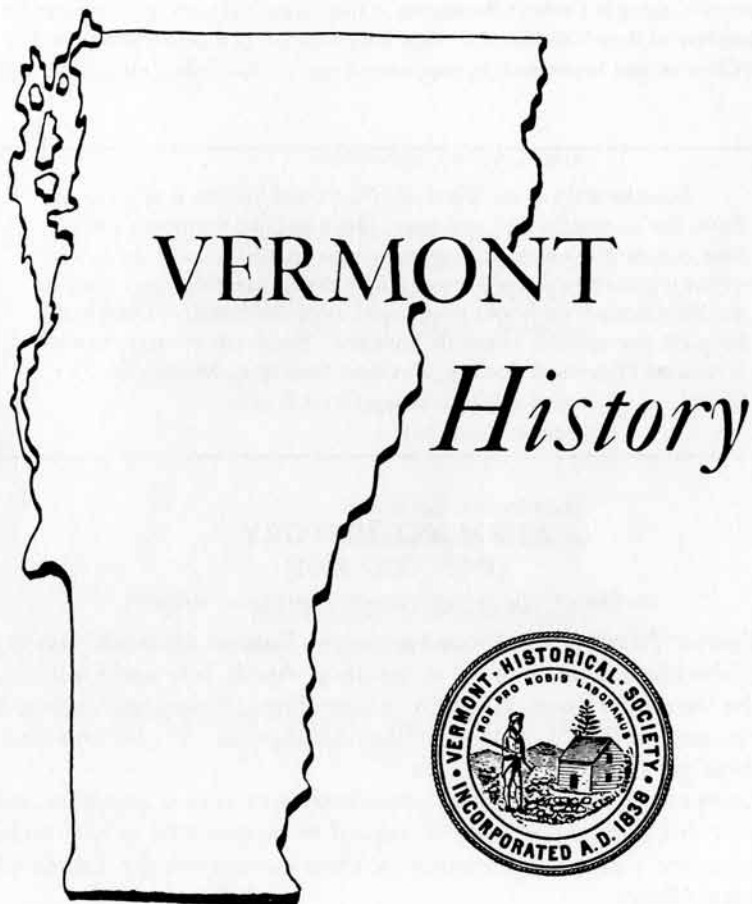
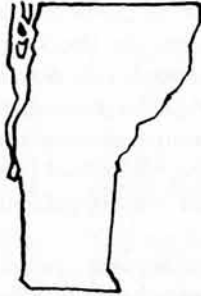


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“Neither dedicated Republicanism nor the bucolic countryside could buffer the forces of political modernity.”

## “Little Republics” The Structure of State Politics in Vermont, 1854-1920

*By Samuel B. Hand, Jeffrey D. Marshall, and D. Gregory Sanford*

From 1854 until 1958 Vermont Republicans never lost a statewide election, and the state, the only one, never failed to deliver its electoral vote to GOP national candidates. Vermont also returned the largest Republican majorities. Local elections produced a house sprinkled with non-Republicans (these anomalies frequently called themselves Democrats) and a senate often one hundred percent Republican.

During those halcyon days Republican disaffections were limited in size and duration. Sound Vermonters expressed political dissent either by not voting or supporting maverick Republicans. Only those who had abandoned all hope or who looked toward federal appointments from a Democratic administration in Washington would enter into a compact with the Democratic party. The archetypal Democrat was the town misanthrope; local lore and selective evidence lent credence to the caricature. Except for the elections of 1902 and 1912, anointed Republican candidates would not have lost an election even had Democrats and dissident Republicans consolidated.

By the turn of the century the virtues of Vermont's political constancy had become celebrated national treasures. Its state elections, the earliest in the nation,<sup>1</sup> were heralded as barometers of national Republican prospects. In 1896 McKinley reciprocated Vermont's gifts, a molded cross of Vermont butter and eighty percent of its vote, by according it a review-

ing stand for the inaugural parade. Issues that divided national parties seldom infected state politics,<sup>2</sup> and Vermont reveled in being "the star that never sets in the flag of devoted Republicanism."<sup>3</sup> Democrats and other detractors dismissed Vermont's constancy as an uncritical response to Republicanism that contributed to the state's apparent economic and demographic stagnation. Vermont, in the view of these critics, had been "hitched to the post" by Republicans while the rest of the country galloped toward the future.

The view in Vermont, however, reveals a more complex and dynamic structure. The sanctification of town meetings as the oldest and purest of American political processes masked the increasing subordination of Vermont town governments to state authority. Neither dedicated Republicanism nor the bucolic countryside could buffer the forces of political modernity. Vermont moved to centralize services earlier and more thoroughly than its sister states, not in spite of, but in consequence of its predominately agricultural economy. That a political revolution of such magnitude happened without disrupting Republican dominance occurred in part because of elaborate safeguards cultivated to mute internecine factionalism, safeguards which over time acquired a force through custom and usage that mitigated the need for formal legislation. The observance most rigidly implemented was the mountain rule. Instituted even before Vermont became a state, it attempted to accommodate regional rivalries by defining candidate eligibility in geographic terms. Initially imposed to ensure a lieutenant governor from east of the Green Mountains to balance a governor from the west, the rule took on more elaborate applications. Since 1791 when Vermont entered the Union as the fourteenth state, one senate seat was designated eastern, and contestants for that seat came exclusively from the east. Conversely, the other senate seat "belonged" to the west.<sup>4</sup>

While its application to the senate remained constant until after World War II, the mountain rule underwent considerable modification in terms of other offices. The rule was not closely observed in relation to United States house seats until Vermont was apportioned down to two seats in 1882; the law establishing the two congressional districts delineated east-west political boundaries. While the rule worked to the advantage of national incumbents (Senators died in office or retired at an advanced age; representatives, after 1882, usually sought re-election until advancement to the senate was possible), for most elective state offices it was linked to a rotation principle reflecting the Yankee tradition of passing office around.

Governors invariably alternated east-west, and from 1870 to 1928, served a single two-year term. Lieutenant governors, although only occasionally succeeding to the governorship, provided a mirror image of gubernatorial geography<sup>5</sup> (See Table 1.) Little mountain rules in various forms

TABLE 1

<i>Year Elected</i>	<i>WEST</i>	<i>Town</i>	<i>EAST</i>	<i>Town</i>
1870	JOHN STEWART (MIDDLEBURY)		<i>George Dale (Brighton)</i>	
1872	<i>Russell Taft (Burlington)</i>		JULIUS CONVERSE (WOODSTOCK)	
1874	ASAHIEL PECK (JERICHO)		<i>Lyman Hinckley (Chelsea)</i>	
1876	<i>Redfield Proctor (Rutland)</i>		HORACE FAIRBANKS (ST. JOHNSBURY)	
1878	REDFIELD PROCTOR (RUTLAND)		<i>Eben Colton (Irasburgh)</i>	
1880	<i>John Barstow (Shelburne)</i>		ROSWELL FARNHAM (BRADFORD)	
1882	JOHN BARSTOW (SHELburne)		<i>Samuel Pingree (Hartford)</i>	
1884	<i>Ebenezer Ormsbee (Shoreham)</i>		SAMUEL PINGREE (HARTFORD)	
1886	EBENEZER ORMSBEE (SHOREHAM)		<i>Levi Fuller (Brattleboro)</i>	
1888	<i>Urban Woodbury (Burlington)</i>		WILLIAM DILLINGHAM (WATERBURY)	
1890	CARROLL PAGE (HYDE PARK)		<i>Henry Fletcher (Cavendish)</i>	
1892	<i>F. Stewart Stranaham (St. Albans)</i>		LEVI FULLER (BRATTLEBORO)	
1894	URBAN WOODBURY (BURLINGTON)		<i>Zophar Mansur (Brighton)</i>	
1896	<i>Nelson Fisk (Isle La Motte)</i>		JOSIAH GROUT (DERBY)	
1898	EDWARD SMITH (ST. ALBANS)		<i>Henry Bates (St. Johnsbury)</i>	
1900	<i>Martin Allen (Ferrisburg)</i>		WILLIAM STICKNEY (LUDLOW)	
1902	JOHN McCULLOUGH (BENNINGTON)		<i>Zed Stanton (Roxbury)</i>	
1904	<i>Charles Stearns (Johnson)</i>		CHARLES BELL (WALDEN)	
1906	FLETCHER PROCTOR (PROCTOR)		<i>George Prouty (Newport)</i>	
1908	<i>John Mead (Rutland)</i>		GEORGE PROUTY (NEWPORT)	
1910	JOHN MEAD (RUTLAND)		<i>Leighton Slack (St. Johnsbury)</i>	
1912	<i>Frank Howe (Bennington)</i>		ALLEN FLETCHER (CAVENDISH)	
1914	CHARLES GATES (FRANKLIN)		<i>Hale Darling (Chelsea)</i>	
1916	<i>Roger Hulburd (Hyde Park)</i>		HORACE GRAHAM (CRAFTSBURY)	
1918	PERCIVAL CLEMENT (RUTLAND)		<i>Mason Stone (Montpelier)</i>	
1920	<i>Abram Foote (Cornwall)</i>		JAMES HARTNESS (SPRINGFIELD)	

Governors in BOLD type and Lieutenant Governors in *italics*.

From 1870 through 1920, only one governor, Charles Bell, came from a town below the median population. Four out of twenty-five lieutenant governors came from towns below the median population.

and manifestations applied to the general assembly. In 1900, a typical year, only one of the 30 state senators and 13 of the 246 house members returned from the previous session. Unlike governors and lieutenant governors, however, legislators frequently resumed office after an intervening period. The 1900 senate, with but one senator returning from the previous session, included only eight freshman legislators. The house, as befits a bastion of citizen-legislators, contained a far lower percentage of experienced members.

Most observers lauded rotation in office as a touchstone of participatory democracy, though a small faction deplored the lack of continuity. In 1880 Governor Roswell Farnham lamented how the practice "necessarily" brought "into our legislative hall and into various offices of the State, men unaccustomed to legislation and to a great extent inexperienced in public affairs."<sup>6</sup> The political calendar called for elections in even-year Septembers, with inauguration of the governor and the convening of the legislature in October. Legislative sessions seldom extended beyond November, and except for rare special sessions never reconvened. To mitigate the effect of newly elected officers having such "slight opportunity to become acquainted with the needs of the State," some sentiment appeared for reinstating annual sessions.<sup>7</sup> Admittedly a palliative, the 1880 legislature rejected the suggestion without debate. Vermont had abandoned annual sessions only ten years previously for the sake of economy and to propitiate the prevailing belief that annual sessions produced too much legislation too frequently revised. "Permanency in the law is always desirable," and frequent legislative sessions threatened that principle. Governor Urban Woodbury cautioned that "it is better to do too little than too much;"<sup>8</sup> Governor William Stickney thought it "well to remember that change is not always improvement."<sup>9</sup>

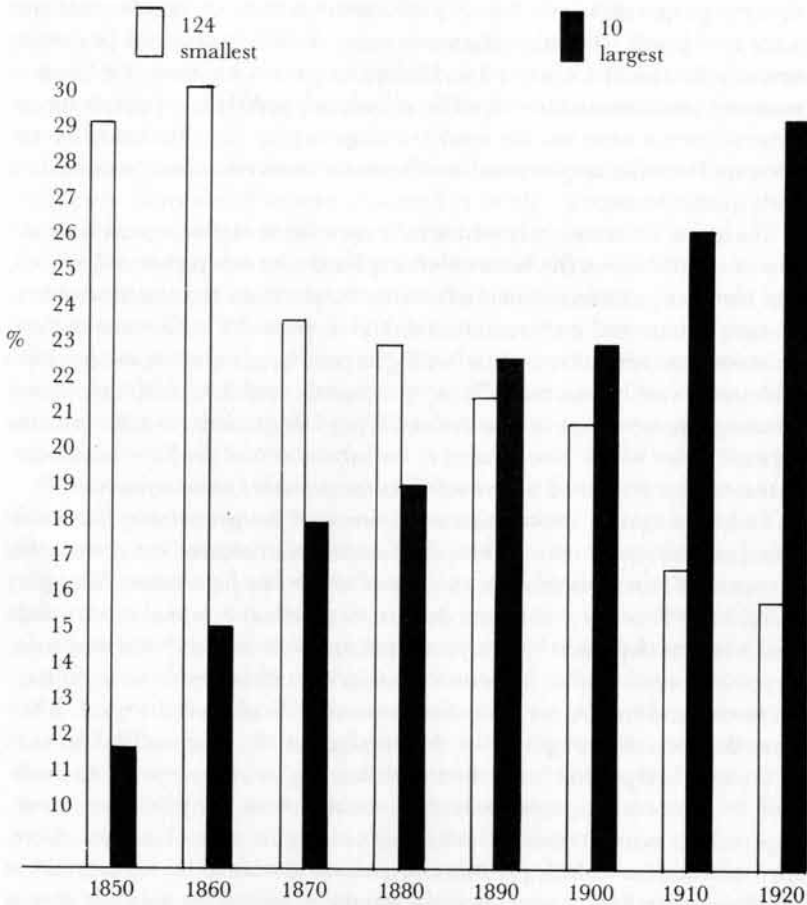
Such sentiments bolstered the virtues of the citizen-legislator. "It has been well said," Governor Stickney declaimed, "that the best legislation is attained by the combined judgement of average men."<sup>10</sup> Adherents uncritically linked the concepts of citizen-legislator with town governance. Governor John McCullough likened Vermont towns to "little republics" which existed before the state. They were "the inheritance and growth of the ages of Anglo-Saxon uplifting." Control of local affairs, he believed, was the essence of liberty, and Vermont's founding fathers, by establishing a house of representatives with each town represented by a single delegate had "simply recognized [this] in our constitution."<sup>11</sup> Outside the house, however, towns were not equal and grew increasingly less so, with enormous disparities in wealth and population. In 1902 Burlington's grand list was set at \$135,092 and its delegate to the house represented a little republic of over 18,500 inhabitants. Glastenbury boasted a grand list of \$353 and forty-eight inhabitants.

From 1850 through 1920 Vermont's population inched from 314,120 to 352,428. Significantly, the state's aggregate population totals masked in-

TABLE 2

*Population Distribution*

(as percent of the entire state population of the 124 smallest towns and 10 largest towns and cities)  
1850-1920



ternal restructurings. Statewide growth reflected gains in larger communities which more than compensated for population losses in the smaller towns. While the number of Vermont towns remained fairly constant, their median size declined from 1,224 in 1850 to 935 in 1900.<sup>12</sup> (See Table 6) Since each town was granted a single seat in the Vermont House of Representatives, towns with under 950 residents in 1900 (and even fewer in subsequent years) held a house majority. In 1902 the 124 smallest towns of the 246 towns represented in the legislature constituted 20 percent of the state's population, while the 10 largest municipalities, all over 5,000, claimed 25 percent. By 1920 the 124 smallest towns contained only 16 percent and the largest up to almost 30 percent. (See Table 2.)

The growing discrepancies within legislative representation did not escape notice, and by the mid-nineteenth century there had already been several attempts to conform legislative apportionment to population. The focal point for these proposals was the Council of Censors, a constitutionally mandated body of thirteen, elected every seven years for the purpose of proposing amendments to the Constitution. Elected on a statewide basis, the Censors were not beholden to little republic principles, and their proposals for re-apportionment were usually rendered nugatory by constitutional conventions traditionally apportioned on the same one-town one-representative basis as the house.

The council's most concerted attack upon little republic principles occurred in 1855 when the Know Nothing Party elected its slate of Censors. The Censors proclaimed their adherence "to the more reasonable doctrine that population and representation should be equal." The Censors deemed the town representation system "wrong in principle, unjust in its operation and unnecessarily expensive." They proposed a constitutional amendment creating representative districts of equal population to correct "the present system" under which "one quarter of the inhabitants of the State have nearly the same number of representatives as the other three quarters."<sup>13</sup>

To hedge against the anticipated rejection of the proposal by the town-based constitutional convention, the Censors restructured the convention to consist of ninety members apportioned on county population. This ploy failed when the convention met, declared its method of selection a "strange and startling departure" from precedent and custom, and affirmed principles they attributed to the state's founders. In their day "towns, in their corporate and municipal character, were objects of special regard. They were the horn of strength to the then struggling commonwealth." In each of these little republics "men discussed their rights and prepared to maintain them; there and there only they could vote in the aggregate; there, express their sentiments on all subjects touching the general interest; there, give instructions to Delegates and perpetuate the same by record; and in all these particulars, towns, as such, should be no less the object of special regard now."<sup>14</sup> Having censured the Censors, the convention dissolved without consideration of the proposed amendments. Failure to show "special regard" to the little republics doomed the Council of Censors as an institution. Citing the exigencies of war, the 1862 Censors did not propose amendments, while in 1869 they proposed, among other amendments, abolishing the Censors all together.

Rhetorical commitment to the little republic principle abounded at the subsequent constitutional convention in 1870 in which proposals to change the constitutional amending process and to convert from annual to biennial elections evoked the strongest debate. Proponents and opponents of both

measures cloaked their arguments with little republic respectability. The proposal to change the amending process entailed abolishing the Council of Censors and lodging its authority with the senate. Supporters of the proposal presented themselves as the champions of the towns, pointing out the Censor's historic opposition to the town equality principle. Though the senate was apportioned on county population, the proposal maintained town prerogatives by requiring the consent of the house to any senate sponsored amendments.<sup>15</sup>

The proposed abolition of constitutional conventions in favor of statewide referenda distressed delegates assuaged by neither a ten-year time lock for proposing amendments nor concurrence by two consecutive legislatures before presenting amendments to the electorate. These proponents of the old system argued that though the Censors had indeed sinned against town rights in the past, the town based conventions had thwarted all but one of the attempts at reapportionment. The one exception, the creation of the senate in 1836, had been linked to several other issues, including public disgust over the failure of the 1835 legislature to resolve a gubernatorial election.

The biennial elections debate in 1870 was also framed along town lines. While proponents argued that biennial elections "would not materially modify the present state of affairs," opponents feared longer terms created "immunity from accountability" and would form "the entering wedge for taking power from the people and resting it in the executive of the state." With biennial elections linked to biennial legislative sessions the abandonment of annual sessions also raised concern. Opponents warned darkly that were the proposal adopted, "we should be asked to reduce the number of representatives and ignore the rights of the small towns to the advantage of the large towns." Proponents countered with alluring economic prospects. By reducing the frequency of elections and the costs of maintaining representatives in Montpelier, the towns could achieve significant savings.<sup>16</sup>

The biennial election amendment carried by a 119 to 114 vote with a small majority of above median sized towns in favor and an even smaller majority of below median sized towns opposed. The vote to abolish the Council of Censors carried by a much wider margin, 123 to 85. Delegates, despite disagreement over their potential results, clearly linked the two amendments. Eighty-nine percent voted either in favor of both or for neither. Only the twenty largest towns, however, voted as a bloc. Their fourteen to five vote (one abstention) for biennial elections carried the day for that amendment, and their sixteen to four vote assured the demise of the Council of Censors.

Although the status of Vermont's little republics did not undergo a challenge in extended parliamentary debate again until the struggle for the direct primary in 1915, state government did sometimes concede the pro-



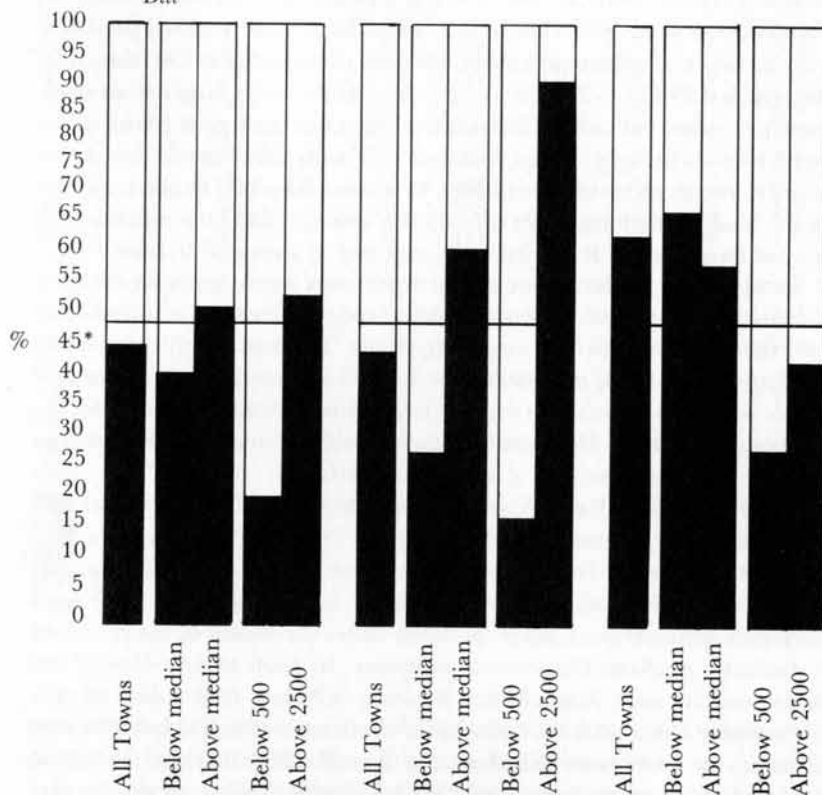
priety of popular majorities. A senate apportioned by county population and a majority requirement for elective office were the principal formal mechanisms, and popular referenda provided the most effective traditional restraint upon little republic sovereignty. The legislature frequently resorted to referenda to resolve particularly divisive issues which threatened to strain the credibility of the house's one representative per town apportionment. A majority of town representatives were required to call for a referendum, and the record reveals numerous instances of issues submitted to referenda that otherwise would not have survived a house vote.

Temperance reform graphically illustrates this phenomenon. In 1852 after a decade of agitation the Vermont legislature passed a bill prohibiting the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages. Possessed of strong gubernatorial support, it had coasted through the senate but squeaked by in the house ninety-one to ninety, and only then because house members appended a referendum clause. The referendum directed the electorate to choose between alternate dates (March or December) for statewide prohibition to take effect.<sup>17</sup> Despite some confusion on this issue, the electorate had not been dealt a *fait accompli*. Fearing that the Vermont courts, as other state courts, would rule that the legislature could not delegate law-making power back to the people, representatives conceived the 1853 referendum as an artifice to circumvent constitutional restriction.<sup>18</sup> On its face the 1852 law did not depend upon the vote of the people; the referendum would merely determine whether the law would come into force prior or subsequent to the convening of the 1853 legislature. The legislators understood that should a majority choose the later date, they would repeal the act prior to its coming into force.<sup>19</sup>

After a spirited contest, and with some anti-prohibition elements boycotting the referendum, the voters approved the March date by a 22,215 to 21,045 vote. The dry majority came largely from the votes of Rutland, Brattleboro, Bennington, and Burlington, Vermont's largest towns. A small majority of towns (129 of 239 with one tie) voted against prohibition. In both the legislative and referendum votes a majority of towns below the state median in population voted wet, while a majority of the towns above the median voted dry. (See Table 3.)

Triumphs of the popular majority over little republic prerogatives are not isolated phenomena, and the temperance controversy supplies other illustrations, including the graphic local option referendum of 1903. Between 1852 and the turn of the twentieth century prohibition sentiment shifted perceptibly. While in 1853 only thirty percent of the towns below median population voted dry, by 1903 prohibition carried in almost 70 percent of below median towns. The largest population centers, formerly prohibition's most vociferous advocates, spearheaded efforts toward repeal by

TABLE 3  
*Approval of Prohibition, By Percentage of Towns in Legislature*  
 1853  
 Liquor Referendum Bill



\*Due to a large number of house abstentions, 47% constituted a voting majority

proposing local option — a variation of the little republic concept, in which each town would decide whether to permit the sale of alcoholic beverages within its boundaries.

In 1902 Percival Clement, a former mayor of Rutland and Vermont's most prominent local option spokesman, campaigned unsuccessfully for the Republican gubernatorial nomination. Though the 1902 state platform included a plank calling for a local-option referendum, local option forces persisted in running Clement as an independent candidate for governor in the general election. Gaining 28,000 votes to regular Republican John G. McCullough's 31,800 and the Democratic standard bearer's 7,300,

Clement became the first candidate to deny a statewide Republican nominee a popular majority.<sup>20</sup>

The Constitution of Vermont mandates that in the absence of a popular majority, the general assembly elects state-wide office holders. When the assembly convened in October, 1902, it promptly elected McCullough. It also enacted a local-option law with a referendum clause attached providing a choice between enforcement dates. On town meeting day in 1903 the earlier date carried 29,711 to 28,972. As in 1853, the distinctly larger town sentiment prevailed, but unlike 1853, eight of the state's ten largest communities voted overwhelmingly against prohibition. Towns below media population voted to retain statewide prohibition by a two-and-a-half to one majority. In the final tabulations, while only 83 of Vermont's 246 little republics approved local option, it carried by a majority of almost 750 votes.<sup>21</sup>

Temperance, a persistent and conspicuous issue, permits detailed numerical analysis, but Vermont's political and social context inhibited other varieties of divisiveness from becoming visible. The consistently overwhelming Republican house majorities (See Table 4.) assured the success of proposals with solid Republican support irrespective of united Democratic opposition. Conversely, Democratic initiatives without substantial Republican support failed even to gain a legislative hearing.

In the face of huge Republican majorities Democrats understood the futility of a distinctly partisan legislative program. In 1890, the Democrats' banner year, they counted only sixty-two house members, necessitating the support of an equal number of Republicans to attain a majority. The need for senate concurrence further inhibited either the reality or the record of a distinctly partisan Democratic program. In 1890 twenty-nine of the thirty senators were Republicans. Between 1876 and 1921 a total of only twenty-nine Democrats won election to the senate. (See Table 4.) In rare instances the Democrats united against disunited Republicans; the record does not reveal issues upon which the legislature divided on strictly partisan, Republican versus Democratic, terms. The Democrats appreciated the futility of advancing legislative initiatives against united Republican sentiment, and on most legislative votes divided in a fashion similar to the Republicans. Republican and Democratic cohesion might vary on any particular vote, but their majorities were usually in accord.

Less tangible political considerations compounded legislative arithmetic. The nineteenth century electorate considered the assertion of nonpartisanship a virtue. The Republican party capitalized on the persisting view that it stood, in most essentials, above partisan politics. Contests for the general assembly exemplified this phenomenon. With Republican nomination tantamount to election in most towns, Democrats regularly participated in Republican caucuses; Vermont law did not require any form of party

TABLE 4  
*Legislative Distribution by Party*

<i>Year Elected</i>	SENATE			HOUSE				<i>Size</i>
	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Rep</i>	<i>Dem</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Unrep</i>	
1876	30			205	31		5	241
1878	29	1		175	43	14	9	241
1880	30			217	19	2	3	241
1882	28	2		183	47	6	4	240
1884	27	3		195	35	9	1	240
1886	29	1		206	29	4	2	241
1888	30			219	19	2	3	243
1890	29	1		172	62	6	3	243
1892	30			200	40	1	2	243
1894	30			228	11	2	3	244
1896	30			224	19	2		245
1898	30			203	41	2		246
1900	30			196	48	1	1	246
1902	25	5		192	48	2	4	246
1904	30			206	33	7		246
1906	30			199	35	11	1	246
1908	28	2		201	39	4	2	246
1910	30			194	47	5		246
1912	27	2	1	146	56	41	3	246
1914	30			174	32	40		246
1916	30			195	42	8	1	246
1918	29	1		211	25	10	1	247
1920	29	1		215	22	9	1	247

registration until the Caucus Act of 1904 when the legislature temporarily excluded Democrats from Republican party deliberations.

It was precisely such efforts at regulating candidate selection that provoked the most cohesive Democratic responses in opposition to Republican majorities. The Purity of Elections Act of 1890, providing for a secret ballot and state supervision of elections, elicited a close Republican split, seventy-eight against to seventy-two in favor. The Democrats carried the vote with a fifty-three to seven majority in favor. The Caucus Act of 1904 produced a similar Democratic alignment. The thirty-three house Democrats and six independents joined by only thirty-two Republicans could not block the bill's enactment.<sup>22</sup> Except on such occasions, Democrats followed the non-partisan course that distinguished their Republican house colleagues.

Town size provides more striking divisions in house votes than party affiliation,<sup>23</sup> but the ten largest towns (all over 2,900 population in 1850 and 5,300 in 1900) could never hope to assert their interests over the other

far more numerous little republics. Duane Lockard, writing of the more recent pre-reapportionment past, noted that "for the relatively small urban areas with even smaller legislative representation to argue their case on such a basis would be the poorest possible tactics."<sup>24</sup> If small town representatives dominated the house, small-town influence could be tempered in the senate, to which each county elected one to four at-large members. Fixed at thirty members, the size of county delegations varied with population, giving greater representation to the larger counties which encompassed the largest towns. But the arrangement did not guarantee large town supremacy. From the senate's inception members elected from towns below the median range formed a small minority. Not until after 1915 and the enactment of a direct primary and a plurality rule could the largest communities manipulate the senate to their advantage. Before then tradition and demography posed insuperable barriers. Furthermore, though senators most frequently came from the larger towns, tradition dictated that no more than one senator be elected from any town. From 1854 there was always a Chittenden County senator elected from Burlington and since 1869 a Rutland County senator from Rutland, but the remaining seats were rotated. Most often counties rotated all their seats, although not in any rigorously recurring order. (See Table 5.)

The status of the largest towns in the senate roughly paralleled their status in their individual counties. No city or town housed a county majority. Vermont's largest cities resembled villages by modern urban standards. In 1900 its ten largest municipalities accounted for only 29 percent of the state's population (See Table 2.), and its five largest 14.4 percent. Only in Chittenden County did a majority live in towns of more than 5,000 inhabitants. In Rutland, the most populous county in 1900, only one-fourth of the population resided in towns exceeding 5,000 inhabitants. But if the largest Vermont communities could not control the senate, they did use it as a forum in which to air their interests and modify house initiatives.<sup>25</sup> The bottom line, however, was a legislature dominated by small towns and a legislative ethos that predisposed advocates of all conceivable causes to fit their rhetoric to little republic cloth.

The sturdy structures that buttressed little republic control, notably legislative apportionment and hallowed tradition, rested, however, upon the shifting sands of demographic and economic change. Ironically neither Democratic voting blocs nor large town electoral strength eroded the little republic prerogatives. Instead, the representatives of the little republics themselves continually cast the votes toward greater and more centralized authority. If little republics alleged the theory of enlarged state and national government indigestible, they nonetheless swallowed it eagerly in small portions. If Vermont hill farmers never fully abandoned their rugged in-

TABLE 5  
*Legislative Continuity 1876-1921*  
*Members Returning to Same Chamber From Preceding Session*

	<i>House</i>	<i>Senate</i>
1876	21	1
1878	20	2
1880	18	1
1882	19	0
1884	20	3
1886	12	7
1888	13	3
1890	5	0
1892	16	2
1894	10	0
1896	12	0
1898	5	0
1900	11	0
1902	9	0
1904	14	0
1906	9	0
1908	7	0
1910	8	0
1912	11	1
1915	8	0
1917	17	0
1919	1	2
1921	10	2

dependence, they nonetheless appeased their appetites for services neither they nor their towns could independently provide. Governor Redfield Proctor could declare in 1878 that it was “in accordance with our general policy and manifestly the part of wisdom not to assume duties and obligations that can be properly left with the towns,”<sup>26</sup> but two years later, and despite his efforts otherwise, he could only lament that “sometimes state representatives seem to think that if they can vote any expenses away from the town to the State, it is so much clear gain.”<sup>27</sup> As Proctor appreciated, the abrogation of local financial responsibility inevitably meant relinquishing local control.

Proctor’s contemporaries understood this as well, but many towns had no constructive alternative. Given small and declining populations, meager grand lists, frequent debt and burdensome property taxes, they lacked sufficient personnel and financial resources to provide even the most fundamental town services. Efforts to circumvent this dilemma by simply absolving

the towns from meeting prior responsibilities were roundly condemned. Governor Levi Fuller noted that "the legislation of 1880 which removed from the towns the responsibility for having good roads, has in many cases caused neglect of ordinary obligations and fostered abuse."<sup>28</sup> Even inhabitants of the smallest towns echoed these sentiments. Their inability to meet "ordinary obligations" was antipodal to the increasing dependency by Vermont farmers — and the smaller the town the more likely it was to be exclusively or primarily agricultural — for marketing facilities.

As Edwin Rozwenc noted in his study of Vermont agricultural policies, the development of specialized commercial farming intensified the farmer's awareness "of the influence legislation can have on the conditions of marketing and the benefits which can be drawn from the public treasury."<sup>29</sup> By the end of the Civil War Vermont's principal industry had become dairy farming, butter and cheese were its principal products, southern New England its principal market. Vermont farmers, who invariably constituted a house majority, fully appreciated the potential for government support. In 1869 they organized the first statewide dairymen's association in the nation, and although membership remained small, it was well connected. Founded in the room of the State House used by the Senate Agricultural Committee, it initially contented itself with state appropriations to further educational activities, but soon it enlisted state and national government support to restrict the sale of oleomargarine, protect markets from Canadian imports, and regulate railroad rates.

Building and maintaining open roads, either from the farm to a railhead or directly to market, was another persisting objective of the agricultural community. In 1827 the state had experimented with turning control over from town to county road commissioners, but it soon restored full authority to the towns. In 1880 the legislature again reestablished the county road commissioner. Inadequacies persisted, and the Dairymen's Association and allied interest groups alleged that a major reason for a continual state of disrepair of Vermont roads was that even when towns and counties possessed the will to maintain roads, they often lacked the necessary finances or professional expertise.

The Highway Act of 1892, designed to counter such failings, mandated that every town elect a road commissioner and levy a tax of twenty cents on the grand list for the support of its roads. The Act also mandated a levy of an additional five cents to be paid to the state for redistribution to the towns on a mileage formula. Although the Act required some towns to allocate more to public roads than was their custom, the formula assured a redistribution from the wealthier to the poorer communities. For these smaller towns the lure of additional finances proved irresistible. The larger and wealthier towns, increasingly hostage to a transportation network to

*Redfield Proctor*



which even the smallest towns provided vital links, viewed the five-cent state tax as an unavoidable investment. The bill passed overwhelmingly with support by a majority of towns in every category. The weakest support was among the lowest quarter of towns in population, but even within that category less than 30 percent opposed the bill. In 1898 the legislature appointed a state highway commissioner and subsequent legislatures, with the endorsement of little republics of all sizes, further extended state authority. In 1917 Vermonters prided themselves in being among the first states to propose a state highway system under federal guidelines. Adherence to federal guidelines, its proponents confirmed, would entitle the state to federal highway grants.

The historic diffusion of responsibility over Vermont roads formed a large impediment to an efficient highway and marketing system, yet contrasted to public education it was a model of consolidation. In 1850 the 239 incorporated Vermont towns contained 2,594 school districts. While the number of districts had declined by only three,<sup>30</sup> by 1860 the school enrollment had fallen from 99,110 to 75,691. This extraordinary number of school districts was an inheritance of the fee system from which the Vermont free common school system evolved. "To enable [towns] to instruct youth at low prices," a 1782 statute authorized towns to either create a single district or divide into several districts.<sup>31</sup> Most chose the second alternative. Groups of parents frequently organized district schools with costs and fees levied on a per student basis. Families without school-aged children or families choosing not to send their children to the district school escaped assessment.

Despite enrollment declines that sapped all reasonable expectations for local financing, particularly in the most rural districts, the towns stubbornly retained the district system. As early as 1810 the legislature enacted a



school tax to supplement the fee system and simultaneously extended its regulatory power, and in 1864 the legislature made the cost of common schools a charge upon the towns.<sup>32</sup> But mandating public support at the town level did not assure adequate resources. Governor Roswell Farnham reported in 1880 that "The large villages and cities of the State are well provided with schools, but many of the sparsely inhabited portions of the State have schools but a few months a year, and those of an inferior kind." Farnham went on to note that the inhabitants of those communities were "so few, or so strained in circumstances that they could not support good schools." His remedy was "to have the expense of schools fall to a greater extent upon the whole state."<sup>33</sup>

Preliminary to implementing any such state aid program, an emerging coterie of professional educators, supported by the state's Republican leadership, determined to consolidate the school district system. One hundred and three districts enrolled 6 or fewer scholars; 420 districts enrolled between 7 and 11 young scholars. That "the people of our commonwealth are increasing in illiteracy," Governor Ebenezer Ormsbee blamed on the common school system.<sup>34</sup> Yet despite the economic and qualitative advantages predicted from consolidation, most towns remained reluctant. The 1885 legislature mandated all towns to vote whether to adopt a town system, but in a series of town pollings held over the following two years only sixteen voted affirmatively.<sup>35</sup> Clearly the district school system retained strong popular support.

Commitment to neighborhood schools under local control was reinforced by non-ideological calculations. Control of the school district meant control of the school budget, and most districts, poor or wealthy, voted to retain that control. The more sparsely settled districts, those communities "so strained in circumstances that they cannot support good schools," correctly anticipated that consolidation would introduce compulsory standards and increased economic burdens. Wealthier districts, with less to fear from mandated standards, appreciated that amalgamation with smaller, less cost-efficient districts would inexorably increase their own school taxes. Consolidation of a relatively prosperous village school district with impoverished counterparts elsewhere in town would shift some of the costs for maintaining all the town schools upon the village. For districts that collectively expended resources disproportionate to their means, consolidation provided a cure at least as debilitating as the disease. Such districts required a broader tax base than their towns, and even some counties, could provide. The state formally acknowledged this in 1890 when the legislature imposed a state levy of five cents on the grand list to be redistributed by formula to the existing school districts. It passed with only twelve dissenting votes. Some districts promptly applied state revenues to reduce property taxes.

*Ebenezer Ormsbee*



The 1890 redistribution scheme dampened resistance to consolidation. The very next session of the legislature mandated a town system despite its having been adopted voluntarily by only forty towns. The district school era ended after 110 years in which the administrator's powers "were sufficiently general and plenary to make him practically a district autocrat."<sup>36</sup> Once the township unit absorbed the district and power came into the hands of a town board of directors, local power eroded. In 1894 the legislature beat back a final effort to restore the district system and voted overwhelmingly to raise the state school tax to eight cents.

Road and school taxes, the only state claims upon the grand list, were celebrated as "steps in the direction of true democracy." Advocates defended them as more than "drafts upon the stronger in favor of the weaker," but rather as "constant reminders" that road improvement could "profitably use more money" and "that the poorer communities have a right to equality in school burdens."<sup>37</sup> Despite the central place of roads and schools in Vermont politics, legislation in other areas augmented state authority at the sacrifice of local or individual autonomy. In 1886 the legislature restricted the authority of the town overseers of the poor to deny pauper support and made support of the indigent insane a state obligation. Dairy farmers, threatened with the loss of markets due to epidemics linked to unwholesome milk, solicited state creamery inspections. Indeed, dairy interests became the paramount advocates of state and national interventions. In 1880 Vermont required that all "imitation butter" served or sold within the state be dyed pink, and the Vermont Dairymen's Association began intensive lobbying for a federal law regulating the sale of oleo. When in 1902 such a

law was enacted, it was commonly referred to as the Grout Act after its most persistent advocate, former Vermont Congressman William W. Grout, a life member of the Dairymen's Association. Despite the exhortations about the importance of local control, Governor Josiah Grout (William's brother) noted such plans "for upbuilding the state [were] always acceptable to the smaller and generally agreeable to the wealthier [towns]."<sup>38</sup>

Governor Grout, who had served Newport and Orleans County in the General Assembly, ardently supported programs that would augment the material resources of the poorer towns and counties. With the grand list for all of Orleans County smaller than that of the wealthier towns (and Orleans was not the poorest county), Grout and others understood that only through pooling state resources could the state amass sufficient wealth to permit meaningful redistribution. Representatives of the larger towns recognized this as well, and Grout attributed their support to knowledge that "any excess they pay, enures to the benefit of the state as a whole."<sup>39</sup> The realities of apportionment abetted large-town public spiritedness. With smaller republics enthusiastic for redistribution schemes and their representatives far more numerous in the house, the largest towns agreed amiably to the inevitable.

State government had undergone a significant centralization. By 1914, at the height of the national progressive movement, Vermont had adopted, selectively and in its own fashion, a thorough-going reform agenda. Vermont Republicans boasted that they had responded to "new complex social and economic conditions" by "imposing upon the agencies of government novel duties and obligations." Few boasted that these new duties and obligations were imposed at the expense of municipal autonomy.<sup>40</sup> Governor Grout viewed the reforms as "Steps in the direction of true democracy" and state taxes as "drafts upon the stronger in favor of the weaker."<sup>41</sup>

Yet the towns which found economic equalizers "acceptable," vigorously resisted comparable electoral schemes. Small towns were reluctant to surrender political power and influence disproportionate to their population or wealth. To trade away authority over road maintenance in return for better roads made good practical sense; to relinquish political influence without compensation made no sense at all. Of all the legislation ever proposed none more exemplified such uncompensated yielding as direct primary bills and none ever met more determined resistance from Vermont's small towns. From 1902, when the first such bill was introduced, until 1908 no primary proposal reached a final vote in either house. In the latter year the senate passed a primary bill that failed to survive a third house reading, a phenomenon that was repeated in 1912.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike in 1908, the 1912 vote did not curtail debate. The Republicans had barely carried the state in 1912, and the spirit of reform gripped the

*Josiah Grout*



party no less than it did Progressives and Democrats. The Republican dominated legislature, prodded by an ambitious governor, enacted virtually all the reform planks of the three state-party platforms, except the direct primary. Satisfied with that record, most representatives hoped to adjourn without any primary bill at all. But neither the daily press nor legislative proponents would let the matter rest. The press reminded its readers that the Republican platform had promised "some practical system," while the Progressives had made the direct primary their central plank. Even Democrats, shut out of Republican caucuses by the electoral reforms of 1904, supported a direct primary that would not require party enrollment as a prerequisite to voting.<sup>43</sup> Faced with substantial pressure, the legislature responded with the time-honored device of a popular referendum.

Unlike previous referenda which constituted plebiscites on recently enacted legislation, the 1914 referendum was purportedly designed to determine whether the electorate would support a primary system and what form that system should take. Voters could record their preference for either a direct primary or a preferential primary, or they might vote against either. If the architects of the ballot hoped to win a plurality for the caucus by splitting primary adherents between binding and preferential systems, their strategy failed. The binding primary carried 18,934 to 5,132, while the preferential primary had 10,578 proponents and 7,647 opponents. Direct primary advocates hailed the totals as a decisive victory, and all three parties adopted

primary planks in their state platforms. Most observers assumed the matter had been decided, but in March, 1915, when a direct primary bill was brought to a house vote, it met defeat by a 103 to 115 vote.

Voting analysis (See Table 7.) reveals that only the Progressives (twenty to seven) gave the primary bill a party majority. Republicans split seventy-five for and eighty-two against, while the Democrats voted six for and twenty-four against. Viewing matters from a different perspective, six of the Progressive, eleven of the Democratic and sixty-seven of the Republican *no* votes were cast by representatives from towns with populations under 1000. Democratic and small-town opposition clearly defeated the bill.<sup>44</sup>

Democratic opposition stemmed from a requirement that nominating petition signatories share their nominee's party preference and a primary ballot that restricted voters to candidates from a single party. Progressives also preferred a completely open primary but accepted the Republican compromise.<sup>45</sup> The principal small-town opposition derived from the reluctance to accept diminished influence over candidate selection. The mechanics of the caucus system assured them larger delegations to county and state conventions than apportionment based solely on population or voter participation would allow. While the larger towns had the largest delegations at caucuses, they did not numerically overwhelm the smaller towns.

The primary law threatened this balance in two ways. First, and most obvious, it counted all voters equally, irrespective of town of residence. Second, though not inherent in primaries *per se*, the Vermont bill allowed nomination by plurality. Caucuses, conventions, and general elections had historically mandated majority elections with runoff elections when necessary. Primary runoffs were rejected as too cumbersome and inordinately expensive. The primary sacrificed the majority principle to economy in government, but nomination by plurality had non-budgetary impacts. Small town representatives feared it would disarm minority blocs of their power to deny nominations by withholding a majority from unacceptable candidates.

Plurality nominations, detrimental to small town influence in statewide contests, posed an even more immediate threat in county contests. Senate nominations were a case in point. Only in Chittenden County did a majority live in towns of over 5000, yet in counties with two or more senators, usually one town, or two in combination, constituted a substantial plurality. According to the 1910 census, Burlington, one of sixteen towns constituting the Chittenden County house delegation, housed 48.2 percent of the county's population. The numbers effectively ensured Burlington a seat in Chittenden's senate delegation under the majority rule, but they looked even larger under the plurality rule. Burlington could mount an aggressive campaign for all seats in the senate delegation, and unless the electorate

TABLE 6  
*Number of Towns Per Decade That Lost Population  
 1850-1920*

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Towns</i>	<i>Median Population</i>
1850	94	1223
1860	136	1187
1870	144	1152
1880	135	1096
1890	186	970
1900	163	935
1910	162	873
1920	184	

of the fifteen remaining towns united in opposition, Burlington would be almost certain of success. Rutland City suggested an only slightly different scenario. With only 28 percent of Rutland County's population, it lacked Burlington's electoral strength. Yet in concert with either West Rutland or Fair Haven, it too could dictate county slates.<sup>46</sup> Bennington, with a population well under that of Burlington or Rutland, housed 40 percent of Bennington County's residents, sufficient, if Bennington so desired, to dictate that county's delegation.

TABLE 7  
*1915 Primary Bill (H. 446)*

	<i>By Party</i>				
	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Dem.</i>	<i>Prog.</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	75	6	20	2	103
No	82	24	7	2	115
Not voting	17	4	4	1	26
Total	174	34	31	5	244

	<i>By Town Size*</i>			
	<i>under 1000</i>	<i>1000- 3000</i>	<i>over 3000</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yes	38	45	18	101
No	86	24	3	113
Total	124	69	21	214

\*From Louis Lisman, *The Direct Primary in Vermont*, M.A. Thesis, University of Vermont, 1932, p. 37. Lisman subdivided his town size chart by party, and omitted the votes of four independents.

Such calculations were not limited to senate delegations. Despite the low visibility of Vermont county government, elected county officers included assistant judges, state's attorney, sheriff, and probate judge.<sup>47</sup> Here too the plurality would augment the influence of the largest towns. Possessing the numbers to nominate any county offices (and in one-party Vermont nomination was tantamount to election), the leading towns might no longer feel compelled to abide by little mountain rules, rotation and distribution-of-office formulae and other mechanisms evolved to maintain political equilibrium. The smaller towns would still control the house, but rather than retreat precipitously to that fortress, they rejected the direct primary.

By repudiating the dictates of the 1914 referendum the house had acted within its authority while violating usage and custom as hallowed as the law itself. Unwilling to admit to having overridden popular sentiment, anti-primary forces suggested they had not repudiated the referendum; neither the direct nor the preferential primary had received a majority of the total vote, and a majority had voted for either the preferential primary or no primary at all. Is the legislature "likely to enact a direct primary law on twenty-nine per cent demand of the voters," was a frequent query of primary opponents.<sup>48</sup> Such assertion rung hollow to most ears and posed a major dilemma for Republican state managers. After proclaiming in their 1914 platform that the people of Vermont were "unequivocally and decisively in favor of the direct primary,"<sup>49</sup> they had failed to forestall a Republican legislative majority from little republics from voting against the bill. Some critics charged ineptitude. Others, unwilling to acknowledge any absence of party discipline, charged duplicity. Vulnerable to both charges, the party's integrity was compromised in the larger population centers whose Republican vote totals traditionally swelled its state majorities.

A distressed Governor, Charles Gates, responded by requesting that the House "see fit to reconsider" its vote. Rehearsing the argument that the referendum and party platforms had "honor bound" the legislature to enact a direct primary law "to keep the faith with the people who have expressed their desire for such legislation," Gates proposed a face-saving compromise. Since conditions "have changed since the people expressed themselves in regard to the law," to avoid any "mistake or misinterpretation" of the popular will, he recommended the legislature add a referendum clause to the primary bill.<sup>50</sup> The house assented to Gates' compromise 147 to 25, and the electorate approved the primary by 24,500 to 21,000 votes. The majority was smaller than some observers had predicted, probably because of the continued opposition of Democrats in all towns. As anticipated, the larger towns provided overwhelming support while the smaller towns were almost equally united in their opposition. A total of 134 towns voted against the primary while 102 lent it their support.

*Charles W. Gates*



Adoption of the primary was widely celebrated as a victory for popular government and the capstone of the Vermont progressive movement, but for the smallest towns it denoted a momentous political setback. Though remaining secure in the house, their influence elsewhere suffered serious erosion. The nomination of gubernatorial candidates by plurality in 1918 and 1920 reflected their diminished influence in the selection of statewide candidates,<sup>51</sup> and the composition of subsequent senates further underlined small town enfeeblement. No longer able to enforce the rotation system, small towns became increasingly captive to senate delegations from their county's largest communities, with two or more senators from the same large town increasingly frequent.<sup>52</sup> The new Chittenden County senators and Windham County officers were, "no doubt," popular nominees, railed one critic, "but even the frantic appeals of direct primary apologists could not avert the ludicrous and embarrassing result of Burlington monopolizing the Chittenden County senators nor give the northern part of Windham County respectable recognition."<sup>53</sup>

The senate had never fully shared the house's agrarian radicalism, but after the primary, its business and commercial interests became more pronounced.<sup>54</sup> Nothing more clearly marks the passing of the old order than the senate rejection of an income tax bill in 1923. Passed by the house with the ardent support of farm groups, supporters expected the tax to mitigate the severity of property tax assessments by levying a new tax irrespective of town or county of residence. Though the bill was ideologically consistent



with nineteenth century school and roads programs, senators, as representatives of those who would most bear the proposed tax burden, defeated it decisively. Not until 1931, after a natural disaster and a national depression combined to require desperate economic remedies, did the senate accede.

Blunting the legislature's most radical impulses did not diminish the steady consolidation of state government, but rural poverty ceased to be its compelling force and little republic vitality its principal object. Especially after World War I, proponents of scientific management took over the lead. Seldom sharing the agrarian vision, governors became increasingly attracted by administrative models from government and business. Federal models such as President Taft's Economy and Efficiency Commission (1912) and state models such as the work of New York's Bureau of Municipal Research (1915) were applied to Vermont's rather chaotic bureaucratic structure. After decades of bureaucratic expansion on an *ad hoc* basis, Governor Horace Graham (1917) tried to impose order through a Board of Control. James Hartness, an industrial engineer who captured the 1920 gubernatorial nomination with less than 40 percent of the vote, articulated the most comprehensive plea for scientific management in government. A proponent of increased executive powers, Hartness became so frustrated by the hallowed limitations upon gubernatorial tenure and power that he ended his term calling for an appointed manager to serve a term not less than six years as Vermont's chief executive administrator.<sup>55</sup>

Yet governors who had served only twenty years before would almost certainly have been amazed at the results that increments to state authority had already produced. By their standards Vermont government already resembled a Leviathan. Other aspects of the political landscape would have seemed more familiar. Republicans continued to overwhelm their opponents in statewide elections and dominate both houses of the state legislature. The General Assembly retained its original basis of apportionment, governors continued to alternate east-west every two years and Vermonters continued to glory in being "the star that never sets in the flag of devoted Republicanism." But state government played a larger role in the lives of Vermonters in their little republics.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Until 1914 Vermont held state elections the first Tuesday in September.

<sup>2</sup>The obverse is that Vermonters seldom divided over issues that did distinguish national politics. Their perceived interests were reflected in legislation associated with Senator Justin Morrill, particularly sound money and protective tariffs. Upon Morrill's death Massachusetts Senator George F. Hoar saluted the late Senator and his state by noting that "for nearly half a century Vermont has spoken through him in our National Council, until, one after another, of almost every great question affecting the public welfare has been decided in accordance with her opinion." *Memorial Address on the Life and Character of Justin Smith Morrill delivered in the Senate and the House of Representatives, 55th Congress, 3rd Session* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1899), 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Burlington Free Press*, June 18, 1890.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the mountain rule see Lyman Jay Gould and Samuel B. Hand, "A View from the Mountain: Perspectives of Vermont's Political Geography," *Growth and Development of Government in Vermont*, Reginald L. Cook, ed., The Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, Occasional Paper 5 (1970), pp. 19-24.

<sup>5</sup> The practice of limiting governors and lieutenant governors to two years in office predates the Republican party. The only Republican variation from this rule was Paul Dillingham, who served three one-year terms as lieutenant governor, 1862-1865.

<sup>6</sup> *Journal of the Senate of the State of Vermont (1880)*, p. 437. Hereafter cited as *Senate Journal*. Gubernatorial inaugurals can usually be found in the "Joint Legislative Assembly" section of the appropriate *Senate Journal*.

<sup>7</sup> *Journal of the House of the State of Vermont (1882)*, p. 16. Hereafter *House Journal*. See also *Senate Journal (1880)*, p. 445.

<sup>8</sup> *Senate Journal (1894)*, p. 429.

<sup>9</sup> *Senate Journal (1900)*, p. 494.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488.

<sup>11</sup> *Senate Journal (1902)*, p. 485. Despite McCullough's rhetoric, he doubtless knew that the Vermont Supreme Court had ruled the towns to be the creatures of the state. *Bennington v. Park*, 50 Vt. 178 (1877). Park was McCullough's father-in-law.

<sup>12</sup> The median population for each census was derived from Thomas W. Arnold, comp., *Two Hundred Years and Counting: Vermont Community Census Totals, 1791 to 1980* (Burlington: Center for Rural Studies, University of Vermont, 1980). Unorganized towns and other communities not entitled to representation in the Vermont House were not included in the median figures. Because of the relatively few "large" Vermont towns, dividing town population by standard deviation cohorts reveals an increasing percentage clustered around the declining median. We have chosen the arbitrary division of median population because the median reflects, from one census to the next, the politically significant shift in population from small to large towns.

<sup>13</sup> *Journal of the Council of Censors, 1855-56*, pp. 103-104.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal of the Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention, 1857*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>15</sup> For the specific amendments and a record of the debates, see *Journal of the Council of Censors, 1869*, and *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of 1870*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> The speaker cast the deciding vote. A tie had been brought about by a small majority of towns below the median population voting against prohibition, a small majority above voting for prohibition, and an inordinate number of abstentions from both categories. These votes and all subsequent house votes have been culled from roll call tabulations in the appropriate *House Journal*. Senate votes are from the corresponding *Senate Journal*, and referendum totals are from Election Records, Vermont State Papers, Office of the Secretary of State, Montpelier, Vermont, hereinafter cited as State Papers.

<sup>18</sup> For a prototype of the out-of-state ruling the Vermont legislature hoped to circumvent, see the Pennsylvania ruling *Parker v. Commonwealth*, 10 Law Rep. 375 (1847).

<sup>19</sup> See for example *House Journal (1917)*, pp. 103-104. After a referendum in which the electorate opted for the later date, the legislature repealed a prohibition act passed the previous session.

<sup>20</sup> Vermont Legislative Directories published prior to 1973 include cumulative election and primary summaries to their date of publication. State Papers has election returns dating back to 1800.

<sup>21</sup> Predictably, the most ardent local option support came from towns where Clement had prevailed in the general election. Almost three-quarters of the towns Clement carried in September approved local option, while four-fifths of the towns in McCullough's column voted against it. Eight of the ten largest towns had voted for Clement; seven, plus one McCullough town, voted for local option. The only two towns that voted for the Democratic candidate were below the state median and split their vote on the referendum. The very smallest towns, although with a smaller majority than in 1853, voted against state-wide prohibition.

<sup>22</sup> Clement supporters and independents retained their vested interest in opposing the exclusionary caucus, but the 1904 election thinned their legislative ranks.

<sup>23</sup> The "Mountain Rule," in addition to regulating candidate selection, served as a kind of "good fence" between neighbors on the east and west sides of the Green Mountains. On most issues, the east-west split correlates with the difference in town population: the average western town was 11 1/2 percent larger than the average eastern town in 1850, and 16 percent larger in 1910.

Liquor issues prove especially divisive along geographical lines, with the east conforming to small town sentiment. In 1853 eastern towns voted overwhelmingly against prohibition while western towns approved by a similar margin. East and west again disagreed dramatically in the 1903 Local Option referendum, though the eastern towns now supported prohibition while the western towns voted for Local Option. The split on both referenda reflects differences in addition to town size. In 1903, for instance, almost all of the towns along the major North-South highway (later designated as Route 7), connecting the major towns with Montreal and Albany, N.Y., voted for Local Option. The eastern towns, oriented toward

Boston and Portland, show no such pattern. Perhaps the two trade and transportation networks worked different influences on social and economic issues.

Whatever factors may have contributed to the split between east and west, town size remains the most important measure for determining how major controversies were perceived.

<sup>24</sup> Duane Lockard, *New England Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 39.

<sup>25</sup> Edwin C. Rozwenc, *Agricultural Policies in Vermont, 1860-1945* (Montpelier: Vermont Historical Society, 1981), p. 10. Rozwenc maintains that the house and senate usually agreed on agricultural policies. The senate, however, "forced discussion of agricultural measures out of the secret recesses of legislative committees" into public sight.

<sup>26</sup> *House Journal* (1878), p. 406.

<sup>27</sup> *Senate Journal* (1880), p. 429.

<sup>28</sup> *Senate Journal* (1892), p. 369.

<sup>29</sup> Rozwenc, *Agricultural Politics*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> *House Journal* (1882), p. 21.

<sup>31</sup> Although subsequently deleted, the reference to instructing "youth at low prices" is included in the Vermont Constitution of 1777, Chapter II, Section 40. See John A. Williams, ed., *Laus of Vermont 1781-1784* (Montpelier: Secretary of State, 1965), pp. 137-139, for the full text of the 1782 statute.

<sup>32</sup> No. 61 of *The Acts of 1864*, p. 69. The standard history of Vermont education is by Mason Stone, *History of Education, State of Vermont* (Montpelier: Capital City Press, 1936). A useful though brief survey for the late nineteenth century is Ruth Zinar, "Educational Problems in Rural Vermont, 1875-1900: A Not So Distant Mirror," *Vermont History* Vol. 51, No. 4 (Fall 1983), 197-220.

<sup>33</sup> *Senate Journal* (1880), p. 450.

<sup>34</sup> *Senate Journal* (1886), p. 335.

<sup>35</sup> Zinar, "Educational Problems in Rural Vermont," 200.

<sup>36</sup> Stone, *History of Education*, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> *Senate Journal* (1896), p. 344.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Republican State Platform, 1914, *Walton's Vermont Register*, 1916, p. 85.

<sup>41</sup> *Senate Journal* (1896), p. 344.

<sup>42</sup> Another significant but less contested giveaway was a 1913 constitutional amendment that raised from a majority to two-thirds the number of legislative votes required to override a governor's veto. Vermont Constitution, Chapter II, Section 11.

<sup>43</sup> The 1912 platforms for all three parties as well as the localist party are printed in *Walton's Register*, 1914, pp. 85-99.

<sup>44</sup> Louis Lisman, "The Direct Primary in Vermont," M.A. Thesis, University of Vermont, 1932, see especially chart on p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> It was the intent of the Republican framers of the bill to inhibit cross-party activities. For example, the primary law would presumably restrict Democratic and Progressive efforts to select their own local slates and simultaneously participate in Republican gubernatorial or senatorial selection.

<sup>46</sup> Under the caucus apportionment rules in 1898 Burlington was awarded 26 percent of Chittenden County's delegation, and Rutland 16 percent of Rutland County's delegation.

<sup>47</sup> While one probate judge was the general rule, some counties housed two probate judges who were elected on the basis of regional county understandings.

<sup>48</sup> Henry Steele Wardner Collection, Box 70, May 2, 1914, letter to St. Albans *Messenger*, collections of the Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier Vt.

<sup>49</sup> *Walton's Register*, 1916, p. 86.

<sup>50</sup> *House Journal*, 1915, p. 630.

<sup>51</sup> In 1918 Clement won nomination with 37 percent of the vote, and James Hartness captured the 1920 nomination with under 40 percent. It is unlikely that either could have won nomination under the caucus system.

<sup>52</sup> On September 13, 1918, the Bennington *News* reprinted a Brattleboro *Phoenix* editorial lamenting how the outcome of the Windham County senate primary produced "another fracture of the time-honored precedent from which one senator used to be elected from the north and the other from the south." In 1918 both Republican nominees were from Brattleboro. Over time the concentration of nominees from the largest population centers became more pronounced.

<sup>53</sup> Henry Steele Wardner Collection, Box 70, November 20, 1914.

<sup>54</sup> Until 1920 a majority of house members recorded their occupation as farmer, while after 1920 farmers comprised a plurality. The senate never reflected such occupational homogeneity. It should be borne in mind, however, that Vermont's economy remained so extensively agricultural that even those not directly engaged were usually dependent upon farmer business.

<sup>55</sup> *Senate Journal* (1923), p. 570. See also *The Boston Globe*, June 4, 1922.