without causing personal hardship or inconvenience. This served as a motivation for farmers to take a great interest in the plans and budgets proposed by municipal officials. Similarly merchants were inclined to encourage private spending (or private improvement) rather than public spending (public improvement) less too little cash be circulating throughout the settlements. Limits placed at times on local authorities not to spend money, at least not until the proposals were carefully reviewed, reflected the values and circumstances of a people who behaved as if the unnecessary spending of public funds was not to be tolerated. Public bodies and private associations alike could not survive without the help of active citizens who volunteered to contribute their time and energies where cash was absent. In other words, there was a time in which citizens were needed for the community to survive and provide itself with essential services.[4]

Another cause for a more active citizenry in historic Pelham was the more active role assumed by municipal government in the community. Whereas many municipalities in the period 1945-70 had been reduced to

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[4] For example, parents were active in the Fonthill Home and School Association because the school board was unable to provide the extras that parents wanted. The only alternative was to contribute one's own resources to raise funds on a voluntary basis and if one was short of cash the contribution needed to be oneself.

administrative units for costly provincially organized services, local governments in previous eras were contending with the development and establishment of a number of expensive and innovative improvements. People were interested in local government because it was interesting; its function was critical to the development of the township or village.[5] The development pattern of southern Ontario depended on local councils providing a number of services which would encourage easy communication and economic growth; roads, hydro electricity and water were all important to ensure an orderly and steady improvement in local living conditions. Decisions affected local ratepayers as taxes were almost entirely based on property values. As the community grew and essential services were installed, there were fewer reasons for continuing to take an interest in council's business. The original intention of local government legislation in Upper Canada was to transfer to the community the costs and responsibilities of organizing the municipality's growth and providing the physical resources for a specified list of services as needed (schools, waterworks, jails, etc.). Even though legislation initially assigned major local projects to the municipalities, council's wide powers to initiate action central to the community disappeared as circumstances changed. By the Depression years, the important questions of the era, such as social services, were being decided at a more senior level of government and excluded local officials (although the munici-

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[5] In the history of Pelham, the construction of new schools stood out as remembered political events as did the development of the Fonthill waterworks in the nineteen twenties, as these both required capital outlays and were deviations from previous service commitments.

palities were often left with administrative responsibilities for many of these programmes). Citizens, in raising the argument about the active role of past councils in the community, never fully appreciated that participation patterns were now different due to the different life situation of the participants and the different role of the council which was particularly important to the resident in the past. The oft-repeated 'different' situation in the past refers specifically to the decline of the independent farmer and merchant as high status and secure income earners within the area of Pelham Township and the Village of Fonthill and a coinciding change in the life situation of a majority of the citizenry. The nature of local government gradually changed over a relatively long period of time as council initiated and legislated fewer and fewer policies and spent more of its time in administering and following up routines already established. Consequently, the level of interest has declined as this has become more and more obvious to local residents. The question raised here concerns the impact of regional government given that this analysis suggests that citizens are presently becoming less involved in council affairs.

The Impact of Regionalization

The role of council was not usually questioned or of particular public importance as long as the smaller municipalities were expanding slowly. The impact of rapid population and industrial growth in a number of regions revealed the weaknesses of local officials in resolving questions of planning, development, taxation, participation, services, representation, etc., leading the provincial government in Ontario to embark on its policy of forming new regional governments.

This policy objective was intended to put the responsibility for initiating and financing major local projects back into the areas most affected by these service problems. However, the ability to initiate action, was not returned to local government but was vested in a new super-structure, the regional municipalities.

The shift to urban oriented and controlled politics has not been as extensive as local people had feared and, if anything, regional authorities have expressed sympathy and concern about rural interests and needs. Any analysis of the structure of power would indicate, nonetheless, that the control over important matters, in education as well as municipal affairs, is now held by those living outside of Pelham. In that way, a new configuration of officials and regional politicians has been set in motion to make decisions and allocate resources with minimal support from the people of Pelham. For instance, as pointed out in chapter five, regional government is interested in organizing public and private resources to develop, orderly and slowly, large expanses of land being used as farmland or being held for speculation. This policy objective is more identifiable with planners, academics, environmentalists, and city dwellers, than with rural people who seek the freedom to do what they want.[6]

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[6] Although the distinction between 'urban lifestyles' and 'rural lifestyles' is not as great as is imagined locally, there is a real difference between the urban professional purporting to represent the public interest, and the values articulated by local politicians and interest group leaders. The only support within Pelham for the Region's position was from the Environmentalists, most of whom were urban type professionals. The real tension is caused by the increased influence of the larger centres

The transformation in the first years (1969-1974) was incomplete and the policy outcomes of Regional Niagara were a mixture that accommodated the demands of competing groups and reflecting different developmental goals. The struggle over Pelham Secondary School had its intense symbolic value because the townspeople perceived the extensive power held by the outsiders and the legal authority bestowed upon them by provincial authorities.[7] The intentions of the official plan adopted by the town council in December 1973 and the thrusts of the planning policies of Regional Niagara were clear signs that the former influentials, who advocated uncontrolled growth and free use of land, were no longer able to control public policy for their own use. It is difficult to imagine the former Pelham Township drawing up the same plan as either the Town of Pelham or Regional Niagara.

The description of social activities in chapter three clearly shows that much of the activity that has always gone on in Pelham continues even after the provincial government initiated its regional government strategy. Families are formed, churches hold services, children go to school, businesses continue, men work, clubs carry on their activities and so forth. Although life goes on normally in most spheres, there are changes which imply new ways of doing things especially for local politicians and bureaucrats. These changes have not been as dramatic as predicted but they do indicate that a style of

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on local life. Jessie Bernard, The Sociology of Community (Glenview, Illinois, 1973), p. 86.

[7] In other words, it was primarily a defensive battle. See Jessie Bernard, op. cit., pp. 154-156.

politics, already known, was secured and strengthened; namely, the professionalization of politics.

One aspect of this study has been to draw out the possible relationship between community and local government, inferring that images of community influence political behaviour more than previous academic analyses had indicated.[8] Research was designed and carried out to find out what governments were doing in Pelham (and how they were doing it), how it affected participation and how people were interpreting their community in light of government, and their own, activity. It was evident early in this project that few citizens participated regularly in local government and that this participation ranged from a high of one third of the eligible electorate voting during the 1972 election to as few as sixteen people attending the regular bi-monthly council meeting.[9] This was at odds with memories of previous council meetings and related activities in which, it was said, large numbers consistently attended council sessions. Accepting that there might have been a more active citizenry in past years, what were the characteristics of the modern

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[8] R. E. Pahl, in a review of historical-sociological urban research, has noted that social scientists are becoming more aware of local conditions. "This kind of study demonstrates that, although industrial-urbanism and the development of class-consciousness are directly related, there are important differences between towns. . . . The way in which industrial towns grow may have a lasting impact on local class-consciousness. Some towns are towns from the start, others never move beyond a collection of urban villages." R. E. Pahl, "A Perspective on Urban Sociology," in R.E. Pahl, editor, Readings in Urban Sociology (Oxford, 1968), p. 37.

[9] This notion of participation excludes for the moment the number talking or reading about local politics without being visible to others.

political life which created a low profile for political discussion and policy making? In the present (i.e., 1972-74) a pattern emerged whereby citizens would involve themselves only when they interpreted a policy outcome as being a 'benefit' for, or a 'threat' to, their life situation; the 'threat' situations were more likely to draw out people than the 'benefits'. While council worked its way through numerous trivial and boring meetings, citizens stayed away seeking to join in only at instances of particular and pressing importance to themselves. For example, between 1970-73, council members met continually with farmers' organizations concerning land use proposals in the town and regional plans. Similarly, residents on Hurricane Road in Fonthill fought a developer's proposal to change the zoning by-law limiting that street to single family-large lot dwellings. Council dealt with citizens most frequently over these or individual services demands. Citizens also needed technical reasons for justifying their demands. Thus, the first part of the explanation is that only infrequently did citizens express an interest in council decisions and in those situations it was not difficult to attribute this to an obvious interest. This description of local council-citizen interaction is best interpreted by recognizing that individuals and groups sought out policy preferences from councils. The interpretation is also historically consistent inasmuch as citizens paid more attention to council in the past because it more consistently dealt with matters of immediate importance to the townspeople. As disposable income grew, individuals found that they could withstand incremental growth in municipal taxes. As long as there was little cash in the community and as long as the services affected many consistently, then it is not

impossible to imagine that there were large turnouts at council meetings if only to find out if expenditures of any sort were justified.

A second explanation for a more involved citizenry might be based on the premise that, in previous years, politics had a different meaning for local citizens. Political participation was greater because of a different class structure in which the middle class had an immediate economic interest in the role of council and the level of expenditures. The question is whether or not the older social and economic organization was such that citizens readily recognized a public good, a common purpose and a sense of commitment which found expression in the work of council but which no longer existed in the nineteen seventies. The more interested and active orientation towards local governmental institutions was still visible in and around Fenwick indicating that the transformation from the old (rural farming families) settlement to the new (urban commuters) has been gradual and is not yet completed. Because rural people are more concerned about local events and because Fenwick still has many rural residents, it has retained more characteristics of the old than does Fonthill. These residents had used their council on occasion to obtain collective goals. Their school board had provided buildings in which they took pride of accomplishment and which represent their commitment to the young of the community. The new structures of government and education was most strongly resented by the old, the localistic in perspective and the most active (pre 1970). They quickly recognized that once their institutions were re-structured, they would no longer be left on their own and would be dominated by outsiders. As

local businesses were closed down and farms abandoned, this old middle class lost its status, power and influence in local politics. The disintegration was not yet completed by the nineteen sixties as farmers and merchants still dominated the councils of Pelham Township and were very much present in the Village of Fonthill.[10] The decisions that councillors were dealing with were, however, insignificant compared to matters dealt with by local councils in years past. The new power-holders, those in control of regional government and the board of education, were a mixture of planners, civil servants, city politicians and provincial authorities, that is, those who saw themselves as professional or full-time politicians and administrators.

The changes which brought about Regional Niagara were in part the result of a continuing decline in the effectiveness of small municipalities to resolve problems which were manifestations of provincial and national phenomena such as housing, environment protection, industrialization and recreation. The inclination among local councils had always been to encourage development in a prospering community. This was to assure merchants of more consumers while at the same time, it was argued, it would help maintain a low tax rate. It was not that there was no order or planning in the development as there was an explicit value structure

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[10] The new council in the Town of Pelham had fragments of the new and the old. For example, the 1972 town council consisted of a retired employee, two self-employed and part owners in peninsula businesses, an employee of a multi-national corporation, a local merchant and two farmers, both near retirement from politics and from farming.

at work; the history of public decisions illustrates that councils were determined to encourage maximum growth within the municipality. The situation was chaotic to provincial authorities and those municipal leaders who had recognized that the public costs for private development were extravagant and needed to be reorganized in such a fashion as to minimize public investment. In declaring the former municipalities of Pelham and Fonthill obsolete, the provincial government proposed a new structure which would only succeed if expertise were applied to handle the numerous development proposals and administrative complications. The former township and village had no conflicting goals within themselves although each did have individual conflicting land use problems. The new town had to accommodate conflicting goals as did Regional Council, thereby changing the nature of council and representation. Instead of small groups working together towards recognized goals, as was often the case in the village and the township, politicians were forced to think about accommodating goals and interests, until this time, assumed by each to be legitimate and natural. People in Fonthill were said to want an urban level of municipal services (street lighting, paved streets, sewers, water etc.) while the farmers were not inclined to make as many demands. Council was forced to find ways to accommodate these two views as to the proper role of council when the two groups were put together in the new town.

The new structures of decision making are those of a representative democracy (as were the old) inasmuch as Regional and local councillors are elected on a regular basis. The shift of power and influence is

subtle; it concentrates a greater amount of power among fewer representatives who are left with the task of policy administration and development. Given the increased workload caused by many applications for industrial, commercial and residental development, the creation of new official plans, the installation of costly services, the formation of a new staff and the problems in dealing with provincial and regional technical staffs, the Pelham council has found itself working alone on specialized problems. Although no one issue of council's work was too complicated for an interested citizen to understand, the cumulation of problems require much diligence and time on the part of citizens.[11] If, under the best of circumstances, past councils were watched and commented on by a large number of citizens, this number had shrunk to a handful by the seventies.

Being eliminated from participating, even simply as a spectator or a commentator, in council matters had reduced citizens to the role of interest seekers or petitioners for assistance. No one came forward during the study out of a concern for the 'public good' without officials scrutinizing them with suspicion and scorn. The 'distance' between the representatives sitting on councils and the people who elect them has been extended. Disenchanted citizens have regretted this establishment of a political structure in which elected representatives have to seek help and expertise from bureaucrats in the local, regional or provincial levels of government. Officials often have to hire professional assist-

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[11] For example, up to 1970, one man in each of the two municipalities was able to handle the task of clerk-treasurer but four years later, it took four people to fulfill the same function.

ance on a temporary basis, as in the case of the lawyer and the town planner, in order to come to any policy conclusions, Solutions revolve around comments from experts, not comments from citizens. A concerned citizen was always heard and treated cordially if he approached council, as the new power holders were careful not to display any annoyance or disrespect, but they were never responded to directly when the request for policy change or initiative was made. Council took such demands under advisement so that municipal officials could consider, frequently in private, precedent and implication in order to confirm conformity and continuity.

The goals of rationality and efficiency were difficult to achieve as some Pelhamites were not convinced of the need for the new administration. In their opinion government by regulation always ended up restricting the rural people from doing what they wanted. The quotations used in earlier chapters illustrate the different opinions in the town about the appropriateness of having a more active and powerful council capable of controlling development and land use patterns. Aldermen, uneasy about this lack of enthusiasm for their policies, were unable to initiate any discussions leading to a more politically active townspeople. While the council recognized that it was developing important goals for the town (such as the future class structure, who and how many were to live there, where in the town they would live and when they would be able to move in) and that aldermen should be talking to many more citizens, the politicians were incapable of conceiving how they might transform the 'lethargic' (in their view) political environment into an active one. Having failed to do this, the politicians listened to a few interest groups and tried to

develop as fair an official plan as possible based on the interests expressed to council, and views expressed by themselves and the planning experts. Council in Pelham was principally an administrative unit, one of many organizations in the town competing for local resources but no longer responsible for initiating projects singularly important to the townspeople. The local middle class notion of political disinterest coupled with a respect for officials has allowed authority to slip away from public view into committees and the municipal offices, while the old influentials from Pelham Township have had so many of their demands rejected by the new councils that a mood of cynicism replaced any previous attitudes of respect, interest, or goodwill toward council.

The changes brought in with the regional government were twofold: a new technology (planning) as the basis for policy making with no effort to explain its meaning and possibilities for people and, secondly, the destruction of the power of rural people in the former township (now controlled by 'Fonthill' people) and in the Region (now controlled by the city dwellers) to decide the future of their own communities. Regional municipalities and boards of education exposed the limited nature of democratic representation at this level of government. The cost of obtaining a more economical administration (more efficient to achieve provincially inspired goals) has been the ignoring of local democracy; however, the idea of community democracy is a complicated one to discuss and analyze if for no other reason than few citizens actively revealed their anxiety towards the structure of political decision making: is community democracy a problem only for the observer? The tensions

aroused by discussions, representation and action, the three major components of local government policy making, were real enough to be observable at any council meeting (and in any conversation with local officials). Given these tensions were there any possible alternatives to the way in which council went about its community work?

The Declining Importance of Local Government

Problems in the community--whether it be friendship, education, disability, roads, or policing,--had ordinarily been the responsibility of traditional organizations such as the church, family, voluntary associations and government. The teenagers, who were outside this framework, were a constant worry. Citizens were anxious to structure some activity to show the community's concern for their happiness. The only effort made to resolve this and other needs failed to transform individuals and existing organizations into a citizens' group somehow different from previously existing voluntary associations yet capable of finding new solutions. In airing local dissatisfaction, the Community Concerns' leaders came to recognize that in Pelham information, dissatisfaction and discussion did not necessarily lead to political and social action. Traditional leaders were able to motivate people only within their own sphere such as the clergy with their congregations or the mayor with his council. No one came forward to offer a new analysis of what was happening and what might be done, even when faced with an agreed upon injustice, such as the closing of Pelham Secondary School. In a human situation which an outsider might describe as ready for widespread changes in thinking and in structures of solving common problems, local residents hesitated to bring any alternatives into public discussion. Dissatisfied people viewed themselves either

as in a situation for which there was no alternative or in a situation which was only temporary. The Community Concerns group failed to achieve a coherent group commitment, although its leadership, especially the young social agency workers, thought they had an opportunity to somehow change the life situation of community people--whem they saw as living isolated and unfulfilling lives--by following the community development model of participation and information leading to change. Their abrupt failure indicated the inertia towards change and the tiredness of people unable to imagine how social and political action could bring forth personal and community happiness.

The different life situations, described in Pelham as urban versus rural, reflected a traditional--non-traditional cleavage in common images of the town, the difference being that for the traditionalists, Pelham was where one lived out his life with friends, neighbours, associations, enemies and so forth while the non-traditionalist thought that his or her life was being lived in a wider area, extending to Toronto and Buffalo or further, with Pelham serving as an adequate or even ideal place to live. This is not to set up a typology of persons living in Pelham but to suggest that there were two different and distinct orientations, one cosmopolitan in focus and the other localistic. For those who were localistic the intrusion of Regional Niagara and the Niagara South Board of Education was a greater threat to their life-style than for the others. It arbitrarily introduced new people into the local policy process who would retain effective control over political decisions formerly made in Fonthill, in the township and in Fenwick (where most of the traditionalists lived). Certainly politics and education were not the only spheres

of action open for discussion, conflict and participation. Most likely, these were not often of primary importance in the lives of most; nevertheless, when regional bodies were introduced, local people no longer had direct or easy access to the powerholders as this access was reserved for a few representatives who in turn were expected to communicate to citizens. At one time decisions could be informally discussed in the context of everyday relationships (for example meeting after church, at the post office or at the firehall) but political matters now had to be taken out of the town and into a series of interlocking organizations expressly set up to resolve or exclude citizen demands. The relationship between citizens and officials changed in character from that of officials among townspeople (an almost equal relationship) to that of a clientele relationship. This change was least obvious at the town council level and most obvious with the Niagara South Board of Education.[12] Without assessing the usefulness of the policy outcomes of the old style of politics, it can be argued that the traditionalists have had their political culture partially destroyed by outsiders, replaced with new structures and subjected to new techniques in the exercise of power.

One element of the new politics has been the distance it created

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[12] For example, within the former Pelham District High School Board, each Board member was assigned an area of responsibility within a school, such as science or languages. When a teacher wanted new equipment the Board member came into the school, looked around at the condition of the facilities then the teacher or his department head discussed and bargained with the trustee for funds for improvements. With the new Board, a teacher would bargain with his department head, then the principal, then the area superintendent, then the director of education and only then with elected officials. Interviews with Bud Ker and Jim Curtis.

between politician and citizen.[13] This is partially because of the specialization now required of the most active citizens if they are to match the skills of the bureaucrat; partially because representatives are inclined to see themselves as arbitrators among interests (hence, close to no one); and, thirdly, because these new organizations are physically located away from the old, thereby reinforcing the social or psychological distance. The impact of the change in government structure was less obvious for the Fonthill people interviewed because they were still dealing with the same people in the same municipal offices whereas those in Fenwick and Pelham Township were involved with new officials operating further away.

The nature of Fenwick society, including citizens in the surrounding areas drawn into its network of friendship, economic obligations and social and church organization, had enabled it to resist these governmental changes allowing life to continue on as normal. Those who were obviously affected were the local council politicians, town employees and the employees of Niagara South Board of Education. The farmers still very much want to be left alone, claiming they do not understand the need for increased government interference. Their political power has declined somewhat in the area and they no longer hold the economic importance they

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[13] This notion of distance is explained by Pranger: "Regarding distance in subjective political culture, an indifference between leaders and led frequently develops in the politics of power. The citizen feels "distant", "estranged", "remote", and "powerless" in political life." Robert F. Pranger, The Eclipse of Citizenship Power and Participation in Contemporary Politics (Toronto, 1968), p. 68.

once had. Despite this, the seasons and the farm set the tone for the social life of the rural non-farming families and the villagers. Turkey raffles are held frequently after the first snowfall was expected in early December ending the work in the fields, while snowmobiles are the perfect answer to long winter evenings when there is little to do. Old farms around the village have been divided into residential lots and a surprising number still have small barns as their owners cultivate a few acres of garden produce or fruit trees. The church festivities, Easter and Christmas, and the education timetable reinforce the agricultutal way of life, a solid defence against political changes.

This quiet rhythm of life was what made part of the town a community but excluded others who, in turn, lived as groups and as individuals, scattered throughout the municipality. The traditionalists had a sense of history about their community, about why some were elected to council, why some were excluded and disliked, who was his 'real' father, whose family life was happy or tumultuous and who was bright, even in public school. The community had a serenity about it, a sense of stability, a bulwark against change if for no reason that it was dominated by older men, the younger either having left or withdrawn, being tied up with family and job commitments.

There were demands on the settlement which steadily were weakening it. For many, the rural community just described was thought to have disintegrated sometime in the past. As farms closed down because men were no longer able to make a living out of the land, property was sold to other farmers, to hobby farmers, to householders, to speculators, to industrialists or left to grow over if no buyer could be found. The declin-

ing number of farmers meant the community was no longer a growing, prosperous farming community; for years few came to live or to start up a business in rural Pelham. At the same time, each farmer began to see the day that he too would have to leave the farm if he were to survive past middle age with any economic security. The land came to be viewed as an individual investment and the only opportunity to escape old age poverty was jealously guarded against planners who sought to preserve it for agricultural production or green space. Farmers thought planners were cruel because of this interference. Within the group of traditionalists, two tensions pulled at the people: one belief structure was built around farming, church, social and associational activity as the good life to be preserved and venerated but the other denied that this good life committed them to others, favouring instead opportunities to abandon the land when the price was right. At the same time the non-farmers, however sympathetic and envious of their farming friends, wanted the land for their own uses: housing for themselves, their friends or their children, or new businesses for high tax revenue land use (a commercial building rather than a farm). The forces which destroyed or weakened the rural community were not only the pressures of 'urbanization' exerted by individual and corporate developers from the surrounding cities or the inviting wages and hours offered by new industries in the same cities, although these processes were obviously influencing the nature of community life. People within the settlement sought to minimize expenses and maximize income by expanding and developing their community. As long as growth was slow, as with insignificant incremental housing starts to accommodate newly married sons and daughters, then the village could absorb people

without needing to change its ways.

Possible as it may be to attribute some aspects of community for the Fenwick oriented people, the case for Fonthill residents was less obvious and more speculative. To begin with, the pattern of development around Fonthill was quite different from Fenwick. Farmland in Fonthill was sold and divided into small subdivision-type lots quickly losing any resemblance it had as farmland. People moved in as housing became available or arranged to build their own home, and as they moved in, they developed their own social organizations such as the Kinsmen and the Lions Clubs, both formed in the late nineteen forties. Gradually the village grew into two separate groupings: the traditionalists and the newcomers. The traditionalists were, by the time of this study, diminishing to those over sixty-five and the few, such as merchants, who worked in the village. The new majority were younger families, mostly white collar middle class and some highly paid working class, who came to dominate the institutions significant to them, particularly the schools and the recreation committee. Though it was not easy to distinguish between the participation patterns of the traditionalists and the newcomers among the middle aged, it was noted that the more involved were more likely to be of second or third (or more) generation living in Fonthill. The others had 'just' moved in even though they might have settled there decades ago. Furthermore, few of either group had children settling into Fonthill which would give the village the stability and continuity of a rural community like Fenwick. For the most part Fonthill consisted of one generation (two including those still in school) families at various stages of the life cycle.

Both areas of the town had a number of voluntary associations for

men and women, indicative of a community interest expressed in non-political activity; however, dissatisfaction was commonly expressed in Fenwick and Monthill that not enough people were involved and rhetorical questions were raised about the non-involved club members. This evidence when combined with observations on political participation leads to the conclusion that if there was a strong notion of community among the townspeople it did not necessarily cause anyone to participate in community life. Community was a more neutral idea, not usually evoking either emotion or commitment among citizens, and inferences about motivation to participate would need to take into account other factors including more specific situations such as calculations about personal (individual and family) interests in the course of public decisions. If fellowship was motivation to participate in the church, or in voluntary associations, and if clubs and churches were structured to fulfill this need, then much of what was locally implied by community, a passive communion with people in similar life situations, was satisfied by participation (usually minimal) in these institutions.

Politics did not help to solve the need for fellowship as anything political was viewed with suspicion, sometimes contempt. One could have fun at the turkey raffles and at the strawberry socials raising funds for favourite projects, while going to council to fight to be included in a budget, perceived all too often as severely limited, and to be funded out of a general property tax revenue which other citizens might object to, could only be viewed as hard work. If an idea did not receive immediate endorsement then a group would need to lobby, politick, compromise and go through many long and arduous meetings to achieve its ends. Such was

the case of the citizens' committee fighting for council support of a new recreation centre to include an artificial ice surface. As council had hesitated to endorse this project, the committee had to lobby throughout the town so that two years later the council began to take the proposal seriously. In fighting for public funds the advocates divided the articulated town opinion into those who were willing to pay out of taxes and those who thought that the groups should be willing and able to build the structure out of volunteer labour and contributions--the traditional voluntary campaign. Council was unable to act because it lacked a sufficient social and political consensus about its role in the town. When it did act, it was challenged in front of the Ontario Municipal Board.

Community and Citizens

Community was one of the concepts around which interviews were conducted in order to find out how people gave meaning to their social and political participation. Two different notions of community emerged from this research, the idea of 'participating' and the idea of 'being', one which gave community a great deal of life and importance and one which implied a weaker association. The first idea was found among the older, the traditionalists, the rural, the local workers, and housewives, all those whose daily routine kept them within the town's boundaries for most of their time. This meant that they came into continuous contact with the same people, as they made their rounds between the work place, the post office, the grocery store, the home, the school, the club and the church. Through the years, an intimacy developed about how others lived out their lives and the realization that many were in the same life

situation. Given this commonality in circumstances, it was not difficult to rally citizens to defend themselves against the intrusion of outside politicians interfering in their routines, giving the impression of a recognized senseof purpose within this community. The daily social and political activity indicated this togetherness and commonality of purpose was not nearly as evident as bickering, personal hostility and jealousy, suspicion, gossip and unpleasant remarks. Political action, especially if it were trying to gather up a wide base of popular support, was superimposed on people who were ambivalent about each other. At times citizens were respectful and optimistic; at other times, quite negative, but they were always conscious of the fact that they were living common existences, somehow different from the townspeople and villagers about them. They were proud to tell others where they were from and ever ready to defend themselves against invaders, whether the 'invader' be an idea, a new drug, or a political decision. They were citizens always willing to defend the stability of the community.

The process of regionalization, from this perspective, is an example of how a 'traditional' community reacts to changes in governmental structures. As noted previously, the idea of regional government and regional education was not grasped in the abstract by many outside of the municipal officials. Citizens in a rather trusting attitude waited until the people operating within the new structure began to make decisions for the purpose of directing town development as they would like it. Once these processes were begun, citizens decided that the new powerholders were unaware of what they wanted. When they told them through letters, petitions, public and private meetings and election

changes, citizens found that the decision makers were still inclined to think that other considerations needed to be taken into account instead of only their views.

Citizens, in losing two critical decisions, the closing of the secondary school and the restrictions in the official plan, had come to realize the extent to which they had lost power and the ability to decide their own political future. This did not provoke open hostility, new political organizations or a public resolve to regain this control; yet, in many of the interviews, people expressed a quiet and, at times, bitter hostility towards the political decisions being made not only at the regional level but at every level and in every sphere of government activity. The protests against government indicated that the distance felt by the citizen had merely been increased by provincial policies but this alienation had not been created suddenly within the last few years. As far as political participation and political efficacy are concerned, the Pelham citizen, who felt he was part of the traditional community (this could also be taken to mean the old Fonthill community but the case is much weaker), resigned himself or herself to a less politically useful role locally. The destructive aspects of regional education and government, however widely recognized, were not sufficient reason for citizens to mobilize themselves or others to fight for a more ideal situation. This characteristic, a dullness, a feeling of tiredness over battles lost or never fought, was what distinguished the community and made it vulnerable to outsiders. At the same time, the fact that there was no reaction also indicated that the idea of government and politics may not have been central to the citizens' notions of themselves, the

community and the good life. The spheres of local government and education decision making were partly withdrawn and missed in many ways but life went on, the Women's Institute continued to meet, the men at the Lions Club continued to drink, schools continued to educate the children, and someone still ploughed the roads. A loss occurred but it alone would not destroy the community because it was sometime in the past that citizens abandoned the notion that local government was a community instrument to express common goals and to resolve collective problems.

This idea of community as used here has been limiting as it restricted possible meanings to definite physical and political boundaries and to those citizens living within these boundaries and who were conscious of their being a community, presently or in the past. Some citizens of Pelham would find this meaning excluding them from being members of a community for no other reason than they chose to spend their time and resources by themselves, with their families or in organizations whose activity sphere was centred outside the town, most likely in Welland or St. Catharines. If 'community' is to be used as a concept with a more potent meaning than 'a place to live' or as an equivalent for the vague concept of 'society' (for instance, that we live in Canadian society is often expressed as we live in the Canadian community), then it is valid to assign to community a local and particularistic definition. The alternative as found in this research project, would be to follow the lead of several other social scientists who have argued that community can be reduced to mean only human interaction within recognizable borders. The concept of community which was most useful for understanding participation patterns in Pelham was more elaborate than this narrow and neutral

definition and included subjective, cognitive notions; that is, it included the subjective notion of a sense of community.

Understanding this 'sense of community' becomes in the end the critical idea in this study of local politics: what did it reveal and what did it camouflage? Firstly, it revealed that, for a few, particularly the most active in local affairs, commitment to community was justification and motivation for participation. They had an organic, conservative notion of what that community was: a group of like people, living together, looking after their families, usually letting council make its routine decisions while holding membership in various voluntary and church organizations as an expression of their community concern. A sense of community implied a commonality in lifestyles, beliefs and purposes. The oft cited decline in their community feeling was attributed to the plurality of the new persons moving into the town, an immigration process which destroyed the old homogeneous farming settlements. Having a 'sense of community' meant having insight as to what was good for that community, a clear notion of the local public interest. Certain public policies were argued in council to be legitimate as they would be for the good of the community; that included all who were living in Pelham. Thus some citizens were involved in local politics because they thought they could help others in similar circumstances, because they had a special knowledge of the community and because they thought that they were not inclined to take personal advantage of their positions of prestige and authority (**i.e.**, they could be trusted).

This idealized conception of what motivated those claiming to be acting out of community commitment ignores some concrete interests which

were being served by political action. Obvious examples are the maintenance of low tax rates for the property owners and the 'free use of land' stand of the farmers. Also evident were the participants who had specific short term economic interests, most of whom benefitted, one way or another, with increased residential land use, causing higher property values more quickly while increasing the volume of business. Community life was structured on a mixture of a commitment to a particular and identifiable belief structure and an urge to better a recognizable set of economic interests. The first often sought to exclude people from community activity; for instance, young drug users were shunned and discredited while the second sought to encourage people to move into Pelham. This economic pressure was such that Fonthill was no longer a 'community' in the view of many of its inhabitants (as well as the researcher) as those wanting to develop vacant and farm land for the purpose of maximizing personal profits (while publicly promising that such development would minimize the expenses, 'taxes', of others) had been able to do for most of the century and particularly since 1945. Fenwick, on the other hand, did not grow nearly as quickly and, in fact, almost remained static so that more residents there had lived there longer and felt comfortable, because of their knowledge of village life, in describing it as a community. Nevertheless, Fenwick did change, not in physical appearances because of rapid development, but through changes in the types of people living there. Instead of being dominated by old retired farmers and wives (or widows) of farmers; younger people, mostly wage earners, moved in bringing with them different interests and commitments. Stability and homogeneity no longer could be taken for granted even in Fenwick.

The one social situation did not quickly replace another. The old villages of Fonthill and Fenwick, the smaller settlements throughout the Township, and the scattered rural dwellers were by the seventies citizens with varying degrees of commonality. Some felt that they were very much still together as a community and for these few, activity marked their commitment whether it was in the Women's Institute or in the Lions Club. For others, community was a mixture of 'being' and 'participating'. They only occasionally involved themselves to help out, for example, at a hockey game or in a home and school association. For a third group, community meant 'being' with little 'participating' perhaps talking with neighbours, picking up the mail or shopping once in a while in a local store (rather than the usual trip to the St. Catharines' shopping centre). For a fourth group, community meant 'being' with very little social or political participation. For these, interaction was confined to the family but other than that they were not involved in the town. The four groups of citizens described here were most likely to be men in their active working years. Others, (especially housewives and students) had fewer opportunities to escape, fewer alternatives to their participating in community life. Students, housewives and senior citizens, together a majority of the town's residents, spent most of their day in the town and were obviously responsible for most special interest activity happening every week. The longstanding domination of council by older males was another indication that formal council work did not reveal very much about community life except in the negative: it demonstrated that council only infrequently touched upon the lives of the townspeople in a way which would cause them to act or react. Those who were active in

numerous organizations working within the community, helping themselves and others, raising funds, or donating services were not inclined to turn to council for leadership or assistance nor was council about to initiate such assistance on its own.

Because of the different class structure present in the town, particularly the differences between the new salaried, professional middle class and the propertied farmer and merchant of the old middle class, there was no recognition of common goals nor any attempt by an organization to assume the role of goal articulater. Hence the council was void of any claim, beyond the defense of specific interests, to speak on behalf of the townspeople. The council did not have the role of determining the collective goals of the community, thereby not fulfilling what has frequently been described in social science as the primary role of a political institution. The council was an administrative structure to facilitate land development and to service properties. It was 'political' only inasmuch as it could make binding decisions concerning the uses of scarce resources, especially land and taxes. The broader political roles, setting goals and redistributing resources, were either dispersed within the town among numerous private groups or at other levels of governments. In either case it was outside the scope of Pelham council. Personal goals of happiness and success could usually be satisfied without the help of town officials and councillors. If a citizen wanted to get something done in the town, he was not expected to turn immediately to council for help; he was expected to go out, organize others, find citizen support and go to council only as a final step.

Regional government policies confirmed the low status and in-

effectiveness of local government inasmuch as 'reform' legislation emphasized administrative adjustments over democratic changes. The new structures, Regional Niagara and the Niagara South Board of Education, were created and instituted in order to promote a more professional consideration of policy alternatives and hopefully provide financial savings for the local taxpayer. The new structures of municipal government had removed the power to make decisions in a number of policy areas from the old municipalities and placed most other expenditures under regional supervision. The school board takeover was complete, leaving no authority in any municipality. Citizens in Pelham up to 1974 chose not to express actively either their support or their opposition to these structures of governments, choosing to remain silent or to comment privately. But neither governments really needed the support of the citizens of all municipalities as their authority was derived from provincial legislation and legitimized through structures of local representation. No one municipality's people had control over these governments. During the transition years, no citizens' organization was able to put together a coherent opposition to education policies or to the policies of Niagara Regional Government despite the presence of demands and dissentions in a number of neighbourhoods.

The rhetoric of peninsula and provincial politicians had encouraged local citizens to think of the coming of regional government not as the destruction of their communities but as the beginning of new communities. What passed as community in these statements were, before regional government, more an attachment to a name or a place rather than a community in the sense of citizens living together, willing and able to resolve

common problems. There were two reasons for this: a lack of knowledge as to how to use council in such a way to extract monies, co-operation and expertise from other governments and, secondly, a lack of group purpose within most municipalities which could have triggered such action among citizens.[15] Regional government as it was structured in the Niagara Peninsula followed the established pattern of organizing local government by vesting power in representatives who exercised authority, without much input from citizens, and within the clearly specified guidelines of the provincial government.

Although the townspeople in Pelham did not associate, to any great extent, their ideas of community with local politics, the sublimation of politics into other spheres of activity ensured citizens that as long as the old structures continued they would have access to politicians and decision making. Only when this easy access was removed from the old township people did some notice that the character of the new political structure was quite different from what they had been experiencing. Even this difference did not have any impact until the officials operating within the new structures began to exercise their authority in crucial policy areas. Then those who were dependent on council decisions in order to satisfy their needs and desires realized that they had to deal with unfamiliar people empowered to decide these matters. Political solutions were not ordinarily arrived at on an informal basis at the Regional level but only after citizens had thought out strategies and demands, try-

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[15] This point has been obvious for so long to Canadian municipal officials and academic observers that it is no longer discussed as a proper and legitimate role for municipal government. It could, however, be one purpose of local council.

ing to out-manoeuvre other actors while officials reacted with their own proposals. Politics was set aside from the daily routine and to participate now required a conscious decision. A citizen did not effortlessly 'slide' or 'slip' into a political role as had happened in the past. For example, if a citizen met the mayor at a winter carnival at a time when the citizen needed help from council, a listener would be hard pressed to separate the political from the non-political. If the citizen now found that the authority to resolve his problem no longer belonged to the municipality, he faced the prospect of having to contact the Region, making his demands known and bargaining with those officials.

This description of local politics indicates the pervasive influence that these new institutions had on Pelham. Since democratic politics were conceived in terms of representation and not participation, regional government contributed to a less active political life by reducing the possible avenues for involvement inasmuch as there were less representative positions available within the town. This, of course, affected relatively few people. The only possibility for avoiding this decline in participation opportunities would have been for residents to organize themselves into ongoing citizens' committees to advise elected officials as to their policy preferences and to initiate and foster community involvement. As noted several times, this happened only on a few occasions, for short periods of time, and concerning, for the most part, matters of tangible interests. If representation is equated with democratic decision making, and it was in Pelham, then the introduction on regional organizations had little effect on others as citizens continued to work through local representatives to obtain favours and policy ob-

jectives. The system of indirect representation such as the mayors being ex officio members of Regional Council increased the distance between citizens and that government. This gap might have been overcome if there had been an active bureaucracy and a perceptive media to encourage greater political involvement but these were simply not present in the area.

Another question is whether regional governments increased or decreased the dependency of the local community on outside institutions. It is difficult to make the argument that the dependency has been increased.[16] The long standing relationship between the provincial government and local public institutions had been controlled by the close supervisory powers held by the senior government. Expenditures had to be approved in Toronto, surely reducing any freedom of the municipality to act unilaterally while the legal structure imposed on the municipal corporation restricted the areas in which councillors might choose to initiate action. One reason why the newer municipal and education institutions were resented was that citizens no longer retained the right to stop local authorities from initiating costly programmes: recollected and observed moments of citizens' actions involved, for the most part,

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[16] The argument that small towns have long been dependent on outside institutions for support was a central theme of Vidich and Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society (Garden City, 1960), pp. 202-206. and Jessie Bernard makes a similar observation about community studies; most accept the notion that the metropolis has extended its influence into the rural areas. "When rural-urban differences were first reported, theywere greater than they are today; rural areas were more isolated and more out of touch with the great world." Jessie Bernard, The Sociology of Community, p. 98.

people reacting against greater government involvement (as suggested by council) in the town. With the exception of planning, the opposition was most determined to stop or delay services adding costs to the annual property tax. Planning threatened to cut down the possible tax assessment base as well as ruin individual opportunities to make a profit through land development; hence, it too was largely opposed. As pointed out earlier, citizens were more likely to react against the council when it initiated costly proposals than involve themselves in resolving common problems on a regular basis. The implication is that previously the council and the school board both had been in circumstances in which elected officials recognized pressing problems and, in seeking to rectify the situation, were rebuked by the more active citizens. The council's claim to speak for the public good could effectively be challenged and destroyed by rooms full of hostile citizens.

The implementation of Regional Niagara removed most of the power to initiate local projects so that citizens did not have the town forum in which they could bring any scheme to a halt. The Region, in fulfilling its function as policy leader for the area municipalities, could override local complaints with officials' arguing that only they understood the present and future needs of the whole region. Although citizen participation in Pelham, especially Fonthill, had always been reactive and not creative, the impact of regionalization was to reinforce this notion of politics. Regional authorities did not dramatically intervene to destroy a particular way of life, but they merely affirmed a particular method of policy making already partly evident in Pelham. The replacement of the local decision makers by regional ones also destroyed the status of work-

ing on the council for the traditionalists. In this way regionalization saddened the old middle class more so than any other group in the town.

The political life in Pelham reflected the lack of community political participation among its citizens excluding older members who had always worked and lived in the town, possibly a family tradition for two or more generations. One factor, the complexity and overlapping of ties with other people, organizations and activities, affected the commitment of members to community life. Community was meaningful among a group who shared a common history. Pelham Secondary School represented such a shared background. Too many Pelhamites had gone to classes at the school, remembered good times and hoped their children might attend there, to let Niagara South Board of Education eliminate that institution from their lives. Nevertheless, few shared a common history in Pelham and the number of newcomers who did not share this history was so high as to prelude any assertion that the townspeople were of one community. Furthermore, given that Pelham was located in a region and a province in which mobility among the new middle class was often integral to occupational mobility, it is unlikely that this was ever to be true of the total population. From this point of view, there is no reason to agree with the argument that new municipalities would in turn help create original communities as these new governments were not structured to elicit the type of response from a majority of the townspeople which might lead to the establishment of communities.

The question of the sense of community among the traditionalists is even more interesting. It is doubtful whether a sense of community is retained and experienced even among these citizens who were born and

brought up in the area. There was certainly some feeling of togetherness, a sense of belonging, for those who were still part of the traditional small-town society, who owned the funeral homes, corner stores and service shops, who belonged to the close-knit and long-standing groups in social clubs and churches, and who accepted the time honoured mores of the community, whether it be the Fenwick or Fonthill community. This was expressed most commonly through loyalty to the town and the central institutions such as a school or a sports team competing with other municipalities. As families moved in, and shared this experience of entering Pelham, they sought out neighbours and groups, thereby establishing their own sense of belonging and a 'sense of community' (in their words) within the larger municipality. Again, this sense of community was never extended to include all citizens but reflected the interests and beliefs of groups within the town.

If there had been a sense of community in the past it had the connotation of involvement and commitment, while this 'sense of community' is actually better described as a 'sense of place' for it is an idea of living in a neighbourhood in which one feels comfortable and associating with compatible people without necessarily being involved. The result of this type of lifestyle is that most citizens interact with family, friends and neighbours in unstructured activity. It is possible that some citizens will remain in Pelham long enough to take a more active role in local affairs but it is unlikely that there will be enough activity to create a community out of the town. Tensions will continue between those wishing to develop the town to turn over a personal profit and those who wish to be left to their own peace and quiet. Any stability in population growth

will be mitigated by the coming and going of the administrative and corporate class who are so hesitant to commit themselves to community participation. At the same time, because the townspeople are linked to the entertainment, commercial and educational society about them, it is hard to envision how a preoccupation with affairs local in nature will again dominate other interests. To this end, the regionalization of certain local public institutions seriously hampered the establishment of a more active community. The Niagara peninsula was populated and structured in such a fashion that it is difficult to imagine the establishment of a public consciousness greater than existing sectional, industrial, developmental, and class interests which were evident 1972-1974. There could be no local community and there could be no regional community.

The style of the new politics, designed for planners, bureaucrats and professional politicians alienated the older traditional participants who were unconvinced that municipal government required the extensive revisions that had taken place. The town councillor who no longer felt capable of resolving the complaints of individual citizens wondered if it was still worthwhile to spend the hours needed to serve on council; yet his role was being overshadowed in a government structure which encouraged disgruntled citizens to go through municipal officials and not councillors. It was learned in the interviews that Fonthill traditionally operated this way but not the township. This difference illustrated as well as any example what the new municipal government meant to those who had found the old acceptable: the new had an image of a lack of responsibility and a lack of responsiveness. Citizens had simply lost another institution in their community and had suffered through the

demise of citizenship. If one is attempting to pinpoint the magnitude of the impact of regional institutions on local politics, its illusiveness makes exact statements of measurement difficult. It has no common meaning for Pelhamites; there is no consensus about regional government. No one, however, claimed that it brought more political participation, a stronger sense of community or personal happiness. Inasmuch as neither Regional Niagara nor the Niagara South Board of Education had fulfilled many positive effects in Pelham, it would call for a negative judgement on the first years of operation.

This pessimistic view of recent changes may prove unfair if future citizens accept the regional organizations as naturally as present citizens accepted local government. A base may develop to support such institutions. There is a danger, however, in making the unexamined assumption that political bodies with much power and few representatives will transform themselves into democratic community structures. I have made the argument for just the opposite: that distance has tended to increase between citizens and politicians and not decrease.[17] For those few citizens who remembered a time in which political power was not exercised arbitrarily nor without due consideration of their views, the change to the new was painful and regretted. For the majority who had experienced only the quiet and obscure politics of administrators and distant representatives, the changes passed by unnoticed; that is, unnoticed until they too objected to decisions being made on their behalf.

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[17] Robert F. Pranger, The Eclipse of Community, p. 69.

The implications of this research project centre on the finding that regional government has failed to provide important aspects of democracy. Firstly, the provincial government's preoccupation with the financial costs of local government is certainly not shared by all citizens. People may be willing to pay a higher cost for municipal government if they can maintain the organizations with which they feel so familiar. Efficiency is only part of the responsibility of municipal organizations and it probably has been wrong to ignore other duties however nebulous at first glance. Political-psychological factors which influence political participation have too often and too easily been put aside in favour of financial considerations. Authorities responsible for local government need to be more sensitive in their efforts to develop new local government schemes. Public programmes should incorporate more comprehensive definitions of community and purposes of government than has been the tradition in the thinking of officials.

Secondly, it is apparent that the provincial assumption that regional government is a decentralized structure is simply not accepted. Citizens are resisting because of the objections to the local centralization of authority which has taken power from the smaller communities. Thirdly, these findings also indicate that the policy makers would be more successful in building institutions with local support if they adopted a community development approach such as has been tried in other jurisdictions (such as native people's economic development corporations). Local government can be used to provide services only if citizens are willing to indicate their preferences and if they feel

that the organization will respond to their demands when it is reached. In return, the citizens may support governments in important development decisions. This support is now lacking and will only be restored once local councils again play a more central role in the community. Fourthly, any evaluation of present regional governments should not be based solely on economic, cost-benefit criteria. The analysis should be more comprehensive and include factors related to the impact on community politics and individual political participation.

Finally, these remarks are not directed solely to local government programmes. The present public policy approach of serving people as units in a service state has its limits. The quiet resistance in Pelham is an indication that the government's goals of economic rationality in the distribution of public goods is not universally accepted. Alienation from the state is increasing and to such an extent that political leaders who want to serve their communities will be forced to reconsider their objectives.

APPENDIX: MAJOR CHARACTERS

The following is a brief description of the interviewees referred to in the text. This list is not complete as it includes only those mentioned in the text. As I spent twenty-four months living in Pelham, I had endless conversations in private and at social occasions about the problems discussed in the dissertation. In addition more formal interviews were conducted but these persons have not been referred to directly and are hence left out of this list.

Baty, Brian; in his thirties, science teacher, Pelham Secondary School 1971-74, moved to Fonthill in 1972, branch president of Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, 1973-74, interviewed in April 1973.

Beamer, Douglas; in his fifties, long time township councillor, on Pelham council, 1970-74 and re-elected in 1974, fruit farmer continuing a family tradition dating back several generations, chairman of council's planning and development committee, 1973-74, active in Fenwick Lions Club, interviewed in May 1973.

Benner, Jerry; in his forties, a native of Niagara Falls, taught technical skills at Pelham Secondary School for seventeen years but felt he had to leave in 1973 for another teaching position, wanted to return to the town in 1974, active in teacher's association during school battle, interviewed in April 1973.

Bergenstein, Eric; in his forties, engineer employed by Welland works of an international corporation, involved in Fonthill council in the sixties, Pelham council since 1972, active in earlier high school battles, 1970-71, moved to Fonthill in the 1950's, interviewed in May 1973.

Black, Harold; in his sixties, active in Fonthill politics since 1948, reeve since 1962, usually acclaimed, mayor of Pelham since 1970, retired corporate official, active on Regional Council and chairman of Public Works committee 1973-74, moved to Fonthill in late forties, not involved in voluntary associations, interviewed in March 1973.

Brown, Ernest; deceased in 1974, in his seventies, long time township councillor, Pelham alderman 1970-74, dairy farmer and active in farm related organizations, family in Pelham for several generations, active in the Fenwick United Church, interviewed in March 1973.

Campbell, John; in his fifties, appointed Chairman of Niagara Regional Government from 1970, formerly reeve of Niagara-on-the-Lake, a family long established there operating a dairy, interviewed in March 1973.

Collins, Mardi; in her forties, second generation in Pelham, father active in Pelham Council, lives on the fringe of Fonthill, husband a partner with Alderman Shields in a motel, a housewife, long active in home and school associations, and Anglican Church, first elected to Niagara South Board of Education, 1972, re-elected in 1974, interviewed in April 1973.

Crick, Keith; in his fifties, was a member of Fonthill Council in the 1960's and Pelham Council 1972 to the present, owner of Keith's Restaurant in Fonthill, where he resides, first generation in Fonthill, active in recreation, interviewed in May 1973.

Curtis, James; in his forties, taught at Pelham Secondary School 1954-74, moved to Fonthill in 1954, active in fighting the school closure, interviewed in March 1973.

Dunlop, Rev. D; Fonthill United Church, living in Fonthill for eleven years, after one other Ontario parish, originally from Northern Ireland where he was active in protestant church social work, active in organizing the Community Concerns Conference, interviewed in June 1973.

Elliot, Mrs. Harry T; in her seventies, long time first generation Fenwick resident, active in Conservative party, Women's Institute, senior citizens' groups, and, earlier, as a village reporter for Welland and St. Catharines newspapers, interviewed in February 1974.

Fletcher, Joseph; in his seventies, perennial Fonthill politician whose council involvement dates back to the thirties, C.C.F. supporter, a former small contractor, weed inspector 1970-74, defeated aldermanic candidate in 1974, interviewed in February 1973.

Greaves, Alex; in his forties, Director of Planning, Niagara Regional Government 1970-74, previously head of planning department, City of Niagara Falls, left Regional Government in 1974 to become a private consultant.

Green, Glyn; in his fifties, born in neighbouring Wainfleet Township, moved to Fonthill in late 1940's, law practice in Welland, on Fonthill Public School Board from 1952-69 and N.S.B.E. 1970-71, supporter of N.S.B.E. in the school re-organization, active in Welland organizations and Conservative party, interviewed in April 1973.

Hearp, Rev. A; in his forties, an engineer, who entered the ministry of the Church of God in the late sixties, arrived in Fonthill in 1973, participated in the Community Concerns Conference, interviewed in February 1974.

Homenuk, Sophie; in her fifties, moved to edge of Fonthill after the Second World War, active in the Fonthill Parent Teachers Association, then as a member of the school board in the early sixties, long time Pelham correspondent for the Welland Tribune, retired in 1974, appointed in 1974 to the new Regional Land Severance Committee, interviewed in January 1974.

Hunt, Leonard; in his twenties, clerk treasurer, Fonthill, 1964-69, Pelham 1970 to present, moved to Fonthill in 1964 but grew up in a peninsula township, active in Fonthill Kinsmen, interviewed in March 1973 and June 1974.

Ker, E.A. 'Bud'; in his fifties, principal of Pelham Secondary School from 1966 until its closure in 1974, a part-time fruit farmer on farm owned by family since the 1840's, active in the Fenwick Lions Club, presently an administrator with N.S.B.E., interviewed in April 1973.

Kilty, Heather; in her twenties, a field worker with the Ontario Addiction Research Foundation, a Welland resident, key organizer in the Community Concerns Conference, interviewed in June 1973.

Leavens, Ron; in his twenties, second generation Fonthill resident, M.A. in political science, part-time teaching assistant Brock University, full-time assembly line worker Ford Co. plant, Niagara Falls, active in Ontario N.D.P., candidate in 1972 and 1974 federal election in Lincoln riding, interviewed in November 1973.

McLeod, R.A.; in his sixties, Director, N.S.B.E., 1969-74, formerly of Niagara Falls education system, active in national education organizations, in 1974 was President of the Canadian Education Association, interviewed in October 1973.

Muir, Irv; in his thirties, furniture dealer, mortician in Lampman's Furniture and Funeral Home, Fenwick, (his wife's family - a second generation Fenwick family), first generation in Fenwick, active in the Concerned Parents of Pelham, Fenwick Lions Club and Pelham Parks and Recreation Committee, interviewed in May 1973.

Robertson, James; in his forties, a fruit farmer, active in the Concerned Parents of Pelham, also Fenwick United Church, the Masons, Farmers' associations and the Conservative party, first generation in Pelham but wife's family owned farm for generations, interviewed in April 1973.

Shields, Gerry; in his forties, a tradesman and part-owner of a Niagara Falls motel, first active in Pelham Township Public School Board 1967-68 and Pelham Council 1970-74 when he did not run for re-election, lives on fringe of Fonthill, his parents moved the family to Pelham in the 1940's, interviewed in April 1973.

Wigg, A. K.; in his sixties, taught at Fonthill Public School 1938-1972, had school named after him, was principal simultaneously for two schools, active in church and youth groups, active in Community Concerns, interviewed in March 1973.

Wilson, Joan; in her fifties, moved to Fenwick area in the sixties, a para-professional at Pelham Secondary School, English, family politically connected to Winston Churchill, very active in local Conservative politics, interviewed in May 1973.

Wilson, Peter; in his fifties, husband of Joan, English immigrant, employee with the federal Department of National Revenue, not generally active in Pelham organizations, interviewed in May 1973.

Appendix B

Methodological Limitations of This Study

This research differs from traditional evaluative studies in one important aspect. The concern has not been to investigate the effect of regional government in relation to its intentions. The government stated its purposes in speeches, research papers and legislation, much of which was analysed in chapter four, by declaring that the benefits of regional government would be a more efficient delivery of services, a more comprehensive planning process facilitating a more orderly development program and a more equitable tax system due to a wider property tax base and provincial support.

Evaluative research is usually designed to interpret the results of government policies according to the intentions of the decision makers. Francis G. Caro, in an overview of evaluative research found a number of definitions that emphasize this perspective. Evaluation is "the procedure by which programs are studied to ascertain their effectiveness in the fulfillment of goals." A second definition was "the determination of (1) the extent to which the program achieves its goals; (2) the relative impact of key program variables and (3) the role of programs as contrasted to external variables." Thirdly, another researcher has defined evaluative research as "the determination . . . of the results . . . attained by some activity . . . designed to accomplish some valued goal or objective."[1]

The concerns expressed in this thesis have been somewhat different. Rather than start with the program and then asking "what happened to regional government?" I began with the townspeople and asked "what has happened to the people of Pelham?" This is a significant departure from evaluative research because it is only concerned with the program insofar as it affected Pelhamites. Evaluative research projects are designed to estimate the extent to which a government program meets its objectives. This project was intended to find out what the results were, at a particular point in time, whether these were intended or not. Thus, the concept of 'impact' is to be interpreted in the most complete sense of understanding the context in which regional government has intervened in the life situation of Pelhamites. I was viewing the problem from the perspective of the townspeople and not that of an authority seeking to review a public program.

Several difficulties have been encountered in attempting to find out the meaning of the new regional governments. First of all, the

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[1] Francis G. Caro, "Evaluative Research: An Overview" in his Readings in Evaluative Research (New York, 1971), p. 2.

governments had only been in existence for two (Regional Niagara) and three (education) years so that the time perspective is less than normally considered adequate by evaluative researchers. In this respect, this study's value is that it has captured the meanings of regional government for Pelham at a particular point in time. No argument is made that the reactions and interpretations related here are permanent. For instance, it could be argued, as several government officials did, that the new middle class will soon begin to feel comfortable in Pelham and will eventually develop their own community. While there is no reason to deny this possibility, there was little evidence available during this study to suggest that this was about to happen in the near future. This lack of communal activity within the group of new arrivals made the decline of the old middle class even more dramatic than it might otherwise appear. Perhaps a future researcher, spending two years in Pelham, will find new participants equally committed as the ones I recorded as exiting from political activity.

The second difficulty encountered was the lack of a control group which could be used to compare the impact of this government policy. Everyone in Pelham and its neighbouring municipalities were subjected to regional government. Once one attributes a change in political participation, for example, to new governmental structures, one is raising the question of whether that would happen if regional government were not in existence. That was overcome partly by reviewing the local historical condition to determine if there had been a different political life in the past. Then, the comparison was made to present-day politics to establish the obvious differences (mostly, that citizens took local government more seriously because its work was more directly related to the essential services in people's lives). Secondly, the literature about small towns was reviewed to emphasize the point that these settlements have been subjected to the same significant changes in the last forty years. Regional government cannot be assessed the responsibility for all negative changes happening in Pelham. From this perspective, regional government is important as a symbol of powerlessness as well as being part of a major institutional shift in local government authority.

A third difficulty with the methodology of this study is the lack of precise measurement of the changes being discussed here. This problem is common to other studies dealing with more standard evaluative concerns but has been a particular problem in this study. Residents have been interviewed and the full range of participant observer techniques employed to find out how regional government affected Pelham; however, there is no standard by which one can say 'that is significant' or 'that is not significant.' What I did try to record were those events that citizens interpreted as being crucial in their lives. It was their idea that the school's closure was a critical decision bound to hurt the Fenwick area. It was they who were objecting to the planning process because it treated their lifestyle as a problem of local self-interest. If the weakness of the project is its lack of precision in measuring the changes, its strength is the recording of the

immediate changes for Pelhamites and the meanings that these imply for community life in small settlements. The message is of course, that regional government has an impact quite apart from its intentions and that as a result this policy thrust has more of a negative effect than a positive one.

The difference, then, between the traditional impact analysis and this study is significant in that the focus here has been the consequences of regional government on the entire settlement. The concern has not been to evaluate this policy from the perspective of the intentions of the provincial and/or regional official. The actions of the authorities has had both intended and unintended consequences. The purpose was to investigate these consequences from a research perspective that would allow me the opportunity to assess many more effects than those anticipated by those responsible for initiating the program. It was only by using participant-observation that I was able to overcome the normal bureaucratic preoccupation of evaluative research. To use the jargon of systems analysis, I have been more concerned with 'outcomes' than with 'outputs'. The concept of 'impact' is employed because it suggests implications much wider than a program evaluation scheme. Consequently, this study will probably be of more significance to those Pelhamites concerned about the decline of their community than to those public officials looking for a precise evaluation of regional government.

Appendix C

Methodological Outline of the Study of Pelham

The participant-observer experiences three separate problems in organizing a field study: entry, comprehensive investigation and exit. The entry into Pelham was much easier for me than that experienced by other researchers. My wife Peg's job of teaching kindergarten in Fonthill gave an immediate justification for living there and in fact we had lived in the village before deciding on this study. We had an apartment in the village offered to us by a landlord who had heard about our need through my brother, a teacher in nearby Fenwick. The small apartment complex of eleven units was perfect as a first location in Pelham. It was physically separated from my brother's 'home territory' of Fenwick so I was able to establish my own identity in Fonthill by daily walks, visits to the elementary school and talks with the clerk-treasurer. An example of the value of this entry period was a neighbour who drove daily to work in Hamilton. We commuted regularly during the first year and he took great delight in telling me about his political ideas, especially why he was not concerned about local politics (e.g.: daily travel out of town left him too tired; the local elite ran the place for their own concerns; the need for fundamental change). This gave me some idea of what the politically 'invisible' commuters might be thinking about Pelham politics and many of my first impressions were formed during these car rides to Hamilton. Many couples also passed the time with us and none of them were among the politically active. They were inclined to treat a study of regional government with a shrug of the shoulder. One fellow, an unemployed tradesman from the same neighbourhood in my old hometown (Sudbury, Ontario) thought that because I was at home during the day, I was a natural baseball partner. We also talked politics but again he simply threw around the images that so often were mentioned by the uninvolved: the self-interested elite, the unknown forces, the conspiracy, the lack of concern for the working man.

The first six months were used to establish my identity as a researcher on regional government in Pelham. I attended council meetings and board of education meetings, without making an effort to introduce myself to anyone at these sessions. The first impressions of council and town politics were attained in part from the clerk-treasurer who had met me through my brother several years previously. He took more of an interest than anyone else in the study, and I had to be careful to protect myself from his probing about my findings. He was, for example, always asking to see a copy of a preliminary draft because 'that's where you'll really say what you mean.' He was generous throughout the study in providing whatever data I needed. After I had the formal attitudinal interview with Mr. Hunt in the spring of 1973, I was careful not to put myself into situations with him that included long

sessions about regional government. He did, in addition, make an effort to include me in men's clubs and sporting events and introduced me to a number of uninvolved citizens whom I would have otherwise not met. The clerk-treasurer acted as a source of factual information, of 'informed' opinion and a linkage into the community.

My first involvement in the community was my role as a supply teacher for the Niagara South Board of Education. This immediately took me into several district secondary schools, but primarily the two in Pelham. I was able to enlarge my identity in the community, although the fact that my brother Brian was a teacher at Pelham Secondary School and active in community organizations obviously set the context (especially early friendship patterns) of my status and connections in Pelham. At Crossley Secondary School I never identified myself as a researcher and chose to listen in on other conversations about the future of Pelham Secondary School. The teachers at Crossley had a mixture of views about the other school. They were not at all convinced by arguments that favoured education in a smaller school. At the same time they were not anxious to integrate the two schools because the "trouble makers", some of whom had more seniority, would be moved to Crossley. That would overload that secondary school with teachers and would force a cutback the following year. More importantly, for the results of this study, I never developed the closeness with the Crossley teachers as I did with the Pelham teachers.

I decided early in my work at Pelham Secondary School to down-play my role as researcher. Being there as a supply teacher, I did not have to justify my appearances. Most of the staff (and all with whom I had regular conversations) knew that I was a doctoral student involved in a study of regional government and gradually they became aware that this included the study of their school. My reason for not emphasizing the role of participant-observer at the school was my concern for 'staging' in the staff room. I noticed that whenever a media person or the school trustee visited, behaviour changed to make sure the 'proper' image was projected. For instance, when Jo Carson of the Globe and Mail sat in the staff room, she was told about the concern for community. While this was undoubtedly a strong interest on the part of the teachers' leadership, others were also concerned about individual careers. In private conversations, when the more staunch advocates were not around, teachers often wondered aloud about their future with the school board.

This style in many ways indicates my approach to studying Pelham. In some instances I immediately made my intentions known while at other times I acted as a 'concerned citizen' rather than a social scientist. In fact, at times, I became quite concerned about the local feeling of powerlessness. Any personal conversations or formal interviews were held on the explicit understanding of my research role. The only occasion that I needed to announce my role as a researcher was at a St. Catharines' union meeting about regional government held in September, 1972. The meeting was attended by only four people plus the C.U.P.E. executive who asked why we all were there. My presence at meetings in Pelham never had to be explained.

After six months of general observation and library research, I felt that I was ready to begin to interview. I had decided to interview (a) all those who held elected positions in Pelham; (b) officials from Niagara Regional Government and the Niagara South Board of Education to gather information and to clarify the regional government's intentions and positions on a number of policy matters; and (c) those who were active in local politics through different associations. The choice of individuals to be interviewed is a critical turning point in a community study and, hence, the choices listed in Appendix A need to be explained.

The decision to choose active citizens reflects my interest in interviewing those who had the legal responsibility for making decisions about the future of Pelham and who had to work within the defined limits of the new legislation. Did they find this a better way of running the municipality? Was their work important to the townspeople? Were they able to affect the course of the town's development? When I asked these questions, I made no judgement as to whether there were others, more powerful, 'behind the scenes.' Council in Pelham, as I think elsewhere, tends to want to facilitate the expansion of the town. Therefore, decisions favour developers. There were always rumours floating around about the influence of Mr. 'X' or 'Y.' These 'real power' rumours indicated that the wealthier locals were of some consequence to the town's politics but I was not particularly concerned in this study about the varying influence of these men. I took it as a given that no council is independent of the influences of those with resources who wish to influence important council decisions. However, the framework of the study was designed to set aside that problem in favour of evaluating the impact of regional institutions from a broader community perspective. In this respect, the choice of one set of interviewer was reasonably straightforward. In order to find out the impact of regional government on the municipal government of Pelham I sought to interview all those Pelhamites who were elected to the council and board of education. I wanted to know how they were interpreting these new governmental structures. The clerk-treasurer was interviewed because in the small municipal office, he alone was responsible for the development, co-ordination and execution of policies. Other officials had very specific line or staff duties.

It was more difficult to choose areas of public activity that would serve as a case example to facilitate my research about local government. The choice of the Pelham Secondary School issue was made fairly early in the project because it was in the Fenwick and rural area; because it became an election issue in the 1974 school board election; because the local media covered the issue thoroughly and thus it was widely recognized as a legitimate topic; and because my brother brought this to my attention even before I had arrived in the town. Thus, I was at least partly pre-conditioned to think of the Pelham school battle as a very important issue in the town. Subsequent interviews revealed that the intensity of the feelings about the issue were not shared equally by all residents. Those in Fonthill, for instance, were less concerned than those in the rural areas and in Fenwick.

The choice of planning policy formulation was a more arbitrary

decision. Several specific servicing issues had at various times held the attention of council and local media but none were central for the duration of the study or for the whole of the town. The development of the town plan, on the other hand, provided a sphere of public activity that interested more citizens over a longer period of time (as indicated in council meeting discussions and decisions, citizen attendance at public meetings and the creation of new, planning oriented citizen groups) than most policies and had a wider possible impact on the townspeople than most decisions. It also gained importance because I thought that planning was the most complicated and critical problem facing small settlements. My understanding was that only through communal action (mostly by using local government) would small towns be able to maintain their traditional character, yet that very character would probably prevent them from taking such action. Following this hypothesis, I joined a citizens group, Community Concerns of Pelham, a new organization intent on promoting a conservative, English village-green space approach to planning. Furthermore, they were willing to use a very broad concept of planning to incorporate public services and a sense of community. My role in Community Concerns was more of an observer than a participant, although I was asked to contribute ideas on strategy to one of the executive members. When they held their public meeting I met other citizens who later helped me as informers and interviewees. Most of the seventy-five people in attendance did not attend another Community Concerns meeting as long as I continued to live in Pelham.

The interviews began shortly after this meeting. I felt that I had some sense of the town by that time and could involve myself in interviews, knowing something about the context of the politics in the settlement. I had prepared a historical overview of the area as well as an outline of events surrounding the implementation of regional government. I chose as the first interviewee a retired Fonthill politician whose involvement dated back to the thirties. The questions and answers that I worked through with him served as a pre-test of the interview schedule and eliminated some major difficulties: (e.g., the tape recorder needed an electrical outlet as the batteries were not sufficient; the questions were too long and involved and it was particularly difficult to obtain detailed answers about local notions of community). My approach from that point on was to interview those on the periphery of policy making (such as retiring politicians) first, and then leave the most important interviews until the end. These interviews were important because they were intended to produce new information and substantiate other material as well as elicit opinions and value commitments. Thus, for example, I left the interviews with the mayor, clerk-treasurer, and the chairman of Regional Niagara until the end of May (1973) and the director of education for the Niagara South Board of Education until the fall when he was more readily available.

Some officials who were not included in the list in Appendix A, such as the executive assistant to the director of education, were contacted on a regular basis to confirm specific items in board expenditures, minutes, motions and so on. In each government I was able to find someone whom I relied on not for opinion, but for valuable inform-

ation. Our discussions were not in the context of taped, formal interviews, and I believe that it would be unfair to list their names. Several were quite generous of their time and over the months I was able to substantiate and clarify many of my ideas.

The first draft was written at Oxford University, July and August, 1973, in the hope that distance would improve the objectivity of the study. We remained in Pelham while I continued to re-write and re-think earlier observations, comparing them to the literature (such as Margaret Stacey's Tradition and Change) and testing them out on local citizens. As some information was contradictory or unclear I turned to a local historian and experienced newspaper reporter to fill out details and to add their impressions.

During the second year, I found myself more involved in some community affairs (such as the closure of the school) and less involved in others (such as Community Concerns). Our interest in Pelham shifted with our summer move from Fonthill to Fenwick and my wife Peg's change from an elementary school there to one in Fenwick. This gave us another neighbourhood context and put an entirely new set of people into our lives. We left the middle class commuters in Fonthill without ever having established to my satisfaction a real rapport with them. I had found that they were inactive and in the few glimpses (social occasions, informants, newspaper articles, etc.) that I had of their lifestyles, I had imagined that I knew of their concerns. However, if there is one major group that I felt ignorant of, it was this one. I also had little to do with the very wealthy and knew little of their activity except where zoning changes were introduced into council and associated with one of these families. Informants offered some information about these people, and their consumption patterns were widely discussed. For example, our neighbours and friends kept bringing us reports of how the construction of these 'fabulous' homes was progressing.

As a participant-observer becomes more settled into a community, he becomes less inclined to search out what he does not happen upon in the normal course of daily life and affairs. After awhile, it becomes an effort to meet yet another citizen, to interview yet another official, to go to another meeting or simply do something out of the ordinary, to force oneself out of a villager's lifestyle. The attractiveness of a small town is the security of a known daily routine. In Fenwick, we were involved in the social life of our landlord and his wife, the 'afternoon gang' at the Lions Club and the occasional village social as outlined in the text. These were not unpleasant occasions and I could easily understand the attractiveness of the routine that each villager followed from one day to the next.

My exit was carefully organized in order that it not be known too far in advance that we would be leaving the area. Although my new teaching position was confirmed in February, I did not tell this to the closest of Pelhamites until May, 1974, when Peg had to submit her resignation. By that time, the two most controversial issues were being resolved: the school was closed and the fate of the local regional plan was being de-

cided by outside officials. After the appropriate farewell sessions, we left Pelham for the west in early July, 1974. Since then we have returned on two trips to renew acquaintances and to keep abreast of local developments. No one appeared to be particularly surprised to see us go, although one is always sorry to part company.

Conclusion

While it is a legitimate goal to find the meaning of activity through subjective interpretation, it is difficult to determine whether we ever really know why another person performs a social action. How do we know why the mayor runs for office? How do we know why some people object to regional government? These questions are complicated and it should never be presumed that any one method of research is going to produce a full answer or understanding of the subtleness of every human situation. For example, a sample survey may have offered others another perspective on regional government equally defensible as this one. Yet, sample survey only gives a firm, quantifiable estimate of the sample in relation to the total population, not of the validity of measures (instruments of observations) to population. This is the presumption, that measures validated in one time and place in a society are valid in another. I decided to use participant observation as it offered a methodology with continuous and comprehensive feedback as the study progressed over a two year period. However, the participant-observer methodology has been open to question about the reliability of the field research because it does not offer the 'objective' finality of other methods. Moreover, it is not easy for another researcher to recreate the situation that I had, even though there are interview recordings, documents, diaries, and so on. The fact is the transition happens only once. This study is unique because of this and serves as a record of the Pelham community at that time.

My involvement in Pelham yielded data which I collaborated enough times for me to think that it reflected the political life of Pelham 1972-74. But no participant-observer ever talks to all people at all times, so that in practice his information comes to reflect the understanding of the people he selects as informers and interviewees. Although his original intention might be to consider as many realities as possible, he naturally falls into an unconscious selection process which reflects his personal intellectual development within the university and his inclusion in the friendship patterns within the town. It is near impossible and somewhat artificial to live amongst people for two years without coming to enjoy the company of some more than others, without listening to them more and, most important, without trusting their sense of reality more than that of others. The reader is probably very aware that in this study Bud Ker, the principal, became a central character in my interpretation of Pelham in the second year of field work. His understanding of Pelham has been incorporated into this interpretation of local politics, as have others. The question raised is the validity of the findings given the obvious influence of a few individuals. (It needs to be emphasized here, however, that I did not become particularly close to Mr. Ker until the second year of study and after I had written the initial outline of the thesis. His closeness in the second year was very important to my understanding of Pelham but I had formed many of my impressions previously). The best answer to this criticism is that the research is not comprehensive and holistic in its treatment of Pelham. That is simply not its intention. Rather it is an effort to come to an understanding of how these people

now understand the role of regional government in their lives. Their interpretations are not based on a one dimensional response to this level of government but are a result of a very complicated thought process involving their world view. One can rarely come to a complete understanding of why one reacts to an issue; indeed, we accept that we ourselves are too complicated to be analysed in a single sentence. Extending that argument, it is presumptuous to think that the observer understands why someone else is doing whatever he is doing. We can only hope that our involvement, our listening, out sensitivity has somehow brought us closer but there is no way of absolutely proving beyond a doubt that meanings implied are in fact the meanings of the observed. This can only be suggested and supported by evidence surrounding the political actions in question.

A good summary explanation of the usefulness of participant observation can be found in the following quotation:

> At first sight, it might seem that a high degree of participation could be justified only as an inevitable compromise with the practical demands of a situation. For a high degree of participation not only demands more effort on the part of the investigator, but introduces a new person into the community--the participant observer, whose presence may change it to an unknown extent. However, participation in community life can actually enhance the "naturalness" of the observer's position. There are many situations in which the observer might well be experienced as an inhibiting stranger unless he undertook a function meaningful to members of the community. Yet the importance of active participation for research is not limited to assuaging suspicions, establishing rapport, and enhancing the "naturalness" of the observer's position. Its main function for research consists in opening new avenues of understanding. Through intensive participation in community life, the observer exposes himself to experiences that give him a firsthand knowledge of the more subtle pressures and counterpressures to which the members of the community are exposed. His introspection about his own experiences as a participant represents one of the most fruitful means of understanding the community's characteristics.[1]

The drawback to participant observation is the lack of finality in the study. Nothing is proved absolutely. The reader is trusting the perceptions, the intellectual honesty and the research capacity of the

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[1] Claire Selltiz et al, Research Methods in Social Relations (New York, 1959), p. 220.

writer. In this respect, it is fair to warn the reader that no one has yet been able to establish a meaning for community that is acceptable beyond a doubt either in the general intellectual sense or in a particularistic town study. I suspect that this study is no different.

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