

“They are a Scum Community Who Have Organized:” The *Georgia Straight*, freedom of expression, and Tom Campbell’s War on the  
Counterculture, 1967 – 1972

By

Jake Noah Sherman

B.A. (Hons.), University of British Columbia, 2014

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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### **Supervisory Committee:**

Dr. Jason Colby, Supervisor (Department of History)  
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## **Abstract:**

The 1960s have a special place in the cultural memory of the West Coast of Canada. They have informed its regional identity, the cityscape of Vancouver, and the social infrastructure of the modern state. But lost in the *mythos* that has surrounded Vancouver's *long sixties* is the story of the *Georgia Straight*. Founded by a group of poets in 1967 to combat a campaign launched by the municipal government to discriminate against the counterculture, it is today, in 2018, the most prosecuted newspaper in Canadian history. Between 1967 and 1972, the municipal and provincial government deliberately took advantage of the legal justice system to censor an outlet for dissent, with the end goal of inhibiting it from publishing. This thesis challenges popular conceptions of the 1960s in British Columbia's popular memory by demonstrating the extent to which the state deliberately censored freedom of expression by attempting to silence an outlet for dissent, and highlights how the municipal and provincial government infringed on the civil liberties of Vancouver's counterculture community, in one instance in August 1971, threatening it with outright violence.

## Table of Contents:

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Ch.1—“Pacifist Hippies Gird for War:” the TISH Group, Tom Campbell’s Rise to Power, and the City of Vancouver responds to the <i>Georgia Straight</i> , 1963 – 1967.....	12
Ch.2—“Let History be Your Judge, Then Appeal:” Criminal Libel, Obscenity, Censorship and Freedom of the Press and of Expression in British Columbia, 1968 – 1970.....	43
Ch.3—“That Just Shows You’re Breeding Out There:” The Battle of Jericho, Operation Dustpan, the Gastown Riot, and Tom Campbell’s Fight to Cement his Political Legacy .....	69
Conclusion—‘That One Lone Palm Tree that Somehow Survives a hurricane’.....	98
Bibliography.....	105

## **Dedication:**

This thesis is dedicated to all of the people who formally and informally shared their stories with me. I am forever indebted to them for their compassion and generosity. Those stories are what make us human.

*Some day some scholar interested in the law and its abuse is going to do a serious study of how the authorities in this town have attempted to intimidate and to bust the Straight by persistent harassment and prosecutions, which more often than not failed. The documentation will cause a scandal. Everyone will ask what the rest of us were doing – including the newspapers – while this was going on.*

Allan Fotheringham, “Opinion,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 14, 1973

**Introduction:**

On August 20<sup>th</sup> 1968, about 60 people gathered in the rain outside the Supreme Court of British Columbia in Vancouver, B.C. The courthouse had become a regular hangout for Vancouver's small counterculture, and the crowd, composed of lawyers, university faculty members, students, and hippies, had come to support Bob Cummings and Dan McLeod, a writer for and the editor of the *Georgia Straight*. 'The Straight,' as those in attendance would have called it, was a one-year-old countercultural newspaper that had been repeatedly attacked by the province of British Columbia and the city of Vancouver, with the city going as far as to suspend its business license within six months of its first issue. Eleven months after that failed attempt to ban the newspaper by revoking its business license, (the first of three separate times the city would attempt to do so) the province, particularly the office of the Attorney General of British Columbia, in conversation with the city, specifically the city prosecutor, the mayor and the chief of police, decided it would try to finish a job the latter had been unable to successfully take care of. On August 20, with the rain pouring down on protesters who understood that it was not just a newspaper, but freedom of speech on trial, Bob Cummings and Dan McLeod stood before the Supreme Court charged with criminal libel for publishing comedic satire. Literally, the two young writers were on trial for making a judge the butt end of a joke. It was just the fourth criminal libel case to be tried in Canadian history, and ironically, the previous defendants in the last case, tried in 1938, had been the Social Credit Party of Canada, the British Columbian branch of which, in 1968, held a majority government in B.C.'s Legislative Assembly. So why was the state so threatened by a group of hippies publishing four letter words and awarding judges the "Pontius Pilates Certificate of Justice?" At the time of the criminal libel trial, in part as a result of its own continued prosecution, according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,

(RCMP) who collected over 5000 pages of surveillances documents on the *Georgia Straight* between 1968 and 1972, it was the most widely circulated underground newspaper in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Between May 1967 and January 1970, the *Georgia Straight*, its writers and editor, were charged with twenty-seven counts of obscenity. In 1969 alone, the paper faced twenty-two criminal charges; nine of which were levelled in just one month. The expressed intent of the campaign of prosecution, launched first by the city of Vancouver, and later by the province of British Columbia, was to cripple the newspaper by burdening it with legal fees and prevent it from publishing.<sup>2</sup> Speaking before the special senate committee on mass media in 1970, Canadian historian Pierre Berton would call that campaign of harassment “unbelievable” and “scandalous.” Recently, the Canadian Encyclopaedia of human rights has gone further, calling the prosecution of the *Georgia Straight*, “one of the most blatant and abusive attempts at censorship in Canadian history.”<sup>3</sup> Today, it is the most prosecuted newspaper in Canadian history.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1967 and 1972, the city of Vancouver, in the conversation with province of British Columbia, carried out an assault on freedom of the press and of expression in Vancouver. The *Georgia Straight* was formed in response to the municipal government infringing upon the civil liberties of members of Vancouver’s counterculture. The government, first of Vancouver, and later of British Columbia, attempted to burden the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the RCMP, who published that statistic in a 1968 undercover memorandum. Prior to the

<sup>2</sup> L.A. Howe, Jr. "The Georgia Straight and Freedom of Expression in Canada." *The Canadian Bar Review* 48, no. 1 (1970): 410 - 38. Mark, Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice." *University of British Columbia Law Review* 5, no. 1970: 297 – 325

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, Chaired by the Honourable Keith Davey, October 8, 1970, 192, “Georgia Straight,” Canada’s Human Rights History, Encyclopedia, <http://historyofrights.ca/encyclopaedia/main-events/georgia-straight/> Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 55. Naomi Pauls and Charles Campbell, *The Georgia Straight: What the Hell Happened*, Douglas and McIntyre: Vancouver, 1997, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

countercultural community the *Georgia Straight* was formed to represent by enforcing esoteric bylaws. After the newspaper was founded, and the city put together a special committee on the hippie problem, their suggestion was to increase that campaign of prosecution. To accomplish that end, the Vancouver Police Department, in conversation with the municipal and provincial government, drew upon the Narcotics Control Act, a catch all search and detain law, to arrest young people expressing their democratic right to freedom of assembly and speech.<sup>5</sup> Later it threatened the newspaper with legal prosecution on the grounds of obscenity, criminal libel, and unlawfully counselling people to commit an indictable offence; deliberately vague laws that allowed Crown prosecutors to manipulate the law in order to prosecute the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>6</sup> Finally, as a response to the increased organization of the community and its acts of civil disobedience, the Vancouver Police Department, the office of the B.C. Attorney general and the federal government, threatened it with outright violence.<sup>7</sup>

So how and why did a newspaper that was started by a group of poets to confront police brutality and voice dissent become the most prosecuted in Canadian history? What role did it play in Vancouver's radical and countercultural milieu? And why did the municipal and provincial government consistently attack it?

There is no shortage of academic literature on the 1960s counterculture in the United States, or the underground press, which burgeoned there during those turbulent years; yet,

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Ross, "Panic on Love Street: Citizens and Local Government Respond to Vancouver's Hippie Problem, 1967 - 68." *BC Studies*, no. 180 (2013): 11 - 41.

<sup>6</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670, BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010, Ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement, Gregory Kealy, *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

few Canadianists have studied those same phenomena north of the border.<sup>8</sup> In fact, just one book has been written on the underground press in Canada; there is just one formal historical monograph that deals explicitly with the counterculture in Vancouver; and no in depth study has ever focused on the history of the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>9</sup>

It is only in the last twenty years that historians have begun to question the *mythos* that has informed and generated discussion on the periodization and study of “the Sixties” in the Canadian historical imagination. Among the first and most prominent studies of the Canadian counterculture are Doug Owram’s *Born at the Right Time: a history of the Baby Boom Generation* (1996) and Francois Ricard’s *La Generation Lyrique* (1994). Owram’s study looms large in the historiography of the 1960s in Canada, providing the basis for almost all of the work that has followed. It is an overarching generational study that looks at the impact of the baby boom generation in Canada.

Building on Owram’s work, in the last fifteen years, Canadian scholars have contributed to the emergence of a scholarship that has redefined and reimagined the 1960s as a time of social movement organization, change and transformation, profiling and historicizing the rise of second wave feminism, the environmental movement, the transformation of public space, the impending legalization of Cannabis, RCMP undercover work and LGBTQ activism. Historians Martin Marcel, Frank Zelko, and Stuart Henderson,

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<sup>8</sup> In the last decade and half over one hundred books have been published on the subject. Ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement, Gregory Kealy, *Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. David Armstrong, *A Trumpet to Arms: Alternative Media in America*, Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher, Inc., 1981, Ed. Paul Buhle and John McMillian, *The New Left Revisited*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003, John McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, New York: Bantam Books, 1987, James Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets, From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987, Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: the Civil War of the 1960s*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, Terry Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS*, New York: Bantam Books, 1973, Geoffrey Rips, *The Campaign Against the Underground Press*, San Francisco: City Light Books, 1981, William O’Neil, *The New Left: a History*, Wheeling: Illinois University Press, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Ron Verzuh, *Underground Times: Canada’s Flower Child Revolutionaries*, Toronto: Denau, 1989.

and sociologists Dominique Clément and Kathleen Rodgers, have begun to conceive of the “sixties” as a historical era that transcends the decade itself, associating it with ideas and social movements whose impact has played out over time, such as the environmental movement and the sexual revolution.<sup>10</sup> Their studies, in conversation with a growing body of literature have transformed the discourse from one that has traditionally focused on the study of countercultural institutions, icons and political activists, to one that has looked at the internal dynamics of social movement organization and the response of state actors to the emergence of the counterculture and of political activism in Canada. These studies have argued that the 1960s were a critical turning point in Canadian history, altering perceptions of national identity, politics, social activism, dissent, and contributing to contemporary conceptions of place.<sup>11</sup>

While there has been a resurgence in Canadian countercultural scholarship over the last decade and a half, and scholars have begun to reimagine the history of social activism in Canada, only one historical monograph examines Vancouver in depth. Historian Lawrence Aronsen, who attended UBC in the 1960s, published *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties* in 2010. Aronsen’s monograph profiles the rise of the “Hippie capital of Canada,” offering a sweeping overview of the relationship that existed between municipal authorities

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<sup>10</sup> Dominique Clément, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937 – 1982*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008, 4.

<sup>11</sup> For more on this, see: Lara Campbell and Dominique Clément, “Introduction, Time, Age, Myth, Towards a history of the 1960s,” in *Ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clément, Gregory Kealy, Debating Dissent: Canada and the Sixties*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012. Among the most prominent studies scholars have written over the last decade and a half are, Bryan Palmer’s *Canada’s 1960s: the Ironies of Identity in a Rebellious Era*, (2009) Frank Zelko’s *Make it a Greenpeace: the Rise of Countercultural Environmental Activism*, (2013) Ian Milligan’s *Rebel Youth*, (2014) Stuart Henderson’s *Making the Scene: Yorkville and Hip Toronto in the 1960s*, (2011) Marcel Martel’s *Not this Time: Canadians, Public Policy and the Marijuana Question*, (2006) Sean Mill’s *The Empire Within: Post Colonial Thought and Activism in Sixties Montreal*, (2010) Dominique Clément’s, *Canada’s Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937 – 1982*, (2008) and Kathleen Rodgers *Welcome to Resisterville: American Dissidents in British Columbia*, (2014).

and young people between 1966 and 1972. Aronsen argues that there was a distinct connection between the counterculture in Vancouver and San Francisco, but that what made Vancouver unique was that the city was less “ideologically driven and confrontational” in its response to the youth culture than elsewhere in the United States. He calls the city and general population’s response to the emergence of the counterculture, “conservative but not reactionary,” arguing that mainstream reporters avoided sweeping negative generalizations of the youth culture, and that Kitsilano homeowners and business owners did not initially view the emergence of the counterculture as a threat to them. Aronsen argues that Mayor Tom Campbell approach to the youth culture can be characterized as, “vacillation as opposed to constant confrontation.”<sup>12</sup>

Urban historian Daniel Ross has also examined the response of local state actors and community members to the arrival of the counterculture in the Vancouver neighbourhood of Kitsilano. He argues that the response of the municipality and of the business community was deliberate and reactionary, writing that the arrival of the counterculture in Vancouver resulted in formal state policy that resulted in a “police crackdown” on the community. Ross has also argued that the representation of the hippie as a “problem” was common in the discourse of the time.<sup>13</sup>

This thesis rebuts Aronsen’s claim and builds on Ross’s scholarship by examining the response of state actors, local, provincial and federal government to the emergence of an underground newspaper founded in response to what Ross calls “a police crackdown” on youth culture and identity, and it overturns popular conceptions of the 1960s in British Columbia by demonstrating the extent to which state actors attempted to curtail freedom of

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<sup>12</sup> Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties*, Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel Ross, "Panic on Love Street: Citizens and Local Government Respond to Vancouver's Hippie Problem, 1967 - 68." *BC Studies*, no. 180 (2013): 11 - 41.

expression and the press in Vancouver. It argues that Mayor Tom Campbell's reaction to the *Georgia Straight*, which became the counterculture's main organ of communication and organizational tool, was a deliberate abuse of the law that aimed to obstruct freedom of expression by crippling the *Georgia Straight* with legal prosecution. And it adds to the scholarship of the Canadian counterculture which has emerged in the last fifteen years by examining how the *Georgia Straight* became enmeshed in and emblematic of the social movements of its time. Furthermore, it adds to the scholarship on the 1960s by examining the response of local state actors to the emergence of the Canadian counterculture in what contemporary observers were calling, "the hippie capital of Canada."<sup>14</sup>

This thesis sets out to understand the context that contributed to the foundation of the *Georgia Straight*, and investigates its place within Vancouver's countercultural milieu between the years of 1967 and 1972. It asks what role the newspaper played in its community and seeks to understand why the municipal and provincial governments prosecuted it to the extent they did. Ultimately, it uses the newspaper itself and its story to investigate Vancouver's countercultural community and its lasting impact on the regional identity of the West Coast of Canada and the cityscape of Vancouver. It argues the *Georgia Straight* formed an organizational tool and social network for social activism in Vancouver, connecting Vancouver and British Columbia's disparate New Left, and organizing it in the service of anti-establishment politics, and therefore, that it directly threatened the development plans of the City of Vancouver. Finally, by using the history of the *Georgia Straight* as a case study, this thesis challenges popular conceptions of the 1960s in Vancouver and British Columbia by proving that there was a large section of the population of Vancouver and of British Columbia that was extremely hostile to the countercultural

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<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 23.

community, and that the government itself manipulated the law to curtail freedom of expression of a minority group.

The thesis concludes by investigating the lasting impact of the New Left and the 1960s on Vancouver's culture and cityscape, and the enduring legacy of the *Georgia Straight*. It draws upon archival documents collected at the Vancouver Municipal archives and the BC Royal Museum, RCMP surveillance documents obtained through a freedom of information request, interviews conducted with former members of the paper's staff, and copies of the first five years of the *Georgia Straight*.

The first chapter explores the context and political ferment that led to the *Georgia Straight's* founding. In particular it investigates the TISH Group and the rise of Canadian postmodern poetry on the West Coast, which some of the poets who banded together to found the *Georgia Straight* were connected with. It also outlines the political changes that took place in Vancouver in 1966 and 1967, among them: the election of Mayor Tom "Terrific" Campbell, the influx of a large youth transient population, and the response of the city to complaints from home and business owners in Kitsilano, all of which resulted in the foundation of the *Georgia Straight*. Additionally, it examines the response of the city to the founding of the newspaper. The second chapter examines the concerted legal effort to inhibit the ability of the *Georgia Straight* to publish by Vancouver Mayor Tom Campbell, Chief City Prosecutor Stewart McMorran, and B.C. Attorney General Leslie Peterson between 1968 and 1970. It does so by analyzing the legal history of the *Georgia Straight*. The expressed intent of the legal campaign was to cripple the newspaper and inhibit its ability to publish by burdening it with legal fees.<sup>15</sup> The third chapter explores the way in which the

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<sup>15</sup> L.A. Howe, Jr. "The Georgia Straight and Freedom of Expression in Canada." *The Canadian Bar Review* 48, no. 1 (1970): 410 - 38. Mark, Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice." *University of British Columbia Law Review* 5, no. 1970: 297 - 325., RCMP Surveillance Documents,

*Georgia Straight* functioned as a nerve centre and social network for social activism between the years 1970 and 1972. Specifically it looks at how the Mayor of Vancouver sought to cement his political legacy by running the youth population out of the areas in which they resided in order to prepare them for future development. It focuses on two violent confrontations, “the Battle of Jericho” and the “Gastown Riot,” both of which were centred around affordable housing and real estate development projects. In doing so, it attempts to understand why the newspaper was prosecuted to the extent it was.

At the same time as it attempts to answer this question, a major pitfall of this study is the lack of female voices both in this thesis and in the archive itself. The vast majority of the *Georgia Straight*'s writers were male, and the management reflected the sexism that was an inherent part of the global counterculture. The *Georgia Straight* regularly published naked women in its pages and on its cover in its first three years, and even had men write columns geared toward women. One, written by Bob Cummings in 1968 under his alias, told women it was their duty to the revolution “to screw.” Frustration with that kind of content and the naked women depicted in its pages, boiled over in April 1971 when the female staff of the *Georgia Straight*, (most of whom, but not all, worked in layout and office administration) occupied the office and the press, releasing their own, Women's Liberated *Georgia Straight*. The female staff demanded in print that the male leadership offer more articles written by women, and feature female perspectives. The spark that set off the incident was a syndicated cartoon that depicted Jesus Christ being crucified on a woman's pubic hair. The cartoon was published on the cover of the *Georgia Straight*, and the decision to publish it was made by two men, writer and vendor Korky Day, and editor Dan McLeod. At the same time, the

machismo management style that found expression in its pages and on its covers was reflected in the Straight's antagonistic, brash and confrontational responses to the municipal government and establishment press.

Yet, though 'the *Straight*' often handled its business in an unapologetically masculine way, and published sexist content, for the men and women who read it and participated in putting it out every week, it was far more than a newspaper. For Vancouver based intellectuals Dr. Gabor Maté and Dr. Julie Cruikshank, it was a sounding board, and perhaps the first place either award-winning author was ever publisher.<sup>16</sup> For Korky Day and Fred Flores, who fled the United States to avoid fighting in a war they felt was unjust, it provided a community and a way of paying the bills, flogging the newspaper on Vancouver Street corners.<sup>17</sup> For Arielle MacDowell's parents, it fostered love. The two met on a street corner in Vancouver where her father was selling the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>18</sup> But for all of them, and for the rest of B.C.'s counterculture, it was a social network, listing events, dates, times, protests, and forming a countercultural calendar for dissident Vancouver. The underground newspaper connected those who read and wrote for it to one another, and it in turn organized them in the service of political action. As Day recalled on Fourth Avenue in Vancouver nearly 50 years after he was arrested for selling the newspaper and charged with "possession of obscene material with intent to distribute:"

If you liked it - it was your primary means of radical information: what's happening, what will happen, what's going on in Vancouver and elsewhere. It was our source of new ideas. If you were against it – one of your main fears was that one of your children would find a spare copy lying around and be spoiled, turn against you, and

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<sup>16</sup> Gabor Maté, "The Six Day War," *The Georgia Straight*, June, 17, 1967, *The Georgia Straight*, Julie Cruikshank, "Know Your Local History," *the Georgia Straight*, October 15 – 19, 1971.

<sup>17</sup> Korky Day, (Vietnam War Resistor and *Georgia Straight* Writer) interview by Jake Sherman, January 16, 2017, Vancouver, B.C. Fred Flores, (Vietnam War Resistor, *Georgia Straight* Ad. Salesman and writer,) interview by Jake Sherman, February 7, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Arielle MacDowell, (Principle, Columbia Park Elementary, Revelstoke, B.C.) interview by Jake Sherman, May 10, 2017.

run away from home. And it did happen. If the home was bad enough, it probably was the tipping point.<sup>19</sup>

For that reason, and because of the real threat the *Georgia Straight* posed to the City of Vancouver and Province of British Columbia's moral vision of society and development projects, both the City and the province tried to outlaw it. But 51 years later, as Doug Sarti reminisced on the *Georgia Straight's* 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in May 2017, like a lone palm tree that somehow survived a hurricane, it is still here.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Korky Day, (Vietnam War Resistor and *Georgia Straight* Writer) interview by Jake Sherman, January 16, 2017, Vancouver, B.C.

<sup>20</sup> Ed. Doug Sarti and Dan McLeod, *The Georgia Straight: A 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Edition*, Vancouver: Rocky Mountain Books, 2017

**Ch.1—“Pacifist Hippies Gird for War:” the TISH Group, Tom Campbell’s Rise to Power, and the City of Vancouver responds to the *Georgia Straight*, 1963 - 1967**

*The Georgia Straight could not have happened anywhere else. And I think that a lot of that has to do with the political culture of British Columbia. It's a peculiar culture that allows people to reshape, or to think about remaking the world in their own image.*<sup>21</sup>

Canadian journalist Terry Glavin once called the *Georgia Straight* “a ship on the waves of the zeitgeist.”<sup>22</sup> The underground newspaper, born out of a desire to speak truth to power, was informed by and informed the cultural milieu in which it found itself. The development of postmodern Canadian poetry provided young poets with experience publishing, and the male poets who helped found the *Georgia Straight* in April 1967, were responding to a young mayor in Vancouver who sought to run them out of town. This chapter explores the context and cultural ferment that led to the foundation of the *Georgia Straight*. Specifically, it examines the development and rise of Canadian postmodern poetry, whose vanguard would later contribute to the foundation of Vancouver’s Free Press. It also looks at the rise of Tom Campbell, the cultural changes that took place in Vancouver in 1966-1967, and the response of a group of poets to the campaign launched by Campbell and the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to deliberately harass the youth culture by prosecuting it. It concludes by looking at the official response of the municipal government to the establishment of ‘Vancouver’s Free Press:’ the *Georgia Straight*.

### **I: The Vancouver Poetry Conference of 1963**

In the summer of 1963, poets from across North America gathered in Vancouver to attend a summer workshop organized by University of British Columbia English professor Warren Tallman. In attendance were Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson, Robert Duncan and Robert Creeley—some of America’s foremost literary talent. Also there were the future co-founders of the *Georgia Straight*: Dan McLeod, Jamie Reid, Peter Auxier, Milton Acorn and

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<sup>21</sup> Terry Glavin, as quoted in, *The Last Streetfighter: the History of the Georgia Straight*. DVD. Directed by Tom Crighton and Tony Wade. (1997) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QykaUVHvags>

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

future Canadian poet laureate Bill Bissett.<sup>23</sup> These men were all connected to and part of the burgeoning group of poets who transformed the West Coast Canadian poetry landscape in the early 1960s, and contributed to the foundation of the West Coast counterculture.

University of British Columbia student leader and *Georgia Straight* co-founder Stan Persky called the conference “the beginning of the 1960s in Vancouver.”<sup>24</sup>

The conference and workshops associated with it have gained a certain mystique within the oral history of Canadian postmodern poetry and literary history. But what has been often overlooked in the telling of the story of both Canadian postmodern poetry and the development of a poetics particular to the West Coast of Canada is that there is a concrete connection between the development of the *Georgia Straight* and Canadian literary history.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the *Georgia Straight* grew directly out of the arts and poetry community that surrounded the University of British Columbia. Speaking some fifty years after its foundation, *Georgia Straight* co-founder, artist and poet Pierre Coupey, called the *Georgia Straight* a kind of embodied and political response to ideas circulating in the artistic milieu of the West Coast of Canada. “The *Georgia Straight* was a kind of political embodiment of a lot of ideas coming from the world of visual arts and the poetry scene in Vancouver,” Coupey

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<sup>23</sup> Frank Davey, *When Tish Happens: the Unlikely Story of Canada's Most Influential Literary Magazine*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2011, Frank Davey, TISH 1 – 19, Vancouver: Talon Books, 1975, Warren Talman, *In the Mist*, Vancouver: Talon Books, 1992, Robin Matthews, “Poetics: the Struggle for a Voice in Canada,” *CVII*, Vol 2. No. 4. (December 1976): 6 – 7. Warren Talman, “Poets In Progress,” *Canadian Literature*, Vol. 24. (Spring 1965): 52 – 54, “The Roots of Present Writing: a Discussion among Daphne Marlatt, Fred Wah, Robert Creeley, Peter Culley, Victor Coleman, Steve McCaffery, Nichol, Joel Oppenheimer and Robert Bertolf,” *Credences: a Journal of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry and Poetics*, Vol. 2. No. 3. (Fall/Winter, 1984): 211 – 228. Dennis Cooley, “Three Recent *Tish* Items,” *Canadian Poetry*, (Fall/Winter 1978): 98.

<sup>24</sup> Stan Persky, (UBC Student Leader, Poet and *Georgia Straight* Co-founder) interview by Jake Sherman, March 13, 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Davey, *When Tish Happens: the Unlikely Story of Canada's Most Influential Literary Magazine*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2011, Frank Davey, TISH 1 – 19, Vancouver: Talon Books, 1975, Warren Talman, *In the Mist*, Vancouver: Talon Books, 1992, Robin Matthews, “Poetics: the Struggle for a Voice in Canada,” *CVII*, Vol 2. No. 4. (December 1976): 6 – 7. Warren Talman, “Poets In Progress,” *Canadian Literature*, Vol. 24. (Spring 1965): 52 – 54, “The Roots of Present Writing: a Discussion among Daphne Marlatt, Fred Wah, Robert Creeley, Peter Culley, Victor Coleman, Steve McCaffery, Nichol, Joel Oppenheimer and Robert Bertolf,” *Credences: a Journal of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poetry and Poetics*, Vol. 2. No. 3. (Fall/Winter, 1984): 211 – 228. Dennis Cooley, “Three Recent *Tish* Items,” *Canadian Poetry*, (Fall/Winter 1978): 98.

recalled from his West Vancouver home in 2017. “Particularly with reference to Black Mountain poetics, ideas about projective verse and the TISH group.”<sup>26</sup> Buttressing that statement, Dan McLeod, future owner and editor-in-chief of the *Georgia Straight*, edited the TISH newsletter between 1964 and 1966, and all of its founders were connected to and a part of the poetry scene at the University of British Columbia.

## II: The TISH Group

The TISH group, an anagram for shit, grew out of the informal meetings of a group of English graduate students at the University of British Columbia and one of their professors, Warren Tallman. Every Sunday, Tallman had his students meet to exchange ideas, often over alcohol, in the basement of he and his wife Ellen’s Vancouver home.<sup>27</sup> At the time, his teaching was considered provocative. Tallman had been profoundly influenced by what was referred to as ‘the New American Poetry’—an outcrop of the Black Mountain School in North Carolina.<sup>28</sup> The Black Mountain School has been recognized as the primary pedagogical home of the American avant garde between 1934 and 1960.<sup>29</sup> Among its faculty were architects Buckminster Fuller and Walter Gropius, poets Charles Olson, Robert Creeley and Robert Duncan, and novelist Paul Goodman: all of whom would profoundly influence the 1960s counterculture.<sup>30</sup> Yet principal among its pedagogical accomplishments, scholars

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<sup>26</sup> Pierre Coupey, (Poet, Artist and *Georgia Straight* Co-Founder) interview by Jake Sherman, January 12, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Frank Davey, *When Tish Happens: the Unlikely Story of Canada’s Most Influential Literary Magazine*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2011, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Ed. Donald Allen, *the New American Poetry, 1945 – 1960*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960. Ed. Jeffrey Gray, Mary McAleer Balkun, James McCorkle, *American Poets and Poetry*, Denver: Greenwood Press, 2015, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Ed. Donald Allen, *the New American Poetry, 1945 – 1960*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960.

<sup>30</sup> Ed. Jeffrey Gray, Mary McAleer Balkun, James McCorkle, *American Poets and Poetry*, Denver: Greenwood Press, 2015, 81.

have recognized the development of a new school of poetry known as Black Mountain Poetics, which was extremely influential in inspiring the 'Beat Generation' of the 1950s.<sup>31</sup>

Black Mountain poetics drew inspiration from Charles Olson's 1950 manifesto on aesthetics and poetry, "Projective Verse." Fundamental to Olson's thesis were three components of understanding poetry: kinetics, principle and process.<sup>32</sup> With reference to kinetics, Olson argued that poetry was fundamentally about energy. In terms of principle, Olson argued that 'form was nothing more than an extension of content.' In other words, verse and rhyme were of secondary importance to message and ideas. Finally, in terms of process, Olson contended that, like breath, 'one perception should constantly lead to the next.'<sup>33</sup> These ideas would be extremely influential for American poets Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Charles Bukowski and Jack Kerouac.<sup>34</sup> The TISH group, likewise inspired by the Black Mountain Poets, projective verse, and beat poetry, took these ideas one step further. They argued that poetry needed to matter and be aware of and present to what was happening in the world. Furthermore, it should reflect its own regional community.<sup>35</sup> They expressed that regional poetic identity by founding their own newsletter.

The TISH newsletter has been called "Canada's most influential literary magazine."<sup>36</sup> It was founded in 1961 by Tallman's students Frank Davey, Fred Wah, George Bowering, Jamie Reid and David Dawson, who decided to start the newsletter after a lecture given by Robert Duncan in the basement of Tallman's home. The Newsletter became the impetus for the development of a poetics particular to the West Coast of Canada. It likewise inspired,

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 82.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," as quoted in, *Ed. Donald Allen, the New American Poetry*, 396.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> *Ed. Jeffrey Gray, Mary McAleer Balkun, James McCorkle, American Poets and Poetry*, Denver: Greenwood Press, 2015, 83.

<sup>35</sup> Frank Davey, *When Tish Happens: the Unlikely Story of Canada's Most Influential Literary Magazine*, Toronto: ECW Press, 2011, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 12.

encouraged and gave voice to Vancouver's burgeoning alternative and bohemian scene, which found expression at poetry readings in Kitsilano on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>37</sup>

The original collective ran the magazine from 1961 to 1963, and it featured the writing of future co-founders of the *Georgia Straight*, Peter Auxier, Jamie Reid, Bill Bissett and Dan McLeod. After a falling out of the original members, Auxier and McLeod offered to continue publishing the newsletter, which ran sporadically until 1969. Ultimately, the TISH newsletter provided a platform for social networking that created connections and experience with printing and publishing for young poets who would later turn their conviction that language should be aware of what was happening in the world and present to its locality into action. In 1967, McLeod, Reid, Auxier, Persky, and other members of Vancouver's poetry scene would find expression in a new medium: the underground press. As Stan Persky remembered from Berlin where he teaches Philosophy, "it was the Bohemian that preceded the counterculture."<sup>38</sup>

### **III: Tom Campbell, the War on the Counterculture, and the Emergence of Vancouver's Free Press**

In 1966, the Port of Vancouver became the largest in Canada.<sup>39</sup> The Grateful Dead played their first show in Vancouver—the first of more than 2000 outside the Bay Area.<sup>40</sup> Social Credit Party Premier W.A.C. Bennett won his sixth of seven consecutive provincial elections. Construction began on three hydroelectric dams that promised to transform the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Pierre Coupey, (Poet, Artist and *Georgia Straight* Co-Founder) interview by Jake Sherman, January 12, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Stan Persky, (UBC Student Leader, Poet and *Georgia Straight* Co-founder) interview by Jake Sherman, March 13, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Surpassing the Port of Montreal. Eric Nicol, *Vancouver*, Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1978, 237.

<sup>40</sup> David Lemieux, "July 30 – August 5, the Tapers Section," *Dead.net*: [www.dead.net/features/taperssection/july30-august5](http://www.dead.net/features/taperssection/july30-august5), Jerry Kruz, (Concert Promoter) interview by Jake Sherman, December 3, 2016, Victoria, B.C. Jerry Kruz, *The Afterthought: West Coast Concert Posters and Recollections from the '60s*, Vancouver: Rocky Mountain Books, 2014, 33.

economy of the province and the course of the 2000 km Columbia River.<sup>41</sup> High-rise apartments slowly begun to colour the skyline of Vancouver's west-end.<sup>42</sup> And a lawyer, businessman, and real estate developer who had built several of those apartment buildings and even contested the 1960 election because of the reluctance of the incumbent to grant him a development license, defeated William Rathie in the municipal election.<sup>43</sup> At 39, Tom Campbell was the youngest mayor in Vancouver's history.<sup>44</sup> He ran on the slogan, "government is a big business."<sup>45</sup>

Described as having been "a bit of a backwater, small and conservative," "a town in search of a city," and "a dinky little town in 1966," the economy, cityscape, culture, and skyline were rapidly changing in Vancouver.<sup>46</sup> Opposition to the Vietnam War and the influx of approximately 100 000 young consciousness objectors to Canada, (40% of whom emigrated to the West Coast) helped to transform the social and cultural fabric of British Columbia.<sup>47</sup> Along with these young Americans came their ideas about countercultural politics, ecology, music, mind-expanding drugs, media of communication, and social activism. At the same time, young runaways from across the country flooded the streets of Vancouver.<sup>48</sup> Quickly, it developed the reputation of "Haight-Ashbury North," a reference

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<sup>41</sup> David J. Mitchell, *W.A.C. Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia*, Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1983.

<sup>42</sup> Stan Persky, (UBC Student Leader, Poet and *Georgia Straight* Co-founder) interview by Jake Sherman, March 13, 2017.

<sup>43</sup> Nicol, *Vancouver*, 238.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Rick McGrath, (*Georgia Straight* Rock Critic, 1969 – 1971) interview by Jake Sherman, March 1, 2017, Victoria, B.C. Anne Petrie (UBC Student, CBC Vancouver Radio Host, Feminist and Author) interview by Jake Sherman, January 5, 2017, Victoria, B.C. *The Last Streetfighter: the History of the Georgia Straight*. DVD. Directed by Tom Crighton and Tony Wade. (1997)

<sup>47</sup> Kathleen Rodgers, *Welcome to Resisterville: American Dissidents in British Columbia*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014. Guiseppe Valiente, "U.S. Vietnam War Draft Dodgers Left their Mark on Canada," *Macleans*, April 16, 2005, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/u-s-vietnam-war-draft-dodgers-left-their-mark-on-canada/>

<sup>48</sup> CBC Archives, *CBC Radio*, Counterpoint: "Hippie Runaways Flock to Vancouver," November 12, 1967.

to the iconic San Francisco neighbourhood that had become synonymous with the North American youth culture.<sup>49</sup>

Two of those American emigrants were Korky Day and Fred Flores, both of whom ended up working at the *Georgia Straight*. Flores, who joined the California National Guard in an attempt to evade service in Vietnam, found out his unit would be shipped to Southeast Asia and decided to make a mad dash for the Canadian border early one evening, departing from San Diego and jetting up interstate five so that he'd make it to Canada before roll call in the morning. In the winter of 2017 he recalled his arrival in Vancouver from a busy coffee shop in Victoria, B.C., where he now lives. "There were always incense, tie-die, and lots of pot," Flores reminisced. "And you have to remember, pot was new on the scene."<sup>50</sup>

The 'hip' population the Vancouver Police Department estimated at 2000 in 1967 settled mostly in the district of Kitsilano, a neighbourhood immediately adjacent to West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue that provided proximity to the university and the ocean as well as affordable rent.<sup>51</sup> As a result, Kitsilano quickly became the centrepiece of a new alternative community, as countercultural businesses—in what might seem like an odd embrace of free market capitalism—popped up along West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Among them were a health food restaurant called the *Namm*, a social welfare society for young runaways called *Cool Aid*, a psychedelic dance hall called the *Afterthought*, the Committee to Aid American War Objectors office, and a number of coffeehouses where folk music, poetry readings, and political meetings were

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<sup>49</sup> And at the same time as a massive influx of Americans war resisters settled in British Columbia, teenage runaways from all across Canada—some of whom were inspired by the *Georgia Straight*—made their way West. BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, "RCMP Memo, Re: 'Movement of the Hippie Element,' 1967," GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>50</sup> Fred Flores, (*Georgia Straight* Ad Manager and Writer) in conversation with the author, January 12, 2017

<sup>51</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk's Office Subject Files, file: Special Committee re: Hippie Situation, "Report to Council: October 10, 1967," COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 24.

regularly organized.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, church and school attendance declined in the neighbourhood, and members of the burgeoning “youth culture,” who grew their hair long, smoked marijuana, experimented with L.S.D., lived communally, and listened to electronic folk music, became an affront on Vancouver’s mostly conservative, working-class, middle-aged population. Pierre Coupey, a 24 year-old poet born in Montreal who had just arrived in Vancouver from Paris and felt he might have well have just arrived in “hell,” called it, “class warfare.”<sup>53</sup>

Stan Persky, a poet, former activist and student protest leader at the University of British Columbia, commented on the aversion on the part of Vancouver’s population to the emergence of the counterculture and the influence of American war resisters. “What was threatening about us was, as the phrase of the times went, ‘drugs, sex and rock n’ roll. Especially the sex part. Somewhat unconsciously, but not entirely, our lifestyles posed a threat to normal, respectable, capitalist business and life practices.”<sup>54</sup>

In February 1967, Mr. R.D. Keir, a member of the Kitsilano Ratepayers Association, wrote to city council voicing distress about what he called, a “lunatic fringe” that had “invaded” West 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.<sup>55</sup> Keir wrote to the mayor, “[the hippies] have seriously affected our property values and the presence of large numbers of these oddly attired and fierce

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<sup>52</sup> Other popular hangouts for the ‘youth culture’ were the courthouse steps, the Hudson’s Bay Company, Gastown and Jericho Beach.

<sup>53</sup> Despite the attempts of church congregations to attract youth by including psychedelic music and dance in their services. “Hippies Conduct Service,” *the Province*, August 19, 1967. Jerry Kruz, (Psychedelic Concert Promoter at the *Afterthought*) interview by Jake Sherman, November 20, 2016, Victoria, B.C. Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>54</sup> Stan Persky, (UBC Student Leader, Poet and *Georgia Straight* Co-founder) interview by Jake Sherman, April 12, 2017.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Ross, “Panic on Love Street: Citizens and Local Government Respond to Vancouver’s Hippie Problem, 1967 – 68,” *BC Studies*, no. 180. (2013): 11 – 41.

looking characters has definitely been detrimental to business.”<sup>56</sup> In a city memorandum sent by Police chief Ralph Booth to Mayor Campbell and logged by the city clerk the police department acknowledged Keir’s as the first formal complaint received by the city against the counterculture.<sup>57</sup>

By the summer, the city was receiving five to ten complaints a week on what it regularly referred to in city documents as the “hippie situation” and “problem.”<sup>58</sup> Many came from merchants who complained the hippies were ‘dirty,’ ‘parasitic’ and ‘scum,’ blocking the street and harassing pedestrians.<sup>59</sup> Some establishments even began to refuse service to people with long hair.<sup>60</sup> Other citizens and homeowners in the neighbourhood complained of excessive noise, public urination and the influx of disease.<sup>61</sup> Mrs. E.M. Waddington sent a letter to the city’s medical health officer claiming, “the medical authorities here have determined absolutely that the hippy people carry vermin, fleas, lice and something called crabs.” She continued, “like many Vancouverites, we depend on buses for transportation to and from town. Even delousing of bus seats nightly would be insufficient.”<sup>62</sup> Waddington went on to demand action on the part of the city.

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<sup>56</sup> A Report to the Chief Constable on “the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Situation” maintained Keir’s was the first complaint logged by the city. Vancouver Municipal Archives, George Moul Fonds, File: “Lower Kistilano Ratepayers Association,” “Letter to Mr. Keir to Mayor Tom Campbell, February 22, 1967,” Box: 569—B—4, Folder 1. BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, “Report to the Chief Constable, Ralph Booth, CC. Leslie Peterson” GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, “Report to the Chief Constable, Ralph Booth, CC. Leslie Peterson” GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3, Vancouver Municipal Archives, Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk’s Office Subject Files, “Report to Chief Constable on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Situation, March 27, 1967,” file: Special Committee re: Hippie Situation, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>60</sup> This issue would be one of the first the *Georgia Straight* would cover in May 1967.

<sup>61</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk’s Office Subject Files, file: Special Committee re: Hippie Situation, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>62</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk’s Office Subject Files: Hippies, “Letter from Mrs. E.D. Waddington to City Chief Medical Health Officer, Dated, August 29, 1967,” COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

The Vancouver Police Department responded to complaints by enforcing by-laws aimed at disrupting hippie establishments and institutions, while the federal police began to monitor in depth ‘the movement of the Hippie Element’ across the province of British Columbia.<sup>63</sup> A letter from Police Chief Ralph Booth to Mayor Campbell, dated March 28, 1967, recommended “city council take every possible step to reduce and eradicate [the] growing problem.” And the Mayor, who had not mentioned the counterculture once during his campaign—but happened to own six properties in Kitsilano—responded to the new subcultural phenomena.<sup>64</sup>

At the same time as Mayor Campbell responded, the RCMP began its surveillance campaign that tracked the whereabouts and movements of individuals known to have “subversive sympathies.”<sup>65</sup> A nationwide memo received by B.C. Attorney General Leslie Peterson called “the hippies very much against our modern society.” It accused the national youth culture of petty theft, and of looking “all alike with their long hair, beards, and disgusting overall appearance.” It continued by claiming they were ‘all American, drug users’ and “disease ridden.”<sup>66</sup>

In the late winter of 1967, Campbell, influenced by discussions with Attorney General Peterson and Police Chief Booth, initiated a widespread campaign to dissuade more members of the counterculture from emigrating to Vancouver from across Canada and the United States, and to make it increasingly difficult for those who resided in Vancouver and

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<sup>63</sup> They specifically targeted the *Phase 4 Coffeehouse*, *the Psychedelic Shop*, *Rags and Riches*, *Horizon Book Store*, and the *Afterthought*. Vancouver Municipal Archives, Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk’s Office Subject Files, “Report to Chief Constable on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Situation, March 27, 1967,” file: Special Committee re: Hippie Situation, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11. BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, “RCMP Memo, Re: ‘Movement of the Hippie Element,’ 1967,” GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>64</sup> Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 24. Ross, “Panic on Love Street,” 17.

<sup>65</sup> BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, “RCMP Memo, Re: ‘Movement of the Hippie Element,’ 1967,” GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

Kitsilano to continue to live there.<sup>67</sup> For the first time, Campbell had the Vancouver Police Department trained in the use of dogs coached to detect the scent of marijuana; ramped up the VPD's undercover narcotics operations in partnership with the RCMP, and launched the Vancouver School Board's first public education program on substance abuse. Though Vancouver had a long history of opiate abuse, Campbell ignored the longstanding issues of poverty, mental illness, homelessness and drug abuse, and focused explicitly on the counterculture, marijuana and LSD. Drug and vagrancy arrests increased exponentially thereafter.<sup>68</sup>

Between 1965 and 1968, the annual number of marijuana arrests jumped from 30 to 442.<sup>69</sup> Whereas the arrests had previously been concentrated in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside, (where opiate use was a serious concern) the police began to prosecute young white middle-class members of the counterculture in Kitsilano and Gastown at a disproportionate rate.<sup>70</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* called it a "drug war."<sup>71</sup>

The case of Jerry Kruz, who managed the Afterthought, a psychedelic dance hall deliberately crafted in the image of famed concert promoter Bill Graham's Fillmore in San Francisco, provides one such example of police harassment of the counterculture. Kruz was responsible for bringing the Grateful Dead, Country Joe and the Fish and the Steve Miller Band to the lower mainland for the first time. Because drug users attended Kruz's concerts,

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<sup>67</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk's Office Subject Files: Hippies, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>68</sup> Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 25. Ross, "Panic on Love Street," Ingebord Paulus, *Psychedelic Drug Use in Vancouver: Notes on the New Drug Scene*, Vancouver: the Narcotic Addiction Foundation of British Columbia, 1967.

<sup>69</sup> Marcel Martel, *Not This Time: Canadians, Public Policy and the Marijuana Question, 1961 – 1975*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006, 37.

<sup>70</sup> Ross, "Panic on Love Street," 22.

<sup>71</sup> Alf Strand, "Police Drug War Backed by Mayor," *Vancouver Sun*, March 8, 1967, "City Opens War on Marijuana, L.S.D." *Vancouver Sun*, February 7, 1967.

narcotics officer Abe Snidanko directly targeted him.<sup>72</sup> An undercover Vancouver Police Department memorandum sent to Mayor Campbell called Kruz's dancehall, "the foremost meeting place of Marijuana and LSD users and a place to attract new converts."<sup>73</sup> In 1967 he was arrested, charged under the National Control Act and sentenced to two years in prison for possession of less than 3 grams of marijuana.<sup>74</sup> Kruz later recalled from the kitchen of his home in the Esquimalt neighbourhood of Victoria, B.C., that he was "being watched." "They weren't gonna' stop until they put me away," he remembered, with his grandson at his side.<sup>75</sup>

Increasingly called a threat to public health and security by local state actors and associations and harassed by the local authorities, the local counterculture began to be caricatured in the mainstream press. In May 1967, the *Vancouver Sun* reprinted comments that implied the hippies were an anachronism that represented a return to the fourteenth century, complete with "lice and the plague."<sup>76</sup> And Jack Wasserman, a local *Vancouver Sun* columnist regularly maligned the youth culture in his editorials. The same year, in August, *MacLean's* called Vancouver's hippies, "dope fiends."<sup>77</sup>

At the same time as the mainstream press denigrated the counterculture, and Mayor Campbell and Police Chief Booth began to increasingly charge young people under antiquated vagrancy laws and leverage the use of the Narcotics Control Act, the municipal establishment also began to enforce abstruse bylaws meant to run the counterculture out of

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<sup>72</sup> Abe Snidanko would be immortalized in film as the subject of *Cheech and Chong's* satire. Their character Narcotics officer, *Sgt. Stidanko* was based directly on Abe Snidanko, who the *Georgia Straight* regularly lampooned.

<sup>73</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk's Office Subject Files: Hippies, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>74</sup> Jerry Kruz, (Psychedelic Concert Promoter) interview by Jake Noah Sherman, November 21, 2017, Victoria, B.C.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> "Hippy Haven Soon Psychedelic Slum," *the Vancouver Sun*, May 12, 1967.

<sup>77</sup> *McLean's*, August 1967, as quoted in, Ross, "Panic on Love Street," 11.

Vancouver.<sup>78</sup> In particular the city targeted the Psychedelic Shop, the local ‘head’ shop, the Village Bistro, a local late night hangout and concert venue, the Afterthought,<sup>79</sup> the psychedelic dancehall Kruz crafted in the image of Bill Graham’s Fillmore, Phase 4 coffeehouse and the Advance Mattress coffeehouse, in the winter of 1967, according to detailed correspondence between Mayor Campbell and Chief Booth, logged by the city clerk.<sup>80</sup>

The Advance Mattress coffeehouse was an important meeting place for the local arts community and counterculture that refrained from charging for entry and was run entirely by volunteers. On Tuesday nights, absolutely anyone could take the floor and speak on any topic. More than simply a coffeehouse, it became a bastion of free speech for the community.<sup>81</sup> An undercover police report filed by Car 25, on February 25, 1967, noted, “Found 70 persons, aged 22 to 14, male and female. Almost all of the patrons had a lighted incense stick in their mouths and were apparently inhaling the fumes so generated...the front door access was blocked by the proprietor’s table to a very narrow passage in case of emergency. A tragedy could have been a reality because no fire exit existed.”<sup>82</sup> The report ended by vaguely drawing a causal connection between the seizure of 12 kilos of marijuana and “this 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue group and the Advance Mattress coffeehouse”<sup>83</sup>

In response to the city’s enforcement of bylaws against the youth culture, the media’s representation of the counterculture, and the enforcement of bylaws meant to deliberately

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<sup>78</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk’s Office Subject Files: Hippies, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>79</sup> An undercover memorandum reported that there were obscene slides being shown, noise violations and poor lighting all of which had been reported to the city licensing inspector.

<sup>80</sup> Aronsen, 27.

<sup>81</sup> Milton Acorn, *Obscenity? The Georgia Straight*, May 5, 1967.

<sup>82</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, “Memo, Re: Situation on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue,” City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk’s Office Subject Files: Hippies, COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

curtail the youth culture's right to free expression, a group of poets led by Pierre Coupey, Rick Kitaeff and Milton Acorn, stapled a manifesto to some telephone poles along 4<sup>th</sup> avenue in March 1967.<sup>84</sup> It opened, "To all those interested in fighting lies, propaganda and terrorism, the events of the last months have made it clear that now is the time to establish a truly FREE PRESS."<sup>85</sup> Written by Pierre Coupey, the manifesto called for the free press to 'end repressive legislation, encourage civil disobedience, invite free exchange of opinion, discuss the new environment and the media, discuss reform and revolution and uphold civil liberties.'<sup>86</sup> Printed on poet Bill Bissett's press, the flyer also called for donations to be collected and a meeting to be organized at Rick Kitaeff's house, 733 Hamilton Street, at 7:30 P.M. on April 2, 1967.<sup>87</sup>

In attendance that rainy April evening were TISH editors Peter Auxier, Jamie Reid and Dan McLeod; Milton Acorn, a prominent member of the Communist Party of Canada and accomplished Canadian poet; local poets Pierre Coupey, Gerry Gilbert and Tony Gringus; future poet laureate Bill Bissett; Duhkhobor Peter Hlookoff, and socialist City Councillor Harry Rankin.<sup>88</sup> Among the issues discussed were content the newspaper would print, and the form the paper would take. In particular, the group discussed its editorship, artistic direction, content, funding and management.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Pierre Coupey, "Plains and Straits: On the Founding of the *Georgia Straight*," *The Capilano Review*, No. 3. Issue, 13 (Winter 2011). The flyer had been printed on Bill Bissett's press.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Pierre Coupey, "Plains and Straits: On the Founding of the *Georgia Straight*," *The Capilano Review*, No. 3. Issue, 13 (Winter 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Stan Persky has "a faded visual memory of [Kitaeff's home] that had unusual porches that looked like castle ramparts." Interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. Pauls and Campbell, 4. Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>89</sup> Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

As far as the editorship was concerned, Persky, Acorn and Coupey later claimed it was decided that the paper would operate as a collective.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, they say a decision was made to have a rotating editorship so that no one individual could exert control over the content or form of the paper. Coupey “felt very much that [the paper] had to be from the community itself,” and Persky recalled that, “surely, there was no concept of it being owned by anyone.”<sup>91</sup> With reference to finances, Milton Acorn, a major Canadian literary figure and prominent member of the Communist Party of Canada under direct personal surveillance by the RCMP, donated a full month of his disability cheque to the group to spur the publication of the first number of issues.<sup>92</sup> Those funds, a product of the state, that were donated by a committed communist and political dissident under direct and constant surveillance by the RCMP founded the dissenting voice of the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>93</sup> Acorn would never be reimbursed.

Though the form and content of the yet to be printed-paper had been decided upon, a name still eluded the group. According to McLeod, it was his idea, one that came to him over beers with friends at the Cecil Hotel. The idea was that the name would offer free advertising as the mainstream Pacific Press Papers—the *Vancouver Sun* and *the Province*—as part of marine weather forecasts noted gale warnings for the Georgia Strait.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, it was a pun, meant to, as Coupey recalled, “stick the middle finger up to the establishment.”

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Stan Persky, Interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Acorn had been wounded in the Second World War by a depth charge on a transatlantic crossing and as a result he lived in part on a monthly disability cheque from the Canadian government.

<sup>94</sup> It’s worth noting that in the aftermath of the establishment of the paper the Pacific Press papers changed their gale warnings from “Georgia Strait” to “Strait of Georgia.”

Now with a name, and laid out in McLeod's Kistliano apartment, on May 5, 1967, *the Georgia Straight* published its first issue. Its mandate: "fight harassment with harassment."<sup>95</sup>

The front page of the first issue made clear that the newspaper would focus on issues that related directly to the harassment of the youth culture in Vancouver by the Mayor's office, the VPD and the fire department. The front-page story, "The Great BUS STOP BUST," profiled a case that dealt with vagrancy charges that were being levelled against young countercultural figures by the police department.<sup>96</sup> In particular, it commented on the arrests made in Kitsilano the previous month and the continued harassment of the *Advance Mattress* coffeehouse, both of which had led to the meeting that had established the paper.<sup>97</sup>

The second page read more like a manifesto than an editorial. It opened: "To Prime Minister Pearson, Premier Bennett, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Booth, and all the others who believe they have some legal jurisdiction in the territory bounded by Alberta, Yukon and the United States: we wish to inform you that as of this date, the 5<sup>th</sup> of May 1967, we shall no longer plead either guilty or not guilty to any offence, we shall no longer consider ourselves subject to any of your laws. You have no legal jurisdiction over our country."<sup>98</sup> The editorial demanded the release of all prisoners from jail, mental hospitals, and juvenile detention centers; reimbursement paid to those prisoners; the departure of all representative of the "occupation troops" within 48 hours; the assembling of all the representatives of foreign powers within the country at their provisional office on the courthouse lawn; that indigenous chiefs of the local nation be declared sovereign rulers of the land and called for the organization of a citizen police force to be disbanded "the moment it becomes clear that

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<sup>95</sup> *The Georgia Straight*, May 5, 1967, 3.

<sup>96</sup> "the Great Bus Stop," *the Georgia Straight*, May 5, 1967, 1.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> "Editorial," *the Georgia Straight*, May 5, 1967, 2.

there is no danger of subversion by agents who may still be loyal to the foreign imperialist power.”<sup>99</sup>

Two articles, the first “obscenity?” and the second, “Milton Acorn,” focused on the obscenity charges that resulted in the *Advance Mattress* coffeehouse being shut down. Acorn called the attempts to shut down the coffeehouse part of an anti-LSD campaign. He argued that contrary to the Campbell and Police Chief Booth beliefs, the coffeehouse had actually been a point of opposition to the use of the drug. Ultimately, Acorn concluded that the real threat the counterculture posed to the municipal establishment was not ideological, but capitalistic. Acorn contended that “the deliberate cynical persecution of the *Advance Mattress* coffeehouse” was part of “a co-ordinated attack on the Kitsilano neighbourhood as a whole.” Furthermore, he argued that the persecution of the countercultural community had very little to do with their political ideas but was closely related to the value of the land where they made their community. “As it stands now,” Acorn wrote, “5<sup>th</sup> and Yew is a terrible place to put a shopping mall. The area is inhabited largely by hippies, students, artists – the kind of people who do not patronize shopping centres. But the millionaires and billionaires who invest in shopping centres, the bankers who lend them money, are not fools – not that kind of fools. They are banking on futurities.”<sup>100</sup>

On May 12, the paper moved into its first office space at 423 Homer St. The same day, McLeod was arrested directly outside the office for “investigation of vagrancy” and held by the police department for three hours.<sup>101</sup> Consequently, *College Printers*, who printed the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Milton Acorn, “Milton Acorn,” May 5, 1967.

<sup>101</sup> Pauls and Campbell, 4.

first issue, refused to print the second.<sup>102</sup> Their manager commented on May 18, 1967, “we would have never printed it if we’d actually read it.”<sup>103</sup> McLeod and Coupey, who served as the first editorial leaders of the newspaper, were therefore forced to find a printer willing to print the dissenting voice they envisioned representing their community. As such, they had their legal counsel, John Laxton—who would contribute to the paper by writing legal columns informing citizens of their rights—inspect the paper to ensure it would not be violating the law. Yet, even after Laxton cleared the content of the second issue, not a single printer in town would touch the newspaper; ostensibly, the RCMP claimed, because “they might be held responsible for libel charges.”<sup>104</sup>

On May 17, Mel Stevenson, the owner of the *Columbian* said to the collective when pushed on his decision not to print their second issue: “you know how people think.” And a representative of Broadway printers said on May 23 that they would not print the paper and “[hoped] nobody else [would] either.”<sup>105</sup> That same day an undercover RCMP police report notes that McLeod approached the future Dr. Gabor Maté and the Progressive Workers Front to see whether Maté might be interested in co-editing the paper and ask whether the *Georgia Straight* collective might borrow the P.W.M. press to print the paper. The RCMP reported both of these requests were denied, and that McLeod was seeking a publisher in Seattle, Washington.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> “A Bouquet for the Gang Press,” *the Georgia Straight*, May 23, 1967, 2. Pauls and Campbell, 4. Pierre Coupey, Interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>103</sup> “A Bouquet for the Gang Press,” *the Georgia Straight*, May 23, 1967, 2.

<sup>104</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670

<sup>105</sup> “A Bouquet for the Gang Press,” *the Georgia Straight*, May 23, 1967, 2.

<sup>106</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670

It was then that Dan McLeod ran into Jerry Kruz in the rain outside his psychedelic dancehall *the Afterthought* on West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>107</sup> McLeod mentioned to Kruz that the paper's first issue would likely be its last. Kruz had just been arrested for the second time by the authorities for possession of marijuana. This time he'd been charged, and currently was awaiting sentencing by judge Lawrence Eckhardt.<sup>108</sup> He mentioned to McLeod that he had access to a press, not only because of his concert promotion work, but because his father, a religious man, was a commercial printer.

Kruz, who did not have a good relationship with his father at the time as a result of his criminal charges, offered to speak to him and see if he might print the paper's second issue. Kruz recalls his father didn't necessarily agree with the youth culture's message or its means of expressing it with vulgarity, but believed passionately in the right to free speech, and therefore agreed to print the paper.

There was a crazy backlash. And Dan was literally in front of my dancehall, selling his paper. It was wet. He had long blonde hair. And I was miserable: about to go to jail. And we start talking...I say: I'll fix it for you, and offer to talk to my dad...I still don't know why he agreed to do it. We were always at odds. But he did believe passionately in the right to free speech...I literally went in to jail, and that same day, he started printing for Dan.<sup>109</sup>

And so, because of eighteen-year-old concert promoter Jerry Kruz and his father, the *Georgia Straight* survived to print a second issue.

The second issue, released near the end of May, opened by inviting its readers to send flowers to their local offset printers.<sup>110</sup> The front page contained a picture of Dan

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<sup>107</sup> Jerry Kruz, "A Chance Meeting Before the Summer of Love," *The Georgia Straight*, May 19, 2017: <http://www.straight.com/music/909376/chance-meeting-summer-love>, Jerry Kruz, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>108</sup> Jerry Kruz, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> "A Bouquet for the Gang Press, *the Georgia Straight*, May 23, 1967, 2.

McLeod being arrested by VPD officer #523 on May 12 and profiled a death threat that had been slipped under the door of the *Georgia Straight* offices. It also contained a note of solidarity from the San Francisco *Oracle* inviting them to join the *Underground Press Syndicate* as soon as their circulation reached over 2000. Their circulation, just two issues in, already exceeded 5000.<sup>111</sup>

“Is it nothing to you?” was the first of many pieces the *Straight* would cover publicizing local arrests in ‘the city of Vancouver’s relentless war on Kitsilano.’ And a piece by TISH poet Jamie Reid wrestled with the prohibition of marijuana. Reid used to the paper in order to put together a group that would meet to tackle and participate in further questions related to social activism and the marijuana question.<sup>112</sup>

The next issue was the first to feature the psychedelic artwork on the cover that became synonymous with the underground press and *the Georgia Straight*. Furthermore, it continued to attack the establishment and provide a voice for the youth culture. In particular, it featured the first original Zipp Almsy cartoon, “the Adventures of Acidman,” which would result in eight obscenity charges in 1968 alone.<sup>113</sup> Acidman, who got his superpowers from ingesting LSD, refrained from covering his genitals. The issue was also the first to directly target narcotics officer Abe Snidanko, who would become a regular figure of satire and editorial content for the newspaper, and a major character in Almsy’s cartoons, as well as be immortalized by Cheech & Chong in their films as the bumbling narcotics officer, Sgt. Stadanko.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Jamie Reid, “Marijuana,” *the Georgia Straight*, May 23, 1967, 7.

<sup>113</sup> Krotter, Mark M. “The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice.” *University of British Columbia Law Review*, No. 5 (1970): 304.

<sup>114</sup> After publishing his address in 1969, Snidanko would be forced to move.

But despite their attempt to poke fun and malign the establishment, in what came as a shock to many of the original collective members, the newspaper appeared to be a success, and its circulation quickly jumped from just 3,000 to nearly 12,000. Consequently, the *Georgia Straight*, founded as a collective by a group of artists, was forced to open a bank account in order to deal with its incoming funds. Dan McLeod offered to do this and incorporated the *Georgia Straight*, making it an official business before the law. None of the other members of the collective, however, acknowledged that this, by law, made McLeod the legal owner of the paper.<sup>115</sup> Other members of the original collective note that at this point McLeod became “authoritarian” in his demeanour and increasingly ignored their calls to discuss issues related to the content and printing of the newspaper.<sup>116</sup> Coupey recalled, “We were going around selling the newspaper on the street and in the bars downtown. Vancouver working-class people would just empty their pockets to us. And we turned all of that money over to Dan...if my guesses are anywhere near accurate there were thousands of dollars coming in that only Dan knew about and controlled.”<sup>117</sup>

Issues numbers four, five and six continued to criticize the municipal establishment, provide legal advice to the youth culture, and advance the agenda of the counterculture. As a result, the paper began to elicit a response from some members of Vancouver’s blue-collar community. One reader wrote to the editor, “to the editor of the *Georgia Straight*: I think you, your paper, and every hippie in Vancouver are completely insane. It’s a crime that you can’t all exchange places with the poor, legitimately sick people at Riverview Mental Hospital.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Having had the closest correspondence with lawyer John Laxton

<sup>116</sup> Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> “Editorials,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 7, 1967, 2.

Because of complaints received by the mayor's office and logged by the city clerk, the paper's continued coverage of incidents of police brutality, abuse of political and judicial power, encouragement of the use of psychedelics, nudity and dissent, the municipal establishment responded to the burgeoning paper by leveraging the use of the judiciary. On September 28, 1967, just six issues into the life of the *Georgia Straight*, Mayor Campbell directed Milt Harrell, the chief city-licensing inspector, to revoke the paper's business license under section 277(c) of the city charter.<sup>119</sup> The obscure piece of legislation gave Harrell the authority to revoke a license under suspicion of "gross misconduct." When questioned by reporters on how exactly a definition of "gross misconduct" could be legally defined, Harell said it came down to "common sense."<sup>120</sup> The *Georgia Straight* immediately appealed the decision to the city council, and the supreme court of British Columbia. The decision to appeal to city council is pertinent because according to the city charter the license inspector cannot suspend a license indefinitely. Council can. Pressed by reporters, Campbell said the inspector has summary power of suspension so he can act quickly in an emergency, and he defended the right of council and the inspector to not give any reason for their actions. "Giving reasons opens the door to libel and slander suits," he explained to reporters.<sup>121</sup>

On September 29 the front page of the *Sun* ran the headline, "Pacifist Hippies Gird for War, and the next day, September 30, publishers Peter Hlookoff and Dan McLeod, preparing to battle the state, filed a supreme court registry seeking a court declaration that the suspension was invalid and was made without lawful authority. Named as defendants in

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<sup>119</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor's Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1967, "Cross Examination of Mayor Tom Campbell by John Laxton, re: license suspension" and "Letter from Milt Harrell to Tom Campbell, dated September 28, 1967," COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b.

<sup>120</sup> Krotter, Mark M. "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice." *University of British Columbia Law Review*, No. 5 (1970): 304.

<sup>121</sup> Chester Grant, "License Inspector not all Powerful," the *Vancouver Sun*, September 30, 1967, 1.

the case were the City of Vancouver, Tom Campbell, and Milt Harrell. The same day, in protest of the attempted banning, *Georgia Straight* vendors handed a one-page copy of the paper printed in protest on city streets for free. The *Sun* reported that members of the VPD seized about 300 copies of the pamphlet that night, taking the names of the vendors. Police Chief Fisk said anyone selling the paper within city limits would be arrested. The same day, Jack Wasserman, a conservative *Sun* columnist and strong critic of the counterculture who had been criticized heavily by the *Georgia Straight*, called Campbell's decision to revoke the license and arrest vendors of the pamphlet not only "totalitarian" and "grotesque," but "plain stupid."

They've used words on me that I wouldn't repeat in the men's washroom at a stag party in a logging camp. But, despite my belief that the Straight is an inept attempt to duplicate the more pungent (and better written) underground papers of San Francisco and Los Angeles, it still has a place in the community. It is a voice of dissent. It is a often purile voice, but it is there...The thought that any voice, no matter how irreverent, can be stamped out at the whim of bureaucracy is more obscene than any four, five, or 10 letter word the paper might print.<sup>122</sup>

On October 2, when council deliberated in chambers on the topic to support an indefinite suspension, 651 signatures were submitted as a petition in support of the license suspension. The petition read, "we hope [the *Georgia Straight*'s] corrupt and degrading existence can be silenced forever." Later during the council session, before 100 people who reportedly applauded, city council officially endorsed the suspension. Campbell claimed in chambers that the decision had been made independently by Harrell, but on his advice. Councillor Ernie Broome, who voted against the decision, said the newspaper would likely win their hearing before the Supreme Court of B.C., and that the city prosecutor Stewart

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<sup>122</sup> Jack Wasserman, "Wasserman," the *Vancouver Sun*, September 29, 1967, 1.

McMorran should be directed to lay charges so the validity of those charges could be tested in court. The hearing was set for October 6 at the Supreme Court.

On the appointed day, the presiding magistrate of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the Honourable Justice Thomas Dohm, upheld Harrell's decision, under Campbell's direction, to revoke the business license. He concluded his ruling: "His Worship Mayor Campbell and Chief License Inspector Harrell should be highly commended for their prompt actions...leading to the suspension of the license of this "newspaper" and thus preventing the distribution of this filth to Vancouver school children."<sup>123</sup> Laxton said that same day to reporters following the decision that he would appeal decision to the Supreme Court of Canada and give notice to the Attorney General of B.C. and Canada on October 10.<sup>124</sup> The next day, Oct. 7, McLeod was quoted on page 10 of the *Vancouver Sun*, (interesting considering every other piece of news on the trial and banning was on the front page) calling the ruling "a giant step toward a police state." During the trial Justice Dohm refused to allow argument on legality of section 277 (c) of the Vancouver City Charter, under which the license suspension was upheld. He told reporters that that section of the charter is *Ultra Vires* because the legislation relates to questions of morality. Laxton argued that the federal and not the provincial government had authority on matters of morality under criminal law. Campbell responded to Laxton, telling reporters the newspaper's editors would be, "wasting their time," if they appealed the decision on those grounds. Two days later, McLeod was arrested outside the Sportsmen Café on Dunsmuir Street for "causing a disturbance by shouting." His bail was set at \$35 and he was later released after being booked, with a court

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor's Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1967, "Case Judgment, Hlookoff and McLeod VS. the City of Vancouver, Presiding Magistrate, the Honourable Justice Thomas Dohm, October 6, 1967," COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b.

date set for October 24. After McLeod's arrest on October 8 the *Sun* reported hippies began to hand out yellow papers to police officers when they were stopped and searched under the terms of the Narcotics Control Act, telling them to "remember Eichmann," and be aware that "following orders [was] no excuse for inhumanity."

On October 11, a day after the decision was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, across the Strait of Georgia, in Nanaimo, 400 students in junior high and High School signed a petition protesting the decision of the Supreme Court of B.C. At the same time, School Trustee's and the Minister of Education, Leslie Peterson, who would become the Attorney General of British Columbia the next year, began to move to have the Phillip Roth short Story, "Defender of the Faith," banned from being taught in Grade 12 English in high schools across British Columbia. The story that Roth himself was heavily criticized for by Orthodox and Secular Jewish Communities in North America, was objected too because, like the *Georgia Straight*, it contained the word, "fuck."

That's when suddenly, following the writ submitted to the Attorney General of Canada, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, on October 19, 9 days after the case was appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, the papers license was reinstated. Harell said he made the decision of his own volition, in consultation with Campbell, upon review of the one-page flyer the staff had printed in protest and distributed for free. Years later, Coupey claimed Trudeau (at the time running for prime minister) sent a representative to make an argument on behalf of the freedom of the press.<sup>125</sup> That claim was never publicly acknowledged by Trudeau, Campbell or Harell, but constituents in favour of the ban did write the mayor to ask if the rumour were true, indicating that it was believed to be true. But even though it would appear the federal government had intervened to protect freedom of the press,

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<sup>125</sup> "History of the Georgia Straight," the *Georgia Straight*: <http://www.straight.com/history>

enshrined in the bill of rights, it did not stop Campbell from trying to ban the burgeoning newspaper. Undeterred by the court's decision, Campbell hired a private law firm to consider an injunction. Speaking to reporters at press conference he declared,

Council isn't prepared to censor the *Georgia Straight*. The license inspector suspended the license for gross misconduct and that's something you can't clean up. I don't think these are the kinds of people we want publishing newspapers in Vancouver. This was a rag was that being pushed to schoolchildren for 15 cents a copy. It was bread for the hippies, and profit for the publishers, and we just can't tolerate that.<sup>126</sup>

Earlier that year, in response to the foundation of the *Georgia Straight* and under Campbell's direction, the "Special Committee to Investigate the Hippie Problem" had been set up by the city. The committee met regularly reporting on the counterculture, recording statistics, and offered solutions to combat the "hippie problem" and the migration of youth to the city, which they believed the *Georgia Straight* was encouraging.<sup>127</sup> The failed censure of the publication the city felt was encouraging a "problem," resulted in the city paying closer attention to its recommendations.

The committee composed of Aldermen E.C. Sweeney and Marianne Linell, Commissioners G. Sutton Brown and L. Ryan, Director of Permits and Licenses Dr. H.L. Bryon, and City Clerk M. James, suggested that to deal with the transient population of 'Canada's Haight-Ashbury,' the municipal establishment 'enforce every by-law possible on the countercultural community, while at the same time accelerating "urban renewal and revitalization projects" in partnership with local businesses and ratepayer associations.<sup>128</sup> It also reported that it felt that the hippie movement would likely die out in six months, and

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<sup>126</sup> Krotter, Mark M. "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice." *University of British Columbia Law Review*, No. 5 (1970): 304.

<sup>127</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, City Clerk's Office Subject Files, file: Special Committee re: Hippie Situation, "Report to Council: October 10, 1967," COV—S20, Box 79—B—5, folder 11.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

that what followed would be worse. At the same time, all of this, and the associated publicity, was described years later by Coupey ‘as the best thing that could have possibly happened to the paper.’<sup>129</sup> Instantly, the newspaper became taboo, and the suspension became a national and international news story carried both in the underground and establishment press. Its circulation skyrocketed thereafter. An editorial called the license suspension “a mass circulation campaign” initiated by the municipal government:

The controversy has improved the notoriety of the newspaper and helped circulate more copies. Now, Citizens clamour for a copy, thinking it will be a rare collector’s item they can hide from their grandchildren. Little do they know that the police are only playing their role in a mass circulation campaign, initiated by the Mayor. Thanks to the mayor now everyone is chatting about the paper.<sup>130</sup>

What that editorial failed to acknowledge, the RCMP reported on and sent directly to the commissioner in Ottawa, along with copies of the paper. A report of the federal police claimed that because of the license ban the *Georgia Straight’s* circulation increased from 12,000 to 63 000, making it the underground newspaper with the largest circulation, not just “on the continent,” as Acorn had previously claimed, but in the world in the last quarter of 1967.<sup>131</sup> In Wasserman’s column defending the *Straight* he had written, presciently, that that would be the end result. But even though the paper appeared to be surviving, infighting plagued the founding collective during the trial. McLeod, having borne most of the legal burden and been arrested during the trial, and also, having incorporated the *Georgia Straight* and opened a bank account to house the paper’s funds, claimed to be the legal owner of the newspaper. When questioned by members of the original collective who felt his ownership

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<sup>129</sup> Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>130</sup> *the Georgia Straight*, October 8, 1967.

<sup>131</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670.

was contrary to the principles upon which the paper had been founded, he evaded them. Coupey recalled that members of the original collective felt McLeod was acting in a way that was contrary to the community he was purporting to represent. “There was a sense of betrayal at the time,” he remembered. “And it wasn’t a sense of betrayal of me, or the others involved with the newspaper, it was a betrayal of a principle. And that’s more important. It wasn’t the betrayal of any one individual, but the community in the abstract.”<sup>132</sup>

Feeling that McLeod was attempting to take control of the just six-issue old periodical, Coupey started a dialogue with Acorn and Hlookoff, who tried to organize a meeting to discuss McLeod’s claim to legal ownership.<sup>133</sup> After over a month of attempts to talk with McLeod, on November 6, a full month after the license suspension trial and the attempts of Coupey to address some of the structural changes the paper had taken, McLeod agreed to hold a meeting with John Laxton present as mediator. Coupey’s typewritten notes prepared before the meeting, dated November 6, 1967, indicate he intended to discuss the implementation of a formal co-operative structure, as opposed to a corporation; wanted to develop a clear, accountable bookkeeping system for the business side of the newspaper, editorial and office functions, and that he wanted a financial audit conducted. He claims that there were “bags of cash flowing into the office and straight into Dan's pockets as a consequence of the City of Vancouver revoking our business license.”<sup>134</sup> Coupey recalled the meeting and attempt to force it in conversation:

I wanted to have a collective meeting again to bring everything out into the open and he simply avoided and evaded and diffused. So I pressed the issue—and finally he agreed to a meeting mediated by his the papers legal counsel John Laxton. It ended up being kind of a debacle. It wasn’t a sitting down meeting and it should have been. None of it was done well on either

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<sup>132</sup> Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Pierre Coupey, “notes,” November 6, 1967.

side. I should have been less hot-headed, less volatile, more mature, more responsible. I was 24—and just a kid. And John Laxton was not an honest broker. He was on the side of money, not of principle. The compromise offer they made was that the ownership of the paper would be split three ways between Dan, I and Peter Hlookoff. Stupidly, again, just as stupidly as when I'd allowed Dan to open the Bank account in his name, I refused. I could be sitting here one-third owner of the *Georgia Straight* without having done a thing. But I'm glad I'm not. My life had another direction. A different course.<sup>135</sup>

Much like Coupey's life, the seventh issue set a new bearing. Printed in colour it opened by announcing that two major changes had occurred in the editorship of the *Georgia Straight*, and that four editors—Pierre Coupey, Peter Hlookoff, Milton Acorn and Tony Gringus—had resigned from the paper. McLeod, now the sole editor and owner of the newspaper, opened the first page of the next paper claiming that those who left would be starting their own newspaper, and that those still with the *Georgia Straight* would help them do it. Almost exactly 50 years later, still consumed with anger, Coupey called that statement “pure fiction.” He said the *Georgia Straight* never cultivated the kind of strong, local investigative journalism he and other members of the original poet collective envisioned it fostering. But from his home perched high on the side of a mountain in West Vancouver, with a BMW parked in the driveway, and a large balcony overlooking Burrard Inlet, the artist and former professor admitted the *Georgia Straight* under McLeod's direction and ownership did one thing well. “It stuck the middle finger right up,” he said, gesturing with his hands.

“Right up in their face.”

## **VI: Conclusion**

The burgeoning of a sophisticated style of poetics particular to Vancouver and the connections that were formed in Warren Tallman's home, through the TISH newsletter and in coffeeshop poetry readings on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 1963 and 1967, were instrumental in

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<sup>135</sup> Pierre Coupey, interview by Jake Sherman.

providing a milieu for a paper like the *Georgia Straight* to exist. All of the people who banded together in the Spring of 1967 to start Vancouver's Free Press—with the exception of city councilor Harry Rankin—had connected with one another through their participation in the local arts community and poetry newsletter TISH. The TISH newsletter likewise provided a young Dan McLeod and Peter Auxier with experience publishing their own work and printing and disseminating a regular periodical. Finally, Tom Campbell's campaign against the youth culture provided an impetus for a group of poets to found *the Georgia Straight*. And his reaction, ultimately, altered the course of the newspaper, cementing its place in Canadian legal discourse. Undeterred by the failure of the license suspension, over the next two years Campbell with the help of newly appointed Attorney General Leslie Peterson and city prosecutor Stewart McMorrان, would repeatedly leverage the power of the judiciary to try to censor, and ultimately ban the *Georgia Straight*. Undeterred, McLeod and his "staff," who were rarely paid, and when they were, very little, would continue to repeatedly attack the establishment, and organize in response, voicing dissent, and publishing "obscenity," every chance they had. The staff of *the Georgia Straight* continued, despite the constant  
| overwhelming power of the state, to, as Coupey recalled, stick up the middle finger.

**Ch.2—“Let History be Your Judge, Then Appeal:” Criminal Libel, Obscenity, Censorship and Freedom of the Press and of Expression in British Columbia, 1968 - 1970**

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*How meaningful is the right of freedom of the press when the minute a group tries to exercise it they are harassed continually by police, courts and government, and forced to spend valuable time and money to keep from going to jail.*<sup>136</sup>

By 1968 the *Georgia Straight* had become the most widely circulated underground newspaper in the world. While city council's attack on the not yet one-year-old newspaper had increased the notoriety of the paper by turning it into a regular subject of the mainstream media, Campbell's attack on Vancouver's underground press also raised important questions about the value of freedom of the press in Canadian legal discourse.<sup>137</sup> Despite the appeals of lawyers, members of the federal government, counterculture, and of city council, throughout his two terms as mayor, (1967 – 1972) Campbell continued to make use of every resource available to him to stop the *Georgia Straight* from publishing.<sup>138</sup>

Between 1968 and 1970 the *Georgia Straight* and its employees were charged with criminally libeling a provincial magistrate, three counts of inciting to commit an indictable offence, and 27 counts of obscenity.<sup>139</sup> In 1969 alone, the *Georgia Straight* and its staff were

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<sup>136</sup> "Freedom," *The Ulysses*, September 26, 1968, Filed by the RCMP, September 29, 1968

<sup>137</sup> Phillip Sykes, "At Least you Have an Alternative to the Establishment Press. And it Works," *McLean's Magazine*, May 1970, October 8, 1970. "Allen Ginsberg," *The Georgia Straight*, April 1 – 14, 1969. Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, Chaired by the Honourable Keith Davey, October 8, 1970. James W. Standing, Mayor vs. a Hippie Paper, *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 12, 1968, "Hippies Picket Before Court," *Vancouver Sun*, May 27, 1968, "Hippie Paper Faces New Charges," *Vancouver Sun*, May 28, 1969, "Georgia Straight Charged," *the Province*, May 14, 1969, "Georgia Straight Editors Remanded," *Toronto Telegram*, May 15, 1969, "Hippie Paper Found Guilty of Obscenity," *the Globe and Mail*, February 20, 1969, "Hippie Newspaper and Editors Fined 1500\$ for the Criminal Libeling of B.C. Magistrate," *the Globe and Mail*, January 28, 1969, "Dropping Charges Does not Resolve Issue of Obscenity, Newspaper Lawyer Tells Court," *the Globe and Mail*, February 22, 1971, Dick McDonald, "Underground Press Becomes Cultural Force," *Montreal Star*, August 14, 1970, Phillip Sykes, "At Least you Have an Alternative to the Establishment Press. And it Works," *McLean's Magazine*, May 1970, "Radical Paper in Vancouver to Lose Grant," *the Globe and Mail*, September 20, 1971, Jon Wesley Harding and Dan McLeod, "Jerry Rubin," *The Georgia Straight*, October 25 – 31, 1968, Ken Webster, "Allen Ginsberg," *The Georgia Straight*, April 1 – 14, 1969.

<sup>137</sup> Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice," Mark Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice." *University of British Columbia Law Review* 5, no. 1970: 297 – 325, L.A. Howe, Jr. "The *Georgia Straight* and the Freedom of Expression in Canada," *Canadian Bar Review*, 1970.

<sup>138</sup> Campbell's paranoia and distrust of the youth culture was the subject of laughter in the House of Commons. Socialist city councilor Harry Rankin regularly lobbied in support of the newspaper (and wrote a weekly column for the *Georgia Straight*) and the counterculture from city hall. Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, Chaired by the Honourable Keith Davey.

<sup>139</sup> Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice," Dominique Clément, *Canada's Rights Revolution: Social Movements and Social Change, 1937 – 1982*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2008, 74.

indicted on 22 criminal charges.<sup>140</sup> Nine of those charges were leveled in one month.<sup>141</sup> Beyond members of the papers staff being charged and prosecuted, the *Georgia Straight's* itself was also censored outright. In 1968 the *Georgia Straight* was banned in New Westminster, Surrey, Delta, White Rock, North Vancouver, West Vancouver, Richmond, Squamish and Haney. The city of New Westminster even passed a by-law to prevent people from soliciting on city streets after vendors of the paper began to take “donations” in lieu of payment for the newspaper. Courting arrest, young men and women continued to sell the *Georgia Straight* on the streets of these municipalities.<sup>142</sup>

This chapter explores the legal history of the *Georgia Straight*. In particular it investigates how freedom of speech, assembly, and of the press, values enshrined in the first section of the Canadian Bill of Rights passed in 1960, were infringed on by using the *Georgia Straight* as a case study. In other words, it argues the municipal and provincial government broke federal law via their prosecution of the *Georgia Straight*, and manipulated provincial and municipal laws to do it. It proves this by analyzing the legal campaign waged against Dan McLeod, Bob Cummings, Peter Almasy, and associated staff members of the *Georgia Straight* by the provincial and municipal judiciary. It begins by examining the arrest of Stan Persky for loitering on March 9, 1968, which led to the criminal libel charge later leveled against Bob Cummings and Dan McLeod. In particular it examines the response of Stewart McMorran, the Vancouver Chief City Prosecutor, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Union,

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<sup>140</sup> The majority of these cases were charges leveled for obscenity. Chief City Prosecutor Stewart McMorran ordered the investigations into all of them and leveled the charges. Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice," 301.

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<sup>142</sup> Dan McLeod and Eric Sommer were later arrested in New Westminster for vending the paper and directly antagonizing the municipality. After shouting—having been assaulted and placed under arrest by the New Westminster Police Department—McLeod asked why he was being arrested. A policeman responded, “creating a disturbance in a public place by shouting.” “Straight Banned, etc. etc.” *the Georgia Straight*, September 6 – 12, 1968, 2, “Banned in New West,” *the Georgia Straight*, March 8 – 21, 1968, 3, “New West Lacks Courtesy,” *the Georgia Straight*, August 30 – September 5, 1968, 4. “We Can Sell in New West,” *the Georgia Straight*, October 1 – 6, 1969. Clement, *Canada's Rights Revolution*, 75.

and Vancouver's counterculture as well as prominent icons of the American youth culture. Ultimately, it argues that the legal campaign of repression waged against the *Georgia Straight* had as its intended consequence the demise of 'Vancouver's Free Press.' It concludes by raising questions about why the *Georgia Straight* was prosecuted to the extent it was.

### **I: Stan Persky and “the Official Plot Behind the Great Courthouse Bust”**

On March 9 1968, University of British Columbia graduate student Stan Persky departed for the Supreme Court of British Columbia with seventeen of his students from Vancouver's Free University, a newly founded radical pedagogical organization inspired by radical faculty and other 'new' or 'free' schools that had begun to pop up around college campuses in the United States.<sup>143</sup> The courthouse had become a regular meeting place for the counterculture; and consequently, Campbell had grown increasingly frustrated with the youth culture's reclamation of a symbol of the state's power.

The reason for Persky and his students field trip that afternoon had been that earlier that morning in class they had been informed that the VPD intended to remove young people from the courthouse square using non-specified “John Doe” warrants to prosecute 'hippies' under the Public Works Act. As a result, Persky decided to walk over and give what he later remembered as “an impromptu and *in situ*” lecture on Canadian history, colonialism, and the Hudson's Bay Company; whose department store was directly across the street. Before the lecture was over, the police had arrived, and Persky and his students were all arrested.<sup>144</sup>

That year, Campbell received over 100 letters from constituents and a petition signed by over 600 residents of Vancouver that asked the city to act on 'the hippie situation at the

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<sup>143</sup> Stan Persky, (*Georgia Straight* Co-Founder, Poet and UBC Student Leader) interview by Jake Sherman, February 17, 2017.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

courthouse.<sup>145</sup> A letter from Ms. Margaret A. Dawson sent that February read, “if the courthouse square is left as a lolling ground for lazy lunks, it may as well be covered completely by slabs of concrete.” Another letter proposed sending all the male hippies to an uninhabited island in Howe Sound. Campbell expressed in his responses to both letters that while he would like to “enforce the problem,” the matter was under provincial and not municipal jurisdiction. To every letter Campbell received in March and April of 1968, he and his staff responded, “the matter is under close surveillance.”<sup>146</sup>

Letters exchanged between Mr. A. E. Webb, the Deputy Minister of Public Works, British Columbia Attorney General Leslie Peterson, and Deputy Police Chief John Fisk, prove that the issue was a matter of debate at the highest levels of the provincial and municipal government and provincial governments. In 1968 Fisk wrote to Webb and Peterson stating they had placed several “plain-clothes police officers” around the courthouse who determined that it would be “difficult to justify taking action against the offensive hippy group in that location.” “Such action,” he wrote, “would almost certainly result in cries of discrimination.” Despite Fisk’s tactful analysis of the situation, Campbell decided to continue to harass the young people who congregated there and to malign them on the radio and in the *Vancouver Sun*.<sup>147</sup> Furthermore, the mayor continued to pursue legal paths that would allow him to leverage the power of the judiciary to prosecute the youth culture and their means of publicity, *the Georgia Straight*. “These people are seeking publicity,”

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<sup>145</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 19a and 19b.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> “Hippies Picket Before Court,” the *Vancouver Sun*, October 12, 1968.

Fisk had closed his letter, “and realizing this we have refrained from taking any steps which would draw attention to their presence.”<sup>148</sup>

On March 2, roughly a week before Persky departed for the Supreme Court with his students, Mr. N.A. MacDiarmid of the Attorney General’s office—who signed his letter, Director, Criminal Law—sent Vancouver Chief City Prosecutor Stewart McMorrان the Public Works Act. McMorrان in turn forwarded the letter to Campbell. And Campbell, in receiving the Public Works Act, realized that he had found a piece of legislation that would allow him to use the VPD to prosecute the young people who regularly congregated outside the courthouse, as it made it illegal for any person “to stand appurtenant to a government building.”<sup>149</sup> MacDiarmid had closed his letter to McMorrان, “I think the regulations attached may be of some assistance to the Vancouver Police Department in dealing with this problem.”<sup>150</sup>

After Persky and his students were arrested on the afternoon of March 9 for loitering, they were taken to the police station on Main Street and held before being charged under the Public Works Act. While the students were released that evening, 40 protesters picketed outside the station, the majority of them students and law professors.<sup>151</sup> Deputy Police Chief John Fisk, talking to reporters that evening, stated the arrests had been part of a concerted crackdown on the hippie community.

As a result of the “John Doe” warrants and admission that the arrests were part of a concerted effort to attack a social group, nine UBC law professors officially endorsed the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association in its defense of Persky and his students that

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<sup>148</sup> BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Bob Cummings, “Stan Persky Busted,” *the Georgia Straight*, April 9 1968, Stan Persky, “Jail,” *the Georgia Straight*, April 19 – May 2 1968, 7.

night. The next day, when the BCCLA exposed the fact that the use of those warrants was illegal, the police department used the Narcotics Control Act—a catchall law that allowed the police to search and detain anyone without reason—to justify their detainment of the students. It is likely that the VPD were counseled by McMorran and the Attorney General’s Office to respond by leveraging the use of the Narcotics Control Act. The warrants used to make the arrests, later published in the *Georgia Straight*, read, “A person whose name is at present unknown but can be identified later.”<sup>152</sup>

The news coverage of the incident—which the *Georgia Straight* later called “the Great Courthouse Bust”—prompted a response from Mrs. Thelma Weinreich, a Holocaust survivor and former resident of Nazi Germany. She wrote to Campbell on March 10, “I look to you as the mayor of this city and the chairman of the police commission to stop this Fascist type behavior; Canada is supposed to be a democratic country.”<sup>153</sup> It is possible Weinreich—a local actor and member of activist theatre groups—might have also seen the Bob Cummings editorial, “Sieg Heil,” published the day before Persky’s protest, which profiled a police raid on a communal house conducted by plain-clothes police officers in the middle of night.<sup>154</sup>

After receiving Weinreich’s letter, on March 18, Campbell appeared on the CBC to discuss the events of March 9. The matter was currently before the courts, and he therefore could not respond with any specificity to the event in question. Campbell did, however, speak in generalities. He said on CBC Vancouver’s 7 O’ Clock Show, “This is a group of

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<sup>152</sup> Persky recalled being searched for narcotics in the March 22 – April 4 edition of the *Georgia Straight*. He wrote, “It is as if they went through Thoreau’s pocket looking for a bit of dried seaweed out of Walden Pond.” Stan Persky, “Jail,” *the Georgia Straight*, March 22 – April 4, 1968.

<sup>153</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b

<sup>154</sup> Peter Frederick Guilford, “The Development of Professional Theatre in Vancouver,” M.A. Thesis, UBC, Faculty of Theatre, 1981. Bob Cummings, “Sieg Heil!” *the Georgia Straight*, March 8 – 21, 1968, 13.

society, and not a racial group, who chose to drop out of society, onto society...they are parasites on the community...they are a scum community who have organized.” Campbell continued, “If these young people get their way they will destroy Canada, and from what I hear around the world, they will destroy the world. Our problems are not just war, or the atomic bomb, or the hydrogen bomb, but the fact that our youth—or part of it—is decaying. It is rotten.”<sup>155</sup>

After a nearly three-minute rant by Campbell, host Bob Quintrell sarcastically thanked the mayor for taking the time out of his busy schedule to come and “loiter” with him on the courthouse steps. The broadcast then cut to reporter Doug Collins who closed the broadcast, “for the past half hour the Seven O’ Clock Show has been loitering on the courthouse steps,” after which the cameras slowly panned across a crowd of people to reveal Dan McLeod, cutting from the long haired McLeod to a shot of Jesus Christ on the cross. The closing sequence resulted in more than 200 angry phone calls to the local CBC television office, and the producer of CBC Vancouver’s 7 O’ Clock broadcast being taken off the show.<sup>156</sup>

In response to Campbell’s comments and the closing shot of the CBC broadcast, the staff of the *Georgia Straight* ran a satirical syndicated piece from the ‘Caesarian News Service,’ entitled, “Scum Resurrected.” The headline was featured on the cover above a picture of Adolf Hitler holding a “no loitering sign.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Les Wedman wrote of the incident in the *Vancouver Sun*, “Doug Collins on the 7 O’clock Show learned that you can’t win an argument with fanatics. He lost his interview with Mayor Tom Campbell.” Apparently the fact checkers at the *Sun* had failed to realize it was Bob Quintrell and not Collins who interviewed Campbell. CBC Digital Archives, “Vancouver Politician Averse to Hippies,” CBC Vancouver, *the 7 O’ Clock Show*, Television, March 18, 1968, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/vancouver-politicians-averse-to-hippies>

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Wanis Kouri, “Scum Resurrected,” *the Georgia Straight*, March 22 – April 4, 1968, 11.

Written by Wanis Kouri, Bob Cummings's Alias, the satirical "Scum Resurrected" opened, "Roman Authorities, acting on information from a paid informant, have arrested the leader of a dissident group of pacifists, Jesus Christ." It continued, "Deputy Chief Fiskus of the Romans later announced that the arrest presaged an intended crackdown on the Christian community." The same day the response was published, the RCMP reported on a number of prominent university students who had been involved in organizing the protests outside of the jail in the aftermath of the arrest. Their report listed the current residence of English professor Warren Tallman, believed by the federal police to be a central organizing figure of the protests and associated with the *Georgia Straight*, though he had little to no involvement with the newspaper outside of his associations developed through TISH.<sup>158</sup>

In court the next month, Persky—who had become a prominent figure among the youth culture by leading protests at the university. He recalled from a café in Berlin where he lives and teaches philosophy, that the protests he led were often "in the American style—accompanied by acoustic guitars and banjos." Because of his role in the community the court used Persky to set an example to other dissenters. He was tried a week before the seventeen others arrested with him. Persky was defended by prominent Vancouver lawyer and former president of the BCCLA, Sid Simons. During the trial Simon's appeal to have the "john doe" warrants declared illegal was overruled, and he was denied permission to read the Canadian Bill of Rights in court.<sup>159</sup> Ultimately, what the *Georgia Straight* later called a "kangaroo court" found Persky guilty of violating the loitering section of the Public Works Act.

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<sup>158</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, "Re: the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, March 22, 1968," (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670

<sup>159</sup> Bob Cummings, "Stan Persky Busted," April 19 – May 8, 1968, 7, Stan Persky, "Going to Jail," *the Georgia Straight*, April 19 – May 8, 1968, 7.

Speaking at the end of the trial as he delivered his judgment, the Honourable Justice Lawrence Eckhardt acknowledged that in this case he disagreed with and felt the law was unfair, but that it was not his job to interpret the law, merely to uphold it. As a result he offered Persky a conditional discharge if he agreed to sign a one hundred dollar recognizance bond to keep the peace for six months. He refused, and as a result of his decision not to sign the peace bond, Eckhardt sentenced him to Oakalla maximum-security prison in Burnaby, saying he'd be released when he agreed to sign the bond.<sup>160</sup> But Persky, inspired by the theatrics of Yippies Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, (the former of whom he would invite to UBC that October) denied the plea bargain, and made sure to get as much possible media coverage as he could out of the situation.<sup>161</sup> "I arrived on earth from my planet many years ago," he responded to Eckhardt upon hearing his judgment. "Nothing you earth creatures do astonishes me anymore." Outside the courtroom he called the situation "absurd" and "unjust." He told reporters, "The only course anyone can take is to protest this as much as possible...it is up to us, the people of tomorrow...in the war against the absurdity of the present system it is an honor to be a political prisoner."<sup>162</sup> Protesters picketed outside of Oakalla during the entirety of Persky's three-day stay at Oakalla.<sup>163</sup> Though Persky would only spend a weekend behind bars, the trial and protests helped to create a media spectacle. The *Province*, considered an right-wing establishment paper by the 'Straight's' staff, ran an editorial in the aftermath of Persky's trial that called the Public Works Act, "a 22 carat, triple plated example of how asinine the law can get."<sup>164</sup> As a result of the response from the

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<sup>160</sup> "Eckhardt Gives 4 Times Maximum For Vagrancy," *the Georgia Straight*, October 1 – 8, 1968.

<sup>161</sup> Stan Persky, (*Georgia Straight* Co-Founder, Poet and UBC Student Leader) interview by Jake Sherman, February 17, 2017.

<sup>162</sup> Bob Cummings, "Stan Persky Busted," April 19 – May 8, 1968, 7, Stan Persky, "Going to Jail," *the Georgia Straight*, April 19 – May 8, 1968, 7.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

public, the case became a symbol of injustice for the counterculture; inspiring the BCCLA to regularly organize protests outside the city jail on Main Street gathering support and funds.<sup>165</sup>

After the commotion created by the media and protests had settled, the charge would be appealed by the BCCLA on the grounds that the loitering law violated constitutional guarantees. The BCCLA's case would be ultimately successful, and the section of the Public Works Act that dealt with loitering repealed. Yet it would be another case altogether that would bring the BCCLA to national prominence and garner the surveillance of the RCMP: their defense and support of the *Georgia Straight* during the fourth criminal libel case tried in Canadian history.<sup>166</sup>

## **II—"Free Press Under Siege:" Criminal Libel, Obscenity, "The Pontius Pilate Certificate of Justice" and "Acidman"**

In 1968, in addition to having listed Campbell as "Editor-in-Chief," Narcotics officer Abe Snidanko as "Bust Editor," and Judge Lawrence Eckhardt as "Minister of Justice" in their masthead, *the Georgia Straight* decided to award a number of city official's satirical awards for the year of 1968.<sup>167</sup> On page six of the July 25 – August 8, 1968 issue, in Bob Cummings regular column, the awards given by "the Order of Abundant Flatulence" recognized "distinguished ineptitude." Among them were "the Heinrich Himmler Humanitarian Award," presented to Deputy Police Chief John Fisk for "maintaining the splendid police tradition established in Germany, Russia and South Africa;" and the Pontius Pilate

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<sup>165</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, "Re: the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association," (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request) Request, #A201600670

<sup>166</sup> In a twist of fate, the previous defendants in the most recent criminal libel trial had been the Social Credit Party of Canada, the current majority government of British Columbia. Howe, Jr, "the *Georgia Straight* and Freedom of Expression in Canada," 497. Verzuh, *Underground Times*, 73. RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670

<sup>167</sup> As well as regularly publishing lists of people who had been arrested along with their charges and photos of undercover police officers, the *Georgia Straight* publicized the make and license plate of Snidanko's vehicle and home address forcing him to move and purchase a new vehicle.

Certificate of Justice, awarded to Magistrate Eckhardt as a result of his judgment against Persky. Eckhardt's award read:

The Pontius Pilate Certificate of Justice:  
 (Unfairly maligned by critics, Pilate upheld the highest tradition of a judge by placing law and order above human considerations, and by helping to clear the streets of degenerate non-conformists) to Lawrence Eckhardt, who, by closing his mind to justice, his eyes to fairness, and his ears to equality, has encouraged the belief that the law is not only blind, but also deaf, dumb, and stupid. Let history be your judge – then appeal.<sup>168</sup>

Upon being sent the article by Eckhardt, the Attorney General of British Columbia Leslie Peterson responded to the piece by ordering an investigation by the VPD into the “possibility of laying criminal libel charges” against McLeod and Cummings.<sup>169</sup> The intended consequence of opening the investigation, the Attorney General's office reported to the VPD, was to kill the newspaper by crippling it with fines and legal fees.<sup>170</sup> Shortly after the Attorney General's office opened the investigation, City Prosecutor McMorran responded by laying an indictment against McLeod and Cummings for defamatory libel under section 251 of the Canadian Criminal Code. It had been over 30 years since a criminal libel case had been tried in Canada.<sup>171</sup>

The investigation was publicized the next month by the *Georgia Straight* after Detectives Westover and Welsch of the VPD showed up to ask questions at the paper's office on August 6. They mentioned to McLeod and Cummings that they were acting on

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<sup>168</sup> “O.A.F. Awards,” *The Georgia Straight*, July 25 – August 8, 1968, 7.

<sup>169</sup> The RCMP found out about the investigation not via communication with the VPD, but through their surveillance of the Communist Party of Canada and the BCCLA. RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670

<sup>170</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670. BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>171</sup> Mark Krotter, “The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice.” *University of British Columbia Law Review* 5, no. 1970: 297 – 325, L.A. Howe, Jr. “The *Georgia Straight* and the Freedom of Expression in Canada,” *Canadian Bar Review*, 1970.

behalf of the Attorney General of British Columbia.<sup>172</sup> Six days later, on August 12, less than a month after the publication of the awards, McLeod and Cummings were placed under arrest for criminal libel and brought to Vancouver's police headquarters for questioning before being released on bail.<sup>173</sup>

Members of Vancouver's counterculture and legal community responded to the arrests by staging a makeshift protest outside the police station and founded a new organization, "Vancouver's Emergency Free Speech Movement." According to reports they carried signs that read, "NO DEMOCRACY WITHOUT FREE SPEECH," and "JUSTICE IS BLIND, BUT ONLY IN ONE EYE." Four undercover members of the RCMP were present that day and collected the leaflets handed out and recorded information for the Vancouver detachment.<sup>174</sup>

Around 10 AM that Monday morning, August 12, McLeod and Cummings left the police station to the cheers of the crowd and announced that their case had been remanded until the following Tuesday. Later in the day the federal police reported that the BCCLA had met after the demonstration and intended to solicit support from "trade unions and loggers" to picket "on the Pacific National Exhibition grounds" in support of the *Georgia Straight*.

The next day, August 13, while the BCCLA picketed the PNE grounds, the Vancouver detachment of the RCMP forwarded to the commissioner in Ottawa the most recent issue of the *Georgia Straight* with emphasis placed on the fact that they had published

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<sup>172</sup> "ESFM Demo Tuesday," *the Georgia Straight*, August 16 – 23, 1968.

<sup>173</sup> Lawyer Mark Krotter called the "crime with which the [*Georgia Straight* had been] charged...an anachronism in modern law," arguing that the context that the law had been written in did not correspond to world in which it was being applied; and that it directly interfered with freedom of the press and of expression. Furthermore, he argued that the law could be used to stifle any media of communication that sought to challenge the agenda of the political party in power—not just in British Columbia, but all across Canada. Mark Krotter, "The Censorship of Obscenity in British Columbia: Opinion and Practice." *University of British Columbia Law Review* 5, no. 1970: 297 – 325

<sup>174</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670.

photos of undercover narcotics officers and picketed the VPD office. From this date forward—and throughout the entirety of the criminal libel trial—the Vancouver RCMP detachment read and notated every issue of the *Georgia Straight*, forwarding copies to the headquarters of the federal police in Ottawa.<sup>175</sup>

While the establishment press called EFSM, an offshoot of the BCCLA—‘a hippie movement’—the organization was composed of prominent lawyers, law professors, trade unionists, and assorted faculty and students from UBC. According to the *Georgia Straight*, the EFSM represented the views of “young and old people alike; from conservative groups through to radical groups.”<sup>176</sup> Cummings responded to the establishment of the EFSM and the charges by writing an impassioned piece about the role of underground newspapers in society. “Underground newspapers exist as a test of [freedom of expression] and [to] remind a monolithic society of its flaws,” he declared. “Sometimes at the price of the death of an underground newspaper.”<sup>177</sup> Following the publication of this piece on August 20, Cummings and McLeod were remanded to the following Tuesday while the *Straight* claimed 60 picketed outside the magistrate’s court at 312 Main St. EFSM there stated it would triple its size by the following week by staging a “orgiastic dance/concert/freakout benefit.”<sup>178</sup>

On August 27, the Crown set the criminal libel trial date for September 11, 1968.<sup>179</sup> Despite the fact that it was “raining cats and dogs,” on the 11<sup>th</sup> the newspaper claimed 75 to 100 people showed up for the “free speech be-in” organized by the EFSM outside the courthouse. The be-in consisted of educational talks, picketing and guerilla theatre, and the

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> “ESFM Demo Tuesday,” *the Georgia Straight*, August 16 – 23, 1968.

<sup>177</sup> The *Province* published on August 13, “Bearded, long haired pickets appeared briefly outside the Public Safety Building.” Bob Cummings, Freedom of the Press? *The Georgia Straight*, September 6 – 12, 1968

<sup>178</sup> Bob Cummings, Sixty support Straight, *The Georgia Straight*, August 16 - 23, 1968.

<sup>179</sup> Bob Cummings wrote on September 6, “at issue is the survival of the *Georgia Straight*.” A week before Prime Minister Trudeau, who had previously as Minister of Justice defended the papers right to expression, planned to visit Vancouver and meet with prominent local feminists.

protesters handed out pamphlets that read, “to lose the right to criticize a branch of government is the first step on the path to totalitarianism.”<sup>180</sup> The coverage of the incident by the *Georgia Straight* marked the first time that the newspaper openly identified as “Vancouver’s countercultural organ of communication.” It also marked the second attempt on the part of the municipality to revoke the *Georgia Straight’s* business license, and first attempt to prosecute the *Georgia Straight’s* owner and one of its writers for obscenity.

While the criminal libel trial was underway, Campbell directed McMorran to level charges of obscenity against the paper for its publication of the Peter Almasy cartoon, *Acidman*.<sup>181</sup> *Acidman* was a superhero, presented in Almasy’s comic strip, whose secret weapon was LSD and who refrained from covering his genitals. Police Chief Booth responded to the opening of the investigation by recommending that Campbell attempt to cancel the business license again rather than waste the city’s valuable resources prosecuting the paper. Yet, Campbell decided to try to both cancel the license and continue with the prosecution of *Georgia Straight*.

In a letter to the mayor sent in September 1968, a year after the first attempt to revoke the *Georgia Straight’s* business license, Booth wrote, “I am sure that when city council has thoroughly read this current issue...there will be no doubt that this is a further and continuing effort on the part of the so-called hippie element to impose their standard of moral behaviour on the younger citizens of our community.”<sup>182</sup> On the 20<sup>th</sup> of September Campbell sent a letter to every member of city council recommending the business license of

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<sup>180</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670.

<sup>181</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

the Georgia Straight Publishing, LTD., be suspended.<sup>183</sup> Booth's letter to Campbell was also presented to council.

At the same time as Campbell attempted to revoke the business license for the second time, the next week the September 27 – October 3 1968 issue of the *Georgia Straight* opened, "ACIDMAN IN CONTEMPT," last week's edition of the *Georgia Straight* did not appear for a number of reasons beyond our control, having to do with editors in jail. The article continued, "in addition, ACIDMAN does not appear this week because it comments on a case which is now before the courts and could be in contempt of court, even though it was drawn before the court action started."<sup>184</sup> While Campbell had used Acidman as a scapegoat to level the obscenity charges, what had really made him believe he might be able to thwart the publishing of the *Straight* via cancelation of the business license was the cover of September 13 – 19 issue. The cover featured an effigy of Jesus on the cross, covered with EFSM picketers signs from the be-in in front of the Supreme Court. Campbell assumed this might enrage Vancouver's religious and conservative community, much the same as the representation of Jesus Christ had on the 7 O' clock Show.

On September 24, Campbell pleaded with city council to support a resolution to suspend the *Georgia Straight's* business license. Meanwhile, protesters picketed outside with signs that read, "NO POLICE STATE IN CANADA," and "HEIL! KAMPFBULL." Later, at 2:30, council reconvened and opened with three letters read; two of them, from Chief Booth, and Reverend F.W. Metzger, who wrote on behalf of the Police Commission and the

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> "Acidman in Contempt," *the Georgia Straight*, September 27 – October 3, 1968.

Council of United Churches respectively, supported the license suspension.<sup>185</sup> One from the UBC faculty association, opposed.

After the letters were read, Campbell pleaded with city council, “all we need are five votes. We should never have allowed this paper to become a controversy. We’re here to ban this paper as New Westminster did.”<sup>186</sup> Openly communist city councilor Harry Rankin—who was under personal surveillance by the RCMP—responded to Campbell by arguing that while he was attempting to hold Acidman in contempt, by maligning the newspaper in the press Campbell himself could be held in contempt of court.<sup>187</sup> Ultimately, the matter was taken to a vote around 3 P.M. Council voted 7 to 3 in favour of tabling Campbell’s resolution to ban the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>188</sup> The entire hearing was broadcast by the CBC, and the next day CTV called the second failed attempt to suspend the business license, “the most humiliating public defeat of Mayor Campbell’s political career.”<sup>189</sup> Embarrassed by the second failed attempt to cancel the business license, Campbell directed the city prosecutor to set a court date for the City of Vancouver VS. Dan McLeod and Peter Almasy. The trial was set for October 29.<sup>190</sup>

In the following issue, the *Georgia Straight* thanked those who wrote letters opposing the second license suspension to Campbell. They claimed that Campbell stated he had received 23 letters from constituents in favour, and none opposed. McLeod wrote in response that the newspapers office had personally received six letters that supported the

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<sup>185</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b  
Metzger closed his letter, “this is not a matter of censorship but of responsible government.”

<sup>186</sup> John Wesley Harding, “No blessings for Tiny Tom,” the *Georgia Straight*, Sept 27 – October 3, 1968, 3.

<sup>187</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, (Obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request), Request #, A201600670.

<sup>188</sup> John Wesley Harding, “No blessings for Tiny Tom,” the *Georgia Straight*, Sept 27 – October 3, 1968, 3.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b

*Straight* and were sent to the Mayor's office. Those letters, should they exist, are nowhere to be found in the Vancouver Municipal Archive. All 23 in favour are present.<sup>191</sup> One from R. Neeld, dated September 16, reads, "I am sure you are aware of the influx in the hippie community and the health hazard they pose."<sup>192</sup>

All of this, reported in the *Georgia Straight* and syndicated across the U.S. by the *Liberation News Service*, began to attract the attention of major American countercultural figures such as Allen Ginsberg and Phil Ochs, who had both connected with the bohemian scene in Vancouver through their association with Warren Tallman in the early 1960s. At the same time as Ginsberg and Ochs began to support the paper's legal struggle, Persky—in the aftermath of the disastrous Democratic National Convention in Chicago—invited Jerry Rubin, among the leaders of the Youth International Party, an outgrowth of the free speech movement at UC Berkeley, and among the most prominent figures of the youth culture, to the University of British Columbia to publicly support the community and the *Georgia Straight*.<sup>193</sup>

On October 24, wearing a National Liberation Front flag as a cape, Rubin and a pig named "W.A.C. Pigassus" led approximately 1500 to 3000 students in an occupation of the faculty lounge at the University of British Columbia.<sup>194</sup> He declared inside:

The key to our survival is information. And the best thing we have going for us is the underground press... The government knows that the key to our survival here is that press. And they're trying to wipe it out, man. The government is trying to put them in jail for telling the truth about a judge—they call that criminal libel—and for showing pictures of nude bodies. They call that obscene. Do you live in a country

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Stan Persky, (*Georgia Straight* Co-Founder, Poet and UBC Student Leader) interview by Jake Sherman, February 17, 2017.

<sup>194</sup> Basil Waugh, "Invasion!" *UBC Reports*, Vol. 53. No.12. December 6, 2007, <https://news.ubc.ca/2007/12/06/archive-ubcreports-2007-07dec06-invasion/>

that actually thinks that the human body is obscene? The *Georgia Straight* is your newspaper. They can go to jail. You are on trial.<sup>195</sup>

The students smoked marijuana and raided the faculty liquor cabinet, occupying the lounge until approximately 10 a.m. the following morning, when engineering students amassed outside and threatened to forcibly remove them. At that point, Persky convinced the occupiers to leave rather than risk a confrontation, holding a vote of the remaining 100 students who had spent the night. Persky later reflected, “What would have been the point of staying longer and getting hauled off?”<sup>196</sup>

At about noon on the 25<sup>th</sup> the students decided to leave while the UBC and student union presidents called for “a campus wide day of reflection” to assess what had just happened.<sup>197</sup> John Wesley Harding wrote of the occupation in the *Georgia Straight*, “All of a sudden, anything seems possible.”<sup>198</sup> That same week, McLeod and Almasy went to court on charges of obscenity laid for the publication of Acidman under sections 150 (a) and (b) of the Canadian Criminal Code; a remarkably vague law that provides no definition of what exactly obscene material actually constitutes.<sup>199</sup> At the time, McLeod, Cummings and Almasy faced a combined six and a half years prison time for criminal libel and obscenity.

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<sup>195</sup> John Wesley Harding, “Jerry Rubin,” *the Georgia Straight*, Nov 1 – 7, 1968.

<sup>196</sup> Stan Persky, (*Georgia Straight* Co-Founder, Poet and UBC Student Leader) interview by Jake Sherman, February 17, 2017.

<sup>197</sup> Basil Waugh, “Invasion!” *UBC Reports*, Vol. 53. No.12. December 6, 2007, <https://news.ubc.ca/2007/12/06/archive-ubcreports-2007-07dec06-invasion/>  
It is worth noting that the UBC faculty association for the most part supported the youth culture and the right of the *Georgia Straight* to openly express itself. Numerous of its prominent members—some of whom had communist sympathies—were under personal surveillance by the RCMP and the Faculty Association had its own independent surveillance file open during the occupation of the faculty lounge.

<sup>198</sup> John Wesley Harding, “Jerry Rubin,” *the Georgia Straight*, Nov 1 – 7, 1968.

<sup>199</sup> “(1) Every one commits an offence who: a) Makes, prints, publishes, distributes, circulates, or has in his possession, for the purpose of publication any obscene written matter, picture, model, phonograph record or any thing whatsoever, or, b) Makes, prints, publishes, distributes, sells, or has in his possession for the purpose of publication, distribution or circulation, a crime comic  
2) Every one commits an offence who knowingly, without lawful justification or excuse,  
a) Sells, exposes to public view or has in his possession for such a purpose any obscene written matter, picture, model, phonograph record or other thing whatsoever

Coincidentally, at the same time as Almassy and McLeod went to trial, the *Georgia Straight* received a cease and desist letter from the New York City office of the law firm, Pryor, Braun, Cashman and Sherman, who sent the letter on behalf of their client, Bob Dylan. The *Georgia Straight* had published parts of Dylan's novel, *Tarantula*, and the law firm demanded they destroy all previous publications of the material. The newspaper responded in print, "By printing the book in parts in a non profit UNDERGROUND newspaper, the STRAIGHT has freed a revolutionary work of art from the death-grip of a few money grubbing corporate zombies in New York...We do not believe Dylan would condone the harassment of a much harassed underground newspaper."<sup>200</sup>

During the obscenity trial on October 29, roughly 150 people were denied access to the courtroom when the location was changed at the last minute from 312 Main Street, one of the largest courtrooms in the municipality, to 513 Main Street, one of the tiniest courtrooms in Vancouver proper. Perhaps inspired by Rubin's recent visit, people outside the courtroom who had huddled together on the stairs began to chant "ommmm" as the trial began. One protester even attached several *Playboy* centerfolds to the courtroom door window in protest. Consequently, the presiding Honourable Justice Jones adjourned the court for 25 minutes in order to have bailiffs calm the crowd. When the trial began again, the crowd began to slow clap. Only when Laxton—McLeod and Almassy's defense lawyer—asked the crowd to allow the trial to start did the commotion stop.<sup>201</sup>

After the *Georgia Straight* published a record of the proceedings, the newspaper was told its reporters could be held in contempt of court if it continued to report on the trial. No

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b) Publicly exhibits an disgusting object or indecent show"  
Federal Criminal Code, Sections 150 (A) and (B)

<sup>200</sup> John Wesley Harding, *Tarantula*, *the Georgia Straight*, October 25 – Nov 1, 1968, 3.

<sup>201</sup> John Wesley Harding, "What's the Ugliest Part of Your Establishment," *the Georgia Straight*, Nov 1 – 7, 1968.

further descriptions of the trials exist. But despite being told he could be held in contempt, McLeod did respond to the attempt to silence the newspaper and the obscenity charge the only way he knew how, with his middle finger pressed firmly in the face of the establishment. The following issue of the *Georgia Straight* featured a picture of a naked woman holding a shotgun.<sup>202</sup> In that issue the *Georgia Straight* announced that as a result of the legal fees it would begin to publish weekly as opposed to bi-weekly, and that Acidman would be completely absent from the paper for the foreseeable future. As January of 1969 dawned, it appeared Campbell's efforts to infringe on freedom of speech and the press and censor the *Georgia Straight* might succeed.

On January 17 the Honourable Justice C.W. Morrow decided to reserve his decision on the criminal libel charges until January 24.<sup>203</sup> The *Sun* commented in an editorial calling the award presented to the judge by the “order of abundant flatulence” insulting, arguing the newspaper should be found guilty. The *Georgia Straight* wrote back to them just days before the judgment: “Remember the good old days when libel trials threatened even your existence, and there were ideals to fight for?”<sup>204</sup>

On January 24, Justice Morrow found Dan McLeod and Bob Cummings guilty of criminal libel for presenting a satirical award to a judge. Morrow explained in his judgment that the point of the fine was to kill the paper and keep it out of the hands of British Columbia's youth.<sup>205</sup> Morrow further specified that if the paper could not pay the \$1500 fine by March 27—roughly what the paper made in revenue distributing one issue (which just barely covered its overhead)—then the paper would cease to exist and Cummings and

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<sup>202</sup> *the Georgia Straight*, Nov 15 – 21, 1968.

<sup>203</sup> Wanis Kouri, “A Rare Case of Justice,” *the Georgia Straight*, January 22 – 30, 1969.

<sup>204</sup> “Sun Finds Straight Guilty,” *the Georgia Straight*, January 22 - 30, 1969.

<sup>205</sup> “Death of the Yippie,” *the Georgia Straight*, January 31 – February 13, 1969.

McLeod would be sentenced to serve two months in prison each. In the immediate aftermath of the judgment, Morrow, who had been brought in from the interior to preside over the criminal libel case, was selected by Premier W.A.C. Bennett to head a royal commission to investigate potential changes in liquor laws.<sup>206</sup>

The January 31 – Feb 13 1969 issue of the *Georgia Straight* opened, “DEATH OF THE YIPPIE,” “as of last Monday the STRAIGHT is faced with a \$1500 fine for printing something we believed to be true and fair. The fine, in the judge’s own words was aimed at wiping out the paper.” As a result of the threat to its existence, the *Georgia Straight* began to solicit donations and founded the *Georgia Straight* Legal Defense Fund. “The stakes,” Cummings and McLeod co-published in an attempt to solicit funds, “are much more important than the two people involved and much larger than the STRAIGHT. At issue is the right of every person and every minority to openly dissent, to openly oppose what they believe to be wrong. Even if it includes a strong criticism of a public official or government agency.”<sup>207</sup> On February 14, the same day these words were published, the crown found Dan McLeod and Peter Almassy guilty of publishing obscene material and leveled another fine against the newspaper. Again, the judgment was aimed at killing Vancouver’s underground press, and influenced by the opinions of members of the provincial and municipal government. McMorran even wrote to Campbell that the survival of the newspaper was unlikely given “the strength of what we have against them now.”<sup>208</sup>

But in response to the charges and fines, on March 9, 1969, Phil Ochs and Allen Ginsberg headlined a benefit for the *Georgia Straight* legal defense fund at the PNE Garden

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<sup>206</sup> Bob Cummings, “Bennett’s Booze Boys,” *the Georgia Straight*, February 14 – 27, 1969.

<sup>207</sup> Bob Cummings and Dan McLeod, “the Georgia Straight Legal Defense Fund,” “A Trial of Justice,” February 14 – March 27, 1969.

<sup>208</sup> BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, Hippies, GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

Auditorium; raising \$7,347 Canadian dollars for the newspaper's legal defense, the modern equivalent of just under \$50,000.<sup>209</sup> That concert saved the paper from extinction, and McLeod, Cummings and Almassy from serving prison time. Despite the efforts of Campbell and the judiciary, in solidarity with iconic members of the counterculture and anti-war movement, the *Georgia Straight* and its staff survived to print another issue.<sup>210</sup>

### III: Conclusion

Six months later, on September 18, 1969, Cummings and McLeod would be placed under arrest for a second time, and the *Georgia Straight* would again be convicted of a criminal charge: “unlawfully counselling another person to commit an indictable offence.” The conviction, and the third \$1500 fine—which included a personal fine of \$500 against Dan McLeod—would be leveled against the newspaper for publishing an article that included information on how to cultivate marijuana, entitled, “PLANT YOUR SEEDS.” On the ground of the conviction, Campbell would for the third time attempt to cancel the underground publications business license. Yet, in spite of McMorran pleading before city council, council would table Campbell’s resolution to suspend the *Georgia Straight’s* business license for the second time.<sup>211</sup>

Notwithstanding the near constant effort of the city and provincial government to stop the paper from publishing, which continued through 1969, the support of the BCCLA, counterculture, and even the federal government helped the paper to support its enormous legal bills and continue to cover its rent and distribution; which it reported it was barely

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<sup>209</sup> “Straight Benefit Balance,” *The Georgia Straight*, March 21 – 29, 1969, 3.

<sup>210</sup> “Happening Heralds Hippie Poet: But for Ginsberg, Reality is a Crutch,” *the Vancouver sun*, March 10, 1969, “Crowd Awestruck as Ginsberg Reads,” *the Vancouver Sun*, March 12, 1969.

<sup>211</sup> Prosecutor McMorran would send a letter to every city councilor on September 26, 1969. “Perhaps in view of this present conviction,” it closed, “together with the conviction last February for obscenity, you, together with the rest of city council, may wish to consider the cancellation of this business license.” Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 18a and 18b

covering from month to month.<sup>212</sup> Ottawa even awarded the paper a \$15 000 grant to hire summer students in 1971—which it later rescinded amid public backlash—presenting the *Georgia Straight* during its 1970 Davey commission on Mass Media as “provocative” and “funny,” calling their harassment an “accolade,” and arguing that they “[wished] every underground newspaper were as good as the *Georgia Straight*.”<sup>213</sup>

The material presented in this chapter demonstrates the extent to which the *Georgia Straight* and its story had come to the attention of the federal government and general public, as a result of Campbell’s deliberate attempt to censor freedom of speech in British Columbia. With the exception of one case, of all 31 criminal charges (the bulk of which were obscenity charges) the *Georgia Straight* won one legal appeal, a legal victory later overturned by the state upon appeal by the Crown. The legal campaign—a clear attack on freedom of expression—had as its intended consequence the demise of the alternative publication. Judge Morrow had made that clear in his ruling against McLeod and Cummings. Campbell had made that clear in his assorted media appearances. McMorran had made that clear pleading before city council to have them cancel the business license of the newspaper and save the city’s valuable legal and police forces to combat real crime. Fisk had made crystal clear that the intended consequence of Persky and his students arrest was to harass what Campbell called, ‘a scum community who have organized.’ And McDiarmid, under the direction of Peterson, and ostensibly premier Bennett, called the community, “a problem” that needed solution.

This chapter references only five criminal charges and two of the three attempts to suspend the business license on the grounds of those convictions. The near constant

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<sup>212</sup> Bob Cummings, “Free Press Under Siege,” the *Georgia Straight*, May 28 – June 13, 1969.

<sup>213</sup> Report of the Special Senate Committee on Mass Media, Chaired by the Honourable Keith Davey, October 8, 1970, *Georgia Straight Loses Grant*,” the *Vancouver Sun*, June 24, 1971, “Straight Grant “Just too Fishy,” the *Vancouver Sun*, June 25, 1971. The commission warned that Campbell had been successful at setting legal precedents that allowed him to cancel the business license of any newspaper who he felt was guilty of “gross misconduct.”

communication on the subject between Campbell, Booth, Fisk, Peterson and McMorran, indicates the extent to which the censorship of the *Georgia Straight* became a priority for the city and province.<sup>214</sup> It is important to note that this legal campaign against both the countercultural community and its media took place during a provincial and municipal election campaign. Campbell was re-elected in 1968 and 1970 by large majorities. Morrow received a promotion for his judgment against McLeod and Cummings.<sup>215</sup> And both Tom Campbell and premier W.A.C. Bennett were re-elected in 1968 and 1969 respectively, in part on the back of their campaign to solve “the hippie problem,” indicating the political majority supported the repression of freedom of speech and the countercultural community.

But the question arises: why did Campbell, Bennett and Peterson view the *Georgia Straight* as so dangerous to establishment values and ideas? Because by 1970 the *Georgia Straight* had become far more than simply an outlet for political dissent in Vancouver, it had become a nerve centre for social activism, supporting and reporting on the Vancouver Liberation Front, Northern Fringe Lunatic of the Youth International Party, Greenpeace, back to the land movement, women’s liberation movement, gay liberation movement and Front Liberation de Québec. Sociologist Dominique Clément argues that by 1970 “the *Georgia Straight* [became] a forum for openly criticizing the mainstream press and mocking the legitimacy of the courts.”<sup>216</sup> The paper no longer just threatened Campbell’s broader vision for the development of Vancouver, but its organizational capabilities as a network for activism, threatened the vision of British Columbia espoused by Campbell, and the moral

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<sup>214</sup>City Prosecutor McMorran commented on the Acidman obscenity case when questioned two years later, “I have to do my best to interpret the basis of the law as I understand it. So it’s kind of foolish, you know, for people to criticize the prosecution for taking a case when all they can do is deal with the law as it is, not as people might like it to be.” The law McMorran referred to is necessarily subjective, and therefore, in this particular instance the onus should be placed on the city prosecutor and Crown. L.A. Howe, Jr. “The *Georgia Straight* and the Freedom of Expression in Canada,” *Canadian Bar Review*, 1970.

<sup>215</sup> Bob Cummings, “Bennett’s Booze Boys,” *the Georgia Straight*, February 14 – 27, 1969.

<sup>216</sup> Clément, 76.

vision of society championed by Peterson, offering young people a chance to re-make their society in their own image, starting with the media.

**Ch.3—“That Just Shows You’re Breeding Out There:” The Battle of Jericho, Operation Dustpan, the Gastown Riot, and Tom Campbell’s Fight to Cement his Political Legacy**

*City councils have been dominated by real estate interests since Vancouver's incorporation in 1886...Power in a city is real estate...higher land values mean more money with which to buy more votes and ultimately, more power.*<sup>217</sup>

By 1970 the *Georgia Straight* had become among the most influential of the 400 syndicated underground newspapers in North America. A year later, it was one of the only ones that published bi-weekly, organizing the local countercultural community and providing a forum for discussion of important issues.<sup>218</sup> Anyone who wanted to have anything to do with Vancouver's countercultural or social protest calendar read 'the *Straight*.'<sup>219</sup> The underground newspaper spoke on behalf of and directly to Vancouver's radical and countercultural milieu.

Between April 1970 and August 1971, according to Canadian historian Lawrence Aronsen, there were twenty-five recorded incidents of "urban insurrection" in metropolitan Vancouver.<sup>220</sup> The *Georgia Straight* played an organizational role in every single one. The newspaper organized dissent by listing events, protests, dates, times, demands, phone numbers, and addresses—including at times the license plate numbers, pictures, addresses and notes of undercover narcotics agents.<sup>221</sup> As an organizational tool for social activism, it directly challenged the political vision of the city of Vancouver and the province of British Columbia, including many of their development projects. The *Georgia Straight* was so influential that the decision to begin to publish bi-weekly in 1971 came in response to a

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<sup>217</sup> Julie Cruikshank, "Know Your Local History: a Brief Look at Growth in Vancouver," the *Georgia Straight*, October 15, 1971.

<sup>218</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, "the *Georgia Straight*" and "New Left Organizations," (obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request) FOI Request #A201600670.

<sup>219</sup> Paul Watson, who wrote on behalf of the Vancouver Liberation Front in the *Georgia Straight*, and later co-founded Greenpeace, said writing for the newspaper was "the second best damn thing [he] ever did after Sea Shepard," and called the *Georgia Straight* upon its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, "the anvil upon which the modern environmental movement was forged." The *Georgia Straight*, May 5, 2017. Captain Paul Watson, Facebook, "The Georgia Straight, 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition," October 2, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/captpaulwatson/posts/10155452179670932> Korky Day, (Vietnam War Resistor, *Georgia Straight* vendor and writer) Interview by Jake Sherman, January 15, 2017.

<sup>220</sup> Lawrence Awronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010, 109.

<sup>221</sup> RCMP Surveillance Documents, "the *Georgia Straight*" and "New Left Organizations," (obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request) FOI Request #A201600670.

demand for more information about the movements for social activism and justice in Vancouver.<sup>222</sup>

As a result of its ability to organize members of the New Left and report on social activism in Vancouver, the *Georgia Straight* helped Vancouver's New Left provide affordable accommodation for the youth culture, halted the development of a Four Seasons Hotel at the entrance to Stanley Park, and promoted the protest that provoked one of the most notorious riots in Vancouver's history, "the Grastown Smoke-In." The Smoke-in was organized in response to a police campaign named by Campbell—"Operation Dustpan"—that had as its intended consequence the clearing of Gastown and Kitsilano of youth "vagrants" and "dissidents" to make the West End of Vancouver more "livable" by depopulating it of what he called "undesirables." Following the occupation of the proposed site of a Four Seasons development that May, the city council's planning and development committee had unanimously agreed in June 1970 that lower population densities were required in order to create new jobs in the downtown core by replacing affordable housing with storefronts and offices.<sup>223</sup> "Operation Dustpan" was part of that effort.

At the same time as all this happened, the *Georgia Straight's* complex legal appeal process, (the majority of the charges having been levelled for obscenity in 1969) continued to play out through 1970 and 1971. During the appeal trials, City Prosecutor McMorran repeatedly argued in court that he had not abused his power, that his intention to prosecute the newspaper was based in upholding the law, and that he had no ulterior motives.<sup>224</sup> With

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<sup>222</sup> Bob Cummings wrote in his weekly column in April of that year, "for the last four years we have been providing information to the community that cannot be found elsewhere...and we have found more information available than we have to print...it has been always frustrating for members of the community who have always been anxious to access this information."<sup>222</sup>

<sup>223</sup> "Another Campbellism," the *Georgia Straight*, June 18 – 22, 1971.

<sup>224</sup> "Prosecutor Denies Abuse of Court," the *Vancouver Sun*, January 30, 1970.

the exception of one case, the *Georgia Straight* lost every single one of its legal trials.<sup>225</sup> During the one case the *Georgia Straight* won, the presiding judge said that it was clear that the newspaper was being singled out for prosecution. He asked city prosecutor McMorran why?<sup>226</sup> The Crown later appealed the decision and won.

This chapter explores the way in which the *Georgia Straight* functioned as a nerve centre and social network for social activism between the years 1970 and 1972 by looking at how the newspaper functioned to organize the local countercultural community in response to the development projects of mayor Tom Campbell, which resulted in two violent confrontations, “the Battle of Jericho” and “the Gastown Riot.” In doing so it attempts to answer Judge Isman’s question to City prosecutor McMorran about the reasoning behind the prosecution and harassment of the *Georgia Straight*. I argue the *Georgia Straight* opposed the development of the modern cityscape of Vancouver, and that the power it wielded as an organizational tool for social activism in the face of the city of Vancouver’s development projects and moral vision of society, provided the government with an impetus to harass it.

## II: “the Battle of Jericho”

On October 15 1970—a day before Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau enacted the War Measures Act to combat the FLQ—250 police officers, 150 members of the RCMP, and 8 M.P.’s raided a makeshift youth hostel in an abandoned army barrack in Kitsilano.<sup>227</sup> Roughly 400 individuals seeking affordable housing had squatted there after they were evicted from a hostel downtown the previous month. As the eight M.P.s entered hut 48 of the former Jericho Armed Forces Base and prepared to forcibly evict the squatters, the

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<sup>225</sup> “Hippie Paper Persecuted, Judge Implies: Obscenity Charges Thrown out by Court,” *the Vancouver Sun*, October 18, 1969.

<sup>226</sup> The Crown later appealed Judge Bernard Isman’s decision to dismiss the charges and the decision was overturned.

<sup>227</sup> “How Battle of Jericho was Fought,” *the Vancouver Sun*, October 16, 1970, 18.

residents responded, “All we want is peace and love. All we want is a place to sleep,” and refused to leave.<sup>228</sup>

After being handed an eviction notice, the protesters were forcibly pushed out of the building by the RCMP. 50 of the approximately 400 residents—who referred to the hostel as “the Asylum”—barricaded themselves in a section of the second floor and were violently removed from the building. One young man was arrested for assaulting a member of the federal police inside, and a member of the RCMP, who had no badge number visible and could not be identified, struck a young woman in the head.<sup>229</sup>

The RCMP in conjunction with the VPD then cordoned off the area and after clearing the building of the remaining squatters—some of whom tried to climb back in through the first floor window—moved the protesters onto West 4<sup>th</sup> avenue where they blocked the street by sitting down, stopping traffic in both directions. The protesters remained there for over two hours while Hare Krishna monks chanted, and members of the Yippies and Vancouver Liberation Front showed up in solidarity, banging drums and smoking marijuana. After failing to get the protesters to vacate the area, the VPD, under the direction of the RCMP, redirected traffic around the protest and waited for the riot squad to arrive.<sup>230</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* reported, “the smell of marijuana hung in the air.”

Two hours after the squatters had blocked west 4<sup>th</sup> avenue, at 5:14 p.m., sixteen members of the VPD riot squad marched towards the protesters in two lines with three-foot clubs in their hands that Campbell had procured for them just three months earlier. They proceeded to kick and hit protesters on the ground. In response, the demonstrators threw

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid. Jack Wasserman, “the Hostel Hassle,” the *Vancouver Sun*, October 6, 1970.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* reported, “the smell of Marijuana hung in the air.” “How Battle of Jericho was Fought,” the *Vancouver Sun*, October 16, 1970, 18.

rocks, cans and garbage at the police officers. In the scuffle a teenage woman had her arm broken; a dog that bit a police officer was clubbed to death, and over fifteen individuals were injured by strikes to the head. Two of them, who were pregnant, had miscarriages, the *Georgia Straight* reported. In total eight individuals were arrested and charged with “inciting a riot.”<sup>231</sup>

Presciently, just three months before the incident in question, in protest of Campbell’s decision to successfully table a resolution before city council to acquire 150 riot sticks and helmets for the VPD—by supporting a campaign being spearheaded by the Action Committee for Unemployed Youth—the *Georgia Straight* had published the piece, “How to Start a Riot.”<sup>232</sup> Campbell went as far as to say in council chambers in June 1970 when tabling the resolution to acquire the riot gear used at Jericho that he would pay for the riot sticks out of his own pocket if the request were denied, arguing the riot sticks were “a minimum weapon,” and that “you’d never get hurt if you stayed away from a riot.”

During the hearing 200 protesters tossed marshmallows on the floor of the council chambers in an act of guerrilla theatre organized by the *Georgia Straight*. In response, Campbell flashed the V sign with his hands before he decided to adjourn the meeting. When questioned by reporters from the *Georgia Straight* on the number of individuals who had

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<sup>231</sup> “Pigs Help Out Jericho People,” the *Georgia Straight*, October 21 – 28, 1970, 5.

<sup>232</sup> I.M.A. Lie, A.K.A. Fred Flores, “How to Start a Riot,” June 24 – July 1, 1970, 2, “Community Control of the Police: the Action Committee for Unemployed Youth,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 10 – 17, 1971. Campbell had pleaded before council arguing that, “riot sticks [were] nothing more than cut off broom handles,” that they were a “minimum weapon,” and “if you [kept] away from a riot [you’d] never get hurt.” On the same page, in an article called, “New Peterson Laws,” Jeanine Mitchell wrote, “the anti-youth backlash is coming.” She reported on the Attorney General having lowered the Juvenile age, and cancelled an experimental moratorium on minor provincial laws for juveniles. When questioned on the subject by reporters, Peterson said, “the increase in dissent and permissiveness amongst some of the youth in our province necessitates action being taken to ensure a respect for law and order.” Jeannine Mitchell, “New Peterson Laws,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 24—July 1, 1970, 2.

showed up to protest the decision, Campbell responded, “that just shows you’re breeding out there.”<sup>233</sup>

Furthermore, in the same week Campbell had passed the resolution in council to acquire riot sticks, Attorney General Leslie Peterson lowered the juvenile age to 17. He said to reporters in June 1970, “the increase in permissiveness amongst the youth in our province necessitates action being taken to ensure a respect for law and order.”<sup>234</sup> The issue had first been raised on October 17, 1969, by the president of Ocean Towers Ltd., who managed an apartment building by English Bay where young transient youth regularly slept overnight and had bonfires. President G.C. Bradley complained in October 1969 that they could not be prosecuted because many of them were under eighteen and sent carbon copies of the letter to Campbell, Peterson and Chief of Police Fisk. Campbell, Peterson, and Fisk, who had previously lobbied Campbell for more gear for his riot squad in letters, and Peterson for legal changes, were waiting for the opportunity to make an example of the youth culture, and found that opportunity at Jericho.<sup>235</sup>

Hand written notes obtained from the B.C. Attorney General’s office dated Saturday, October 10, 1970, prove that the order to forcibly evict the squatters came directly from the armed forces in Ottawa. The “federal police [were] instructed that if the city police [would] not act they [were] to do so.” Furthermore, the notes demonstrate that Peterson recommended getting a court order before clearing the hostel which would have put the eviction under the purview of the Sherriff’s office, and that “Ottawa” asked the AG’s office to withdraw the order so that the RCMP could be used to coordinate the operation. A

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<sup>233</sup> A Photo of Campbell flashing the V sign was published in the *Georgia Straight*. Al Sheehan and Keith Bradbury, “Marshmallows Vs. Riot Sticks: Protesters Break UP Council Meet,” the *Province*, June 11, 1970, “UCWIC and TACUY Marshmallows meet the Media,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 17 – 24, 1970, 12.

<sup>234</sup> Jeannine Mitchell, “New Peterson Laws,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 24—July 1, 1970, 2

<sup>235</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1970, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 19a and 19b.

representative of the armed forces called the court order, “politically inexpedient,” and said they “[did] not care about civil actions which [could] result from the eviction and the use of police without a court order.” The politically savvy Peterson—who was expected to succeed W.A.C. Bennett as the leader of the Social Credit Party, and later became the chancellor of UBC and a member of the Order of Canada—stated unequivocally that if the federal government was prepared to proceed without a court order, they should, “keep the province out of it.”<sup>236</sup>

Therefore, in the midst of a national crisis—on the same day Pierre Laporte, (the Deputy Premier and Minister of Labour of the province of Quebec) was kidnapped from his home by members of the FLQ, individuals at the highest levels of the federal and provincial government were occupied by the acts of a group of youth dissidents in Vancouver, and their means of organization, *the Georgia Straight*. In fact, the newspaper had helped organize the hostel community, draft and publish their demands. Throughout the entirety of the housing crisis, which began when the protesters occupied another military facility, the Beatty Street Armoury, on September 8, the Director of Security of the Canadian Armed Forces, Colonel M.H. Bateman, and the Solicitor General of Canada, George James McIlraith, were forwarded copies of the *Georgia Straight* by the RCMP. The federal police used the *Georgia Straight* paper to gather intelligence on the makeshift hostel and prepare for their operation, which perhaps may explain why the federal government was so intent the RCMP and Armed Forces coordinate the operation.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Likely, Peterson, who had seen the response of Vancouver constituents to the arrest of Stan Persky and his students in March 1968, was weary of provoking a similar reaction. BC Archives, Department of the Attorney General, Criminal Prosecution Records, “Hippies,” GR—2966.1.12, Box 1—File 12, C95—3.

<sup>237</sup> They’d even published, “rumour has it government officials are so occupied about protecting their asses from the FLQ that they’ve forgotten about the occupation of the Jericho Army Barracks.” RCMP Surveillance Documents, “the *Georgia Straight*” and “New Left Organizations,” (obtained under the Access to Information Act via Freedom of Information Request) FOI Request #A201600670.

The Battle of Jericho was set off by a federal decision to use a federal building to provide accommodation for low-income residents of the west end in the summer of 1970. That decision was made at the same time as Peterson, Campbell and Fisk had been preparing to confront the youth culture with what they called “law and order.” The federal government had decided to use the Beatty Street Armoury—one of the oldest buildings in Vancouver proper.<sup>238</sup> Many of the youth were runaways from other parts of Canada, and conscientious objectors from the US; some were addicted to drugs, and the majority of them fell between the ages of 16 and 25.<sup>239</sup> But despite the genuine attempt to provide accommodation and social welfare for unemployed youth, the facilities were inadequate, and only ever intended to provide short-term accommodation for “transient” youth through the summer.

In September of 1970, the government ordered the eviction of the Beatty Street Armoury’s residents without providing access to other forms of accommodation, income assistance or employment, and consequently, faced with eviction, the approximately 400 residents of the youth hostel took a vote and decided to occupy the Beatty Street Armoury on the date of their eviction.<sup>240</sup> The news of the occupation and their demands were reported on and published in the *Georgia Straight* the following day. The plight of these individuals had been regularly covered by the newspaper for a month leading up to the occupation, who wrote legal columns on tenants rights and the need for affordable housing in the West End.<sup>241</sup>

The day before the occupation—September 7—the newspaper reported the residents were split up into groups of 10 they called “tribes” to decide how they might best

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<sup>238</sup> John Oliver, “Hostel,” the *Georgia Straight*, August 12 – 19, 1970, 10.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Tony Tugwell, “Hostel—Occupation a Success,” the *Georgia Straight*, September 9 – 16, 1970, 2.

<sup>241</sup> John Oliver, “Hostel,” the *Georgia Straight*, August 12 – 19, 1970, 10, Tony Tugwell, “Hostel—Occupation a Success,” the *Georgia Straight*, September 9 – 16, 1970, 2,

be of service during the occupation, and what their demands would be. The tribes discussed how they would obtain food if the hostel were placed under siege, and what do if the police and army tried to “bust” them. Their demands published in the *Georgia Straight*, were as follows:

- 1) Adequate year round housing and hostels, to be run by the people...
- 2) Cash assistance available for anyone unable to find what they consider meaningful work, including workers striking for a larger share of the goods they produce...
- 3) Socially meaningful public works program under the control of the workers. We are sick of being stuck in shit jobs that don't accomplish anything.<sup>242</sup>

The protesters said that their reasoning for occupying the facility was to oppose people “who ignore the needs of poor people,” and protest “people like Tom Campbell who use slogans like get rid of long hairs to get elected.”<sup>243</sup>

On Tuesday, the morning of their planned eviction, protesters broke out in cheers when they realized the army trucks that had been scheduled to pick up the beds had not arrived. Later that morning, Lt. Col. G. Larkin and Major Goddard entered the building—despite the fact that the residents had barricaded the entrance—to broker a compromise with the hostel residents, and at approximately 4 PM the hostel residents received word that the federal government would keep the hostel open until another facility could be found. The army then decided to move them to the abandoned Jericho Armed Forces Base on a temporary basis, with an eviction date set at October 2, even though the barrack was scheduled to remain empty for the next two years while the city made plans to turn the base into a park. Yet on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the protesters again refused to leave.

The government responded by cutting off the power, water and sewage facilities. But the residents of what the *Vancouver Sun* called “the Jericho Hilton,” and the *Georgia Straight*

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

called “Jericho U,” responded by building their own outhouse by converting an old manhole into “an instant billy” and building a shed around it. The *Georgia Straight* reported, “the only reason the Jericho hostel still exists is that a couple hundred gutsy people have had the nerve to say enough is enough and have taken the situation into their own hands.”<sup>244</sup> Furthermore, the newspaper published numerous pieces on the plight of the people of Jericho and letters residents wrote to the government, pleading with them to allow the hostel to open given that the facility would remain closed for the next year at least as it was prepared to be converted to a park. One from J. McPherson read, “I reject the concept that poverty obliges me to forfeit my dignity.” Another pleaded with the federal government to provide work for the residents calling Jericho “a last resort,” and expressing a longing to become a “useful member of society.”<sup>245</sup>

The day after the forced eviction of the squatters at Jericho, Trudeau enacted the War Measures Act to combat the FLQ. That same day, immediately after overseeing a violent confrontation at Jericho, and after receiving a telegram from John Bell that asked him to “deal resolutely with the hippies and their FLQ comrades,” Campbell threatened to use the WMA to round up the hippies. He argued it was within his right as a state of “urban insurrection” existed in Vancouver, after which he was sent a handwritten letter from constituent Bryce Lee who congratulated him on his use of “law and order” in evicting the residents of Jericho, and suggested that Campbell find a steel cage made large enough to hold 10 hippies, fill it with boiling water, stick hippies inside of it, and “rinse and repeat.”<sup>246</sup> The following day, Campbell’s threat to use the War Measures Act to round up hippies

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<sup>244</sup> Tony Tugwell, “Eviction Fails,” *the Georgia Straight*, October 7 – 14, 1970.

<sup>245</sup> “Jericho People Write,” *the Georgia Straight*, October 7 – 14, 1970.

<sup>246</sup> “I assure you,” Lee wrote, “We will have the cleanest hippies in Canada.” Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: *the Georgia Straight*, 1970, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 19a and 19b.

provoked laughter from federal politicians in the House of Commons as the War Measures Act was debated.<sup>247</sup>

Despite the humour members of the federal government found in Campbell's threat, several prominent members of the VLF—including Paul Watson who would later co-found Greenpeace and wrote for the *Georgia Straight*—fled town to avoid arrest. *Georgia Straight* vendor and reporter Korky Day remembered, “the fear was real. We genuinely felt that the police would come by the office and round us up.”<sup>248</sup> Notwithstanding the genuine fear of arrest, the *Georgia Straight's* staff responded to the October Crisis by publishing the FLQ manifesto, denouncing Trudeau's use of the War Measures Act, and organizing a demonstration in support of the residents of the Jericho Hostel and in protest of Campbell's threat to use the WMA.<sup>249</sup> 2000 residents of Vancouver showed up. The *Georgia Straight* wrote, “It wasn't much of a rally speech wise because you could barely hear the words.”

Ultimately, Campbell, who had become a subject of laughter among the highest levels of the federal government during a national crisis, never made good on his threat to round up the hippies. But the state did try to use the eight people arrested to set an example to other dissenters. In fact, the judiciary used the arrests to try and get a firm legal definition of what a riot is. A higher court in Canada had never heard a case concerning the legal definition of a riot before, and the charge carried a far larger sentence than being involved with an “unlawful assembly.”<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Ibid. “Ottawa Takes Time out to Laugh at Campbell,” the *Georgia Straight*, October 20 – 27, 1970.

<sup>248</sup> Korky Day, (Vietnam War Resistor, *Georgia Straight* vendor and writer) interview by Jake Sherman, January 15, 2017.

<sup>249</sup> “Ottawa Takes Time out to Laugh at Campbell,” the *Georgia Straight*, October 20 – 27, 1970.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid. The *Georgia Straight* reported, “The charge has had little use in Canada. It was introduced as one of those strikebreaking laws at the turn of the century when workers were marching on plants. Now it's being used against kids turned out to the street because they have no other place to go.”

Despite the attempt to set a legal precedent, the members of the counterculture who used the newspaper to organize their movement for housing and rights did score a victory and ultimately influence the development of Vancouver's cityscape. Less than a year after the demonstration, on the site of the former armed forces base, the three hundred-bed Hi Vancouver Jericho Beach opened its doors, in large part due to the lobbying of the Action Committee for Unemployed Youth and publicity provided by the *Georgia Straight*. At the time, it was the largest youth hostel in North America.<sup>251</sup> Even so, Campbell, who by this time had decided but not announced that he would not seek re-election in 1972, still sought to cement his political legacy by altering the cityscape of Vancouver, and that meant he would have to set a course to rid Kitsilano and Gastown of the youth culture, which stood in the way of the condos, apartment buildings and storefronts he envisioned for the West End.

### **III: "All Seasons Park," "Operation Dustpan" and "the Grasstown Smoke In"**

In early 1970, Vancouver's planning and development committee announced that it had given the luxury hotel chain, the Four Seasons, permission to build a 14 storey hotel and 33 storey apartment building at the entrance to Stanley Park.<sup>252</sup> The property was set to be developed on Crown land that had always been open to the public. Campbell had been involved in conversations with the developers in 1966, before he was elected mayor, and having a personal stake in the project decided to move forward with the development, which he said would bring millions of dollars to Vancouver in the form of tax revenue, and transform its skyline, despite the protests of young and old, middle class and blue-collar

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<sup>251</sup> "Four Seasons Fact Sheet," the *Georgia Straight*, May 1971, 2.

<sup>252</sup> John Mackie, "This Week in History: 1971 All Seasons Park Springs up at Entrance to Stanley Park," the *Vancouver Sun*, May 26, 2017, <http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/this-week-in-history-1971-all-seasons-park-springs-up-at-the-entrance-to-stanley-park>

Vancouverites.<sup>253</sup> As a fence was set up around the property, and the developers made plans to begin construction, the *Georgia Straight* responded to the project, calling it, “a religious mecca for the worship of plastic.”<sup>254</sup>

The newspaper protested that the project would increase traffic circulation in the area up to 25, 000 cars a day, destroy one of the last remnants of the coastal rainforest in the West End, and that Campbell, a developer, had been a key advocate for rezoning the property, and planning for the increased traffic circulation at the entrance to the park, before he had even been elected mayor. Furthermore, the paper pointed out that many of the directors of the project were Campbell’s friends and associates, and that the people of the West End, who were largely opposed to the project and protested in the form of petition,<sup>255</sup> had therefore had no say in the issue. As Korky Day wrote:

City council pushes any development project that comes up. For some, it’s a matter of increased tax revenue for the City of Vancouver, for others, like Campbell, an apartment owner, a developer can do no wrong...you see, the reason this thing is being foisted on a citizenry that never had any say in the matter, and the reason Stanley Park and Coal Harbour are being threatened, the reason west-enders have had no say on the extra car congestion—and the fumes it would generate—is that the whole deal is in the hands of Vancouver’s family compact. The tiny group of businessmen who run things.<sup>256</sup>

When the developers put up a fence around the property in December 1970 and Korky Day published his opposition, the project was being opposed by the NDP, (in the process of

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<sup>253</sup> A Mail-In poll conducted by the *Vancouver Sun* held that over 75% of respondents opposed the project. The *Georgia Straight* reported, “While not super-scientific, this poll taken by a rather reactionary newspaper does demonstrate that a probable majority of Vancouverites want the Four Seasons Site to be a part of Stanley Park, and not an eyesore at the mouth of the park,” “Four Seasons Fact Sheet,” the *Georgia Straight*, May 21 – 28, 1971.

<sup>254</sup> Stephen Brown, (A.K.A. Korky Day), “Stanley Park Yes! Harbor ‘Park’ No!” the *Georgia Straight*, December 2 – 9, 1970, 2.

<sup>255</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, File: the *Georgia Straight*, 1968, COV-S483, Box: 45—B—7, folders 19a and 19b.

<sup>256</sup> Stephen Brown, (A.K.A. Korky Day), “Stanley Park Yes! Harbor ‘Park’ No!” the *Georgia Straight*, December 2 – 9, 1970, 2.

running an election campaign against W.A.C. Bennett's Social Credit Party) the Vancouver Parks Commission, the Vancouver School Board, the Vancouver Council of Women, the Community Arts Council, the Community Planning Association of Canada, the Sierra Club, the Regional Planning faculty at UBC, the VLF, and even the Vancouver District Labour Council, who stood to benefit in the short term from the project.

Due to the opposition, the *Georgia Straight* wrote, "from nearly every strata of society," as 1971 dawned, the fate of the project still rested undetermined. And as the year continued, the *Georgia Straight*, city councillor Harry Rankin, and the aforementioned organizations petitioned the government to hold a plebiscite on the issue.<sup>257</sup> Ultimately, in April 1971, the same month Campbell announced that he would not seek re-election and might not see the end of his term due to "health reasons"—which his spokesperson replied were being aggravated by the youth culture and "the Four Seasons Debacle"—city council conceded to the pressure of its constituents and tabled a resolution to hold a vote on the proposed development.<sup>258</sup> The day the resolution was tabled in June 1971, 300 individuals crowded into the council chambers to hear the decision, despite the fact that Mayor Campbell denied their request to provide extra chairs for them.<sup>259</sup>

Before the crowd council agreed to hold a plebiscite, though they specified that only property owners would be allowed to vote, and that a 60% majority would be required to overturn the project. The *Georgia Straight* called the planned vote, "Pseudo-democratic," arguing that property owners only represented 46% of Vancouver's population, and that the

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<sup>257</sup> Jeannine Mitchell, "4 Seasons: Will We Get a Say?" the *Georgia Straight*, April 20 – 23, 1971, 3.

<sup>258</sup> Jeannine Mitchell, "Campbell to Stumble Down?" April 30 – May 4, 1971, 2.

<sup>259</sup> Tony Tugwell, "No Tenants on 4 Seasons Vote," the *Georgia Straight*, April 30 – May 4, 1971, 5.

vote was intentionally framed that way because those individuals tended to hold conservative opinions.<sup>260</sup>

As a result of what members of Vancouver's social activist community felt was unjust use of the democratic process, and inspired by the occupation of People's Park in Berkeley two years earlier, in which the San Francisco youth culture occupied a park slated for demolition, members of the VLF, Yippies and *Georgia Straight* staff—some of whom were members of both organizations—decided to occupy the site of the proposed development. On the morning of May 24, 1971, knowing that the development site would be vacant over the holiday weekend, (Victoria Day) members of the *Georgia Straight* staff borrowed a bulldozer from a construction company, sod and saplings from a nursery, and a wheelbarrow from Irving Stowe. With the help of approximately 100 individuals they pulled down the fence that surrounded the proposed development site in less than 20 minutes, and after tearing down the fence covered the construction areas with sod, planted the seeds, set up their tents, and declared the site, "All Seasons Park," which they envisioned as a piece of land that would provide access to housing, food and work for some of the transient and unemployed youth Campbell and Fisk had been trying to remove from the area, and turn the proposed development site into a sustainable green space and community.

By Monday, more than 1000 people had arrived at the site to help build, provide food for workers, and live at the new makeshift housing community.<sup>261</sup> The same day, a construction company arrived to set up a new fence, but they were forced off the property by the protesters. That prompted Campbell to respond to the new park and housing

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<sup>260</sup> The cover of their following issue featured a caricatured draconian looking Campbell, with drool falling from his lip, saying, "We'll start with 'Stanley Park.' In fact, we may be able to sell 'Stanley Park' Franchise Kits All Over North America...hmmm." Tony Tugwell, "No Tenants on 4 Seasons Vote," the *Georgia Straight*, April 30 – May 4, 1971.

<sup>261</sup> Frank Zelko, *Make it a Greenpeace*, 74.

community by calling it, “a complete disregard for law and authority,” and “a total breakdown of society.”<sup>262</sup> But even the police who had showed up to maintain some “semblance of law” told reporters from the *Vancouver Sun* they thought the park was “a good idea.”<sup>263</sup>

Yet, despite the support of the NDP—who unanimously passed a resolution condemning the Four Seasons Development and supporting ‘All Seasons park’ in response to the youth culture’s occupation of the planned development—members of the VPD, and the regional planning faculty at UBC, the city council planning committee announced a new plan to lower population densities in the West End. The *Georgia Straight* called it a declaration of war on the counterculture and New Left.<sup>264</sup> When questioned on the intention to lower population densities in the West End and prepare the area for development, which was framed by the reporter by the fact that he would not be seeking re-election, Campbell said, “I feel I owe a debt to this city. It’s my city.” In his case that meant setting a course to influence the future development of Gastown and Kitsilano by removing access to affordable housing with expensive apartment complexes, offices and storefronts, and therefore removing “undesirables”—a euphemism city council repeatedly used for unemployed and low-income youth—from the West End. When a reporter followed up by mentioning to Campbell that his development projects—with specific reference to the Four Seasons—had encountered a great deal of opposition, he responded: “Who are these protesters? Do they know what they’re talking about? A deal is a deal and council will not be

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<sup>262</sup> The *Vancouver Sun* reported, “no rules, no orders, no plans, but somehow a park is taking shape on the site set aside for the Four Seasons apartment hotel complex at the entrance to Stanley Park.” John Mackie, “This Week in History: 1971 All Seasons Park Springs up at Entrance to Stanley Park,” the *Vancouver Sun*, May 26, 2017, <http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/this-week-in-history-1971-all-seasons-park-springs-up-at-the-entrance-to-stanley-park>, *Make it a Greenpeace*, “Tom Terrific Proclaims Revolution,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 1 – 4, 1971, 3.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> In response to the planning initiative they ran the headline, “Tom Terrific Proclaims Revolution.”

renegotiate. We have to be careful; a city that gets into the real estate business is getting into someone else's business. I'm a firm believer in private enterprise." The *Georgia Straight* responded in their piece, "Another Campbellism," with, "the fact that real estate is his business of course has nothing to do with him being up tight about the people of the city having control over land use."<sup>265</sup>

Campbell, at this point trying to firmly cement his political legacy, decided to launch a final campaign to clear the youth culture from Kitsilano and Gastown. To do so he decided to order Fisk to start using a police technique called 'saturation patrolling,' whereby police cordon off a specific area, block potential escape routes, and detain and search everyone in the area. The VPD used the Narcotics Control Act to justify the unlawful infringement on the civil liberties of the individuals in the cordoned off areas, who were detained without cause. At the same time, he made plans for the future development of Gastown. Campbell named the police initiative, which was planned in June and launched in July of 1971, "Operation Dustpan," and assigned more than twenty undercover police officers to the new initiative which was part and parcel of the city council planning committee's initiative to lower population densities in the West End. Though Campbell called Gastown "the drug capital of Canada," and framed the operation as a response to crime, the name made extremely clear the intention and motives of the operation to rid the area of "undesirables" and thereby prepare the area for future development. It should be noted that "Operation Dustpan" was in direct contrast to the proposal of the federal government for dealing with soft drug use, which had been presented in the form of the Le Dain Commission in April

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<sup>265</sup> "Another Campbellism," the *Georgia Straight*, June 18 – 22, 1971.

1971, and called current drug enforcement laws out-dated, recommending, “less draconian measures in the control of the use of soft drugs.”<sup>266</sup>

In the first ten days of June 1971, just after Campbell announced the plan to lower population densities in the West End, and while Operation Dustpan was being planned, the *Los Angeles Times* profiled Campbell in a piece entitled, “Young Mayor of Vancouver Fights Hippies.” The piece called Campbell, “Vancouver’s civic centrepiece...Canada’s most oft quoted politician outside of Ottawa.” In it, Campbell said,

I kind of admire Spiro Agnew. I think he’s calling a spade a spade. He’s telling the people of the United States that there is trouble and dissension from within. Every major city in the world is going to have trouble this year. But how are you not going to have trouble? Are you going to let them riot and take over the city? And say, well you can take the West-End if you leave the rest of us alone?

The piece continued, “Now in his third consecutive term, Campbell has been accused of being “all talk” and “no action” on serious issues, but he wins elections voice of the people, law and order style.”<sup>267</sup> In “Operation Dustpan,” Campbell, who was sent the piece by T.S. Buckley, a resident of West Vancouver who had come across it during a trip to Los Angeles, found a way to become more than “all talk and no action on serious issues” by turning Gastown into what first hand accounts referred to as, “a police state.”<sup>268</sup> He received the

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<sup>266</sup> Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010, 121.

<sup>267</sup> “Young Mayor of Vancouver Fights Hippies,” the *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1971.

<sup>268</sup> At the same time as Campbell planned to launch Operation Dustpan, the federal government awarded the *Georgia Straight* a \$15000 grant to hire 15 summer students at \$1000 each. The grant was rescinded at the end of July 1971, after numerous constituents complained to Michael Basford—the Liberal MP for Vancouver Centre and PM Trudeau’s Minister of Corporate Affairs—who was trying to scuttle plans forward to build a freeway through the west end that the *Georgia Straight* was organizing people in opposition of. The Straight later sued the federal government and lost. Peter Burton, “State Congratulates Straight,” the *Georgia Straight*, June 25 – 29, 1971, Dara Culhane, “the New Battle of Jericho,” the *Georgia Straight*, July 6 – 10, 1971, “So Who Wants the Freeway? The *Georgia Straight*, July 2 – 6, 1971, Hasting St. Granville, “Free Gastown, Freeway,” The *Georgia Straight*, August 17 – 20, 1971. “Straight Sues Federal Gov’t for \$15 000,” July 27 – 30, 1971, Micheal Barnholden, “The Gastown Riot, 1971, and the Rolling Stones Riot, 1972,” *West Coast Line*, Vol. 32. No. 2. (Fall 2005) 165 – 166. British Columbia. *Report on the Gastown Riot*. 1971. Vancouver Municipal Archives, “the Gastown Riot,” City of Vancouver Fonds, Mayor’s Office General Correspondence, COV—S483, Box, 045-E-04

letter and article from Buckley on June 23. The same day, perhaps inspired by the piece, he showed up at “All Seasons Park” to “verbally spar” with the demonstrators.<sup>269</sup>

A testament to Cambell and Fisk’s operation, within ten days of the launch of “Operation Dustpan,” in July 1971, 109 people were arrested on trafficking and possession charges. All of them were detained through “saturation patrolling.” More than 90% those arrests took place in Gastown and Kitsilano, and up to that point of 1971, the VPD had already arrested 549 individuals for charges associated with LSD and marijuana, which compared with a total of 800 for the year of 1970.<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, at the same time as “Operation Dustpan” was being planned, and city council announced its intention to lower population densities in the West End, Peterson publicized the launch of an investigation into Gastown’s pubs, (where the *Georgia Straight* was regularly sold) which he argued were “condoning” illegal narcotic activity. In accordance with the investigation undercover police officers were placed in Gastown pubs that on occasion searched every single individual in the establishment.<sup>271</sup>

Meanwhile, just after Operation Dustpan was officially launched, on July 5, Campbell sent a letter to Dr. Gordon Shrum, the Chairman of BC Hydro, requesting he “remove unsightly overhead utilities” in Gastown, while he made plans to order materials to build new sidewalks and install new streetlights in Maple Street Square. That same month, Campbell put together a budget of \$1 million—the modern equivalent of \$5 million—for the “revitalization” of Maple Street Square, setting the first phase of construction to begin in

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<sup>269</sup> John Mackie, “This Week in History: 1971 All Seasons Park Springs up at Entrance to Stanley Park,” the *Vancouver Sun*, May 26, 2017, <http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/this-week-in-history-1971-all-seasons-park-springs-up-at->

<sup>270</sup> Michael Boudreau, “the Struggle for a Different World,” in, ed. Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement and Gregory S. Kealy, *Debating Dissent*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.

<sup>271</sup> Awronsen, *City of Love and Revolution*, 121.

September 1971.<sup>272</sup> Therefore it's impossible to understand the motivation for the implementation of "Operation Dustpan" and the prosecution of the low-income youth residents of Gastown apart from these development plans. Put simply, the youth culture stood directly in the way of Campbell's development plans, which he saw as his contribution to the city of Vancouver, and the defining feature of his mayoral legacy. Yet despite the arrests made as part of "Operation Dustpan," the low-income youth of Gastown and Kitsilano continued to defy the police. The *Georgia Straight* recorded every one of the VPD's arrests in their bi-weekly column, 'Heads Captured,' where they referred to the actions of the police as "Gestapo Tactics," and argued that the VPD directly targeted those areas because of the presence of the "hip subculture."<sup>273</sup>

One young man, commenting on the raid of a Gastown saloon, the Last Chance, by undercover narcotics officers, said in July 1971, "At certain times in history there have been laws that made no sense. Then the people break them until they are changed."<sup>274</sup> The counterculture intended to do just that, and in response to "Operation Dustpan," the plans for the development of Gastown, and the deliberate unlawful prosecution of the youth community in Gastown, Yippies and *Georgia Straight* writers Eric Sommer and Kenneth Lester organized a demonstration to take place at Maple Tree Square, the site of Campbell's future project. Billed as the "Grasstown Smoke-in and Street Jamboree," it was slated to take place on Saturday, August 7, 1971. In order to publicize and organize the demonstration, Lester and Sommer used 'Vancouver's Free Press.' The cover of the August 3 – 6 issue of the *Georgia Straight*, read, "Gastown Smoke-In, details inside." In just 5 days, using only the

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<sup>272</sup> Stan Douglas, *Abott and Cordova*, Vancouver: Arsenal Press, 2013, 6.

<sup>273</sup> "Heads Captured," *the Georgia Straight*, the *Georgia Straight*, July 6 – 10, 1971.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

newspaper and word of mouth, they were able to organize over 10 000 people in protest of “Operation Dustpan.”

Inside the paper, the announcement of the protest set demands, called on young people to remain civil and not be violent, and said the “purpose [was] to demonstrate through joyous action—our determination not to be driven out of Gastown or cast behind bars.” The paper emphasized that the intention of the protest action was to stand in solidarity with the 109 individuals who had been arrested, and object to “Operation Dustpan” and the development projects of mayor Campbell. In print they demanded the end of “Operation Dustpan,” which they wrote, “[was] designed to drive poor people out of Gastown,” and the legalization of Marijuana, “so that drug laws [could] no longer be used to drive poor people out of Gastown.” Furthermore, in an article entitled, “How Not to Get Busted at the Grastown Smoke-In,” Sommer and Lester warned of the possibility of the police provoking a riot, and cautioned protesters to respond with restraint, calling the possibility if handled correctly, “a mass teach-in on legal insanity.”<sup>275</sup> It would turn out, despite their plea to remain joyous and respond with restraint, that Somme and Lester were right to be wary. On the 7th, Campbell and VPD Chief Fisk exercised “law and order” in response to a group of approximately 11 000 young people peacefully smoking a 10 foot joint.<sup>276</sup>

According a nine-page legal affidavit, on August 7, by 8:50 p.m. 400 people had arrived at Maple Tree Square.<sup>277</sup> After they gathered, the demonstrators lit and passed around a ten-foot long joint in plain view of police officers and local merchants while young people

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<sup>275</sup> The *Georgia Straight*, August 3 – 6, 1971.

<sup>276</sup> Michael Boudreau, “the Struggle for a Different World,” in, *ed.* Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement and Gregory S. Kealy, *Debating Dissent*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, Stan Douglas, *Abott and Cordova*, 6.

<sup>277</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, “Gastown Riot Affidavits,” Box: 708 – C2, file 13.

played drums and danced to the music of the Grateful Dead. After about an hour, the full crowd of approximately about 10 000 appeared and the demonstration took on a party atmosphere. While the crowd sung, smoked pot and danced, Campbell appeared on the balcony of the Hotel Europa to address them, but to no avail, as the crowd drowned him out, yelling, “down, down, down,” and “Fuck Campbell.” Campbell then left the balcony visibly upset, after which two young men climbed up the pillars of the Hotel Europa, reached the balcony, and exposed themselves to the cheers of the crowd. A half hour later, two other individuals identified as having been in their teens climbed to the top of the hotel and hung two red and black flags, symbols of anarchy. Presumably, between the time Campbell left the balcony and the riot squad marched on the demonstrators, Campbell and Fisk discussed their plans to deal with the demonstration.

Suddenly, just after 9: 30 p.m., without notice, the riot squad marched on the demonstrators led by four police on horseback. The police then charged the crowd, pinning the protesters against buildings and beating them, breaking windows, pulling hair, and making “effective” use of the three-foot riot sticks Campbell had procured for the VPD the previous June. Ultimately, the VPD arrested seventy-nine individuals, who were forcibly thrown into the back of paddy wagons. Thirty-eight were charged.<sup>278</sup>

Korky Day, who never smoked a joint in his life, and picketed at the Grasstown Smoke-in with a sign that said, “down with dope, but legalize dope,” was one of them. “I was about 3 steps south of the western tip of the hotel Europa,” he recalled. “The Blowhorn came around to clear the street. So I moved over to the sidewalk. Then the police charge right down the street. Clubbing everyone. Mayhem. Screaming. Yelling. I yell, pleading with

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<sup>278</sup> Michael Boudreau, “the Struggle for a Different World,” in, *ed.* Lara Campbell, Dominique Clement and Gregory S. Kealy, *Debating Dissent*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012, Stan Douglas, *Abott and Cordova*, 6.

them while they hit me. “I’m on the sidewalk. I’m on the sidewalk,” but they continue to strike me.”<sup>279</sup> Amid the confusion of what was later described as “the Terror at Gastown,” and “the Battle of Maple Street Square,” in the press and in legal affidavits, the following events were recorded by the *Vancouver Sun*, which they printed in point form on August 9:

- Police Officers on horseback with no badge numbers visible drive people into doorways and pin them there while lashing at them with their riot sticks
- Held by the hair, a screaming young woman is dragged for about 100 yards over broken glass by two police officers...
- Cut down by a blow from a riot stick, a young man slumps on the street. A weeping young woman kneels beside him...
- Gangs of youth roam the streets within six blocks of Maple Street Square, throwing rocks and bottles at the police...
- The police wear no identifying badges or numbers...
- Pools of blood lie in several places throughout Gastown<sup>280</sup>

Speaking to reporters following the altercation—who called on Peterson to hold an official inquiry into the confrontation—Campbell defended the VPD riot squad and blamed the *Georgia Straight*, Sommer, and Lester, for the way in which the events had unfolded. Nonetheless, due to the pressure of the media, Gastown merchants and residents, constituents, and the *Georgia Straight*, the politically savvy Peterson launched an official investigation into the event on August 11, despite publicly supporting the actions of the police force and of Campbell in the previous week. The Honourable Justice Thomas Dohm, the same judge who had upheld Campbell’s decision to revoke the *Georgia Straight’s* business

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<sup>279</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, “Gastown Riot,” Box: 708 – C2, file 13.

<sup>280</sup> A 16 year-old man who had his leg broken and was told, “if you don’t lay still we’ll brake your other leg,” filed a lawsuit against the city of Vancouver.

license in 1967 before BC's supreme court, was selected by Peterson to preside over the inquiry.<sup>281</sup>

The “Dohm Inquiry” which began in late August heard forty-eight eyewitnesses and lasted 10 days. Almost every single legal affidavit, which are now housed in the Vancouver Municipal Archives and open to the public, accused the police of brutally attacking the crowd, arguing the police were unprovoked. John Webb of 136 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Ave. closed his recollection of the events in his sworn affidavit, “My mind was so bogged by these occurrences, that I don’t even feel that I can accurately document them. My memory is just a wheeling collage of upraised clubs. Woman’s screams. Panicking horses. Breaking bottles. And the hate filled faces of the pigs.”<sup>282</sup>

Though Justice Dohm, after reading each of the twenty plus affidavits and hearing nearly fifty eye witness,’ would make numerous suggestions to the chairman of the Police Board of Commissioners,<sup>283</sup> (Campbell) the Honourable Justice found Lester, Sommer and by extension the *Georgia Straight*, responsible for the violence that occurred on the night of August 7. The *Province* agreed, reporting, “the root cause of the whole ugly business were two dangerous Yippies.”<sup>284</sup>

Ultimately, Campbell, who sought to cement his legacy, would do so by provoking an event that the city of Vancouver has been trying to forget ever since that Saturday

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<sup>281</sup> Canada’s Human Rights History, *Encyclopedia*, “1971 Gastown Riot,” <https://historyofrights.ca/encyclopaedia/main-events/1971-gastown-riot/>

<sup>282</sup> Vancouver Municipal Archives, “Gastown Riot,” Box: 708 – C2, file 13.

<sup>283</sup> Which included providing further training for dealing with crowds to the VPD riot squad, and banning protesters from holding demonstrations in the middle of city streets. He said before the court, “Any popular cause serves their purpose if it enables them to gather a gullible crowd who may act in such a way as to defy any authority. The harassment of young people by the drug squad police and the resultant hostility was grist to their trouble-brewing mill.”

<sup>284</sup> Tony Tugwell, “Community Control of the Police,” *the Georgia Straight*, August 15 – 19, 1971. The Gastown Merchants society had an event in support later that week that brought out close to 15 000 in protest of the police department’s use of force to raise funds for those charged during the altercation.

evening in the summer of 1971. Today, a mural hangs outside of the Woodward building in Gastown depicting the violence, just up the street from Maple St. Square, Vancouver's trendy and hip neighbourhood, filled with the offices, storefronts, and expensive condos Campbell envisioned when first elected mayor at 39 years old in 1966.

Yet, despite the fact that Campbell's vision of Gastown would ultimately transform its demographics, the occupation of the Four Seasons development would last a full year, and the project never come to fruition. It is still public property, and regularly enjoyed by Vancouverites. Today, the Hi-Hostel at Jericho is still open on the site of a long forgotten violent confrontation between unemployed youth and the VPD riot squad at the height of a national crisis.

## **V: Conclusion**

*We were Prophetic. Prophetic is the word. Prophetic. Make sure your microphone gets that. We were a voice of the people and the community. We stopped the freeway and got a new political party that was against it to come in. Were we responsible for all of it? No. But we sure put our water in that wave.*<sup>285</sup>

In part due to the pressure the *Georgia Straight* placed on the municipal and provincial government, the politics of British Columbia and of Vancouver underwent dramatic changes in 1972. That year, Art Phillips succeeded Tom Campbell as the mayor of Vancouver, and the NDP ended the twenty-year rule of W.A.C Bennett's Social Credit Party in a dramatic landslide victory. Bennett and his Social Credit Party had won seven consecutive provincial elections. To this day W.A.C. Bennett is the longest serving premier in British Columbia's history.

Phillips, who succeeded Bennett, took a markedly different approach to real estate. He valued the environment and had the city planning committee hear the concerns of the low-income residents of the West End. At the same time, the BC NDP put an end to

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<sup>285</sup> Korky Day, interview by Jake Sherman.

Campbell, Bennett, and Liberal MP for Vancouver Centre Ron Basford's plans to build a freeway through Vancouver, due to the resistance to the project, in part organized by the *Georgia Straight* in 1971. Today, Vancouver is the only major metropolitan area in North America that does not have a major freeway bisecting it.<sup>286</sup>

Is it fair to make the argument that the *Georgia Straight* was responsible for all of that? Absolutely not. But as Korky Day said 50 years after the newspaper was founded, the attention the *Georgia Straight* paid to some of Campbell and Bennett's development plans did contribute to Mayor Campbell and Premier Bennett's political losses. For that reason, McLeod and others faced the brunt of the judiciary for nearly five years. Put simply: the *Georgia Straight* stood in opposition to the vision that Campbell and Bennett had for British Columbia and Vancouver, and for that reason the government deliberately manipulated the law to prosecute them and the community they represented for the better part of five years. As this chapter shows, there was a causal relationship between Vancouver's cityscape and the *Georgia Straight*. The *Georgia Straight* and counterculture have had a lasting impact on not just the regional identity of the West Coast of Canada, but that of Vancouver's cityscape. "Were we responsible for all of it? No," Korky Day remembered, eating Vegetarian Nachos at the Namm on West 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in January 2017. "But we sure put our water in that wave."

At Jericho, the newspaper organized the unemployed youth community and advocated for them. Ultimately, it led to the establishment of what was the largest youth hostel in North America, one still in operation today. The newspaper also openly opposed the Four Seasons development and played a significant role in the establishment of All Seasons Park, which they regularly covered and promoted. It resulted in the piece of land being undeveloped to this day. Furthermore, the *Georgia Straight* opposed Operation Dustpan

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<sup>286</sup> Eric Nicol, *Vancouver*, 137.

and organized the response to it, which resulted in a violent confrontation. Indeed, as an organizational platform for social activism, the *Georgia Straight* directly threatened the vision of Tom Campbell's Vancouver and W.A.C. Bennett's British Columbia by organizing people in opposition of it, and for that reason, as well for the moral challenge it posed to that same vision of society, the municipal and provincial government deliberately manipulated the law to inhibit its ability to publish, and cemented its place in the history of the battle for freedom of expression in Canada.

Ultimately, Mayor Campbell's political vision and legacy would be cemented by a violent confrontation, and though Gastown and Kitsilano were eventually gentrified, he is more often remembered for his harassment of the youth culture than his political vision for Vancouver's development. But he was also instrumental in facilitating the economic development of Vancouver. In his obituary in the *Vancouver Sun*, former Mayor of Vancouver and Premier of British Columbia Michael Harcourt called Campbell, "the last gasp of the vision that brought us the likes of Detroit and Los Angeles."<sup>287</sup>

This chapter shows just three examples, but there were many more examples of the *Georgia Straight* advocating for the counterculture in opposition to the political agenda of the municipal establishment. The fact is the *Georgia Straight* did not exist in isolation from the social movements that surrounded it, and those social movements were intricately entwined with the newspaper. More than a forum for criticizing the government, it was a social network that connected those who read it. In a fractious time the *Georgia Straight* codified a fractious New Left. The fact that the RCMP was far more interested in the groups the *Georgia Straight* advocated for than the newspaper itself speaks to the extent that the *Georgia Straight* had become enmeshed in the social justice initiatives of its time, and its ability to

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<sup>287</sup> Michael Harcourt, "Former Vancouver Mayor Tom "Terrific" Campbell Dies," the *Vancouver Sun*, February 4, 2012.

organize people. The newspaper was so responsible for organizing social justice movement and protests that the VPD and RCMP read the *Georgia Straight* in order to learn about the people they were surveilling and to prepare for their protests. Essentially, they were organizing people who were participating in dissent, and because the *Georgia Straight* became Vancouver's social network for social activism, they were prosecuted.

**Conclusion—“That One Lone Palm Tree that Somehow Survives a hurricane”**

*In its 50 years, the Straight has outlived both adversaries and friends, boom times and recessions, and—like that one lone palm tree that somehow survives a hurricane—it is, miraculously, still here.*<sup>288</sup>

Just up the street from Maple Street Square, outside of a new Woodward's department store at the corner of Abbott and Cordova, after walking by expensive retail outlets, a few *Georgia Straight* newspaper stands, some apartment complexes and 'hip' coffee-shops, you'll find a lone nine-by-sixteen-meter picture looming below neon lights and high rises. In the public art piece, which artist Stan Douglass created to commemorate the Gastown Riot, police on horseback club young people. Some scream. Others run. There are no signs, plaques or memorials to explain it, and no one will tell you that the *Georgia Straight* organized the event the City of Vancouver and its police department has been trying to forget for nearly fifty years.<sup>289</sup>

Walk north from Gastown toward Stanley Park and you'll find a lone grassy area with flowerbeds. Today, few of the people walking through it remember how close it came to being a Four Seasons Hotel and residential apartment complex, or that it was the sight of an experiment in communal living and social activism. Head south and then west across the Burrard Inlet crossing and you'll find yourself in hip Kitsilano where commercial yoga studios, name brand stores, and expensive vegan restaurants line the former epicenter of Vancouver's countercultural life. Among the retail outlets, university students and four million dollar homes, where Anne Petrie, who later became a journalist for the CBC, remembers Vancouverites used to drive through just to stare at the youth, you'll find a lone

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<sup>288</sup> Doug Sarti, "Straight 50: The *Georgia Straight* Celebrates a Golden Milestone," the *Georgia Straight*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.straight.com/news/903621/straight-50-georgia-straight-celebrates-golden-milestone>

<sup>289</sup> Stan Douglass, *Abbott and Cordova, 7 August 1971*, Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012, Robin Laurence, "Stan Douglass: Abbott and Cordova: 1971, Restages Conflict that Shaped our City," February 8, 2012, <https://www.straight.com/life/stan-douglas-abbott-cordova-7-august-1971-restages-conflict-shaped-our-city>, Kevin Griffin, "Stan Douglass: Talking about Abbott and Cordova," the *Vancouver Sun*, December 7, 2011, Shaun Dacey, "The Gastown Riot as Public Art," the *Tyee*, February 17, 2010, Leigh Camping Karder, "At the Gastown Riot," the *Whrus*, July 12, 2009.

reminder that young people once squatted along the banks of Fourth Avenue.<sup>290</sup> The Namm vegetarian restaurant, which used to be located across the street from the office of the Committee to Aid American War Objectors, is open twenty-four hours a day, and stills serves many of the same vegetarian staples it did in 1968.

Continue walking toward the University of British Columbia, in the opposite direction of the *Georgia Straight's* current office on West Broadway, and you'll find Jericho Beach, where Fred Flores remembered sleeping after arriving in Vancouver from California, fleeing service in Vietnam.<sup>291</sup> In that same park, once the sight of a violent confrontation between the police and the youth culture, you'll find the HI-Jericho, built as a response to the youth cultures calls for affordable housing. At the time, with 300 beds, it was the largest youth hostel in North America.

Walking around Vancouver, it's clear that the *Georgia Straight* was intricately involved with shaping the cityscape, sense of place and identity of the city, and the 1960s have left an indelible mark on the West Coast of Canada. But while Mayor Campbell and many of his contemporaries regularly maligned the youth culture, and many of the development projects that the *Georgia Straight* protested and Campbell envisioned have transformed landscape of the West End, today, Vancouver and the West Coast embraces its countercultural past. Most people seem to have forgotten amid the yoga studios and vegan restaurants that mark the city's landscape, that the relationship that existed between the city and the "hippies" was a contentious one, marred by prejudice and legal confrontation. But as evidenced in this thesis, Tom Campbell and his contemporaries, considered the youth culture a "problem" in need of a solution, and the *Georgia Straight* was founded to confront the efforts to solve that

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<sup>290</sup> Anne Petrie, (Former UBC student and CBC Journalist,) interview by Jake Sherman, December 7, 2016.

<sup>291</sup> Fred Flores, (Vietnam War Resistor, *Georgia Straight Ad Salesman and Writer*,) January 17, 2017.

“problem,” and challenge the depiction of the counterculture in the dominant discourse, which regularly maligned it. While historian Lawrence Aronsen has argued that the response of the city to the emergence of the counterculture was “different” than elsewhere in North America and “less confrontational and ideologically driven, especially at the level of municipal government,” the story of the *Georgia Straight* belies that claim, and builds on the work on scholars of the Canadian counterculture who have over the last fifteen years begun to examine the response of state actors to the emergence of the counterculture and New Left in Canada.<sup>292</sup>

As a result of the foundation of the *Georgia Straight* in 1967, the city put together a committee to study the “Hippie Problem.” Its recommendation was to enforce every bylaw it could against the counterculture, and to accelerate its “urban renewal projects,” in effect attempting to make it unaffordable for young people, draft dodgers, poets, transient youth and social activists to continue to subsist in Kitsilano and Gastown. It was literally, in addition to the numerous arrest campaigns which the *Georgia Straight* protested, a means of deliberately abusing the civil liberties of people whose vision was contrary to that of the electorate majority, and therefore posed a threat to the state’s entrenched interests. In fact, Campbell himself owned six buildings in Kitsilano, and was reacting to the drop in property and business prices that accompanied the arrival of the youth culture in Kitsilano by launching a police campaign that charged young people under the Narcotics Control Act and vagrancy laws. As a result of that campaign on Campbell’s behalf, a group of poets founded a media outlet to advocate for the youth culture. Consequently, Campbell, working with Vancouver City Staff, tried to censor it, but could not. After failing to revoke the burgeoning newspaper’s business license in September 1967, (which the city attempted to do three

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<sup>292</sup> Lawrence Aronsen, *City of Love and Revolution: Vancouver in the Sixties*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 2010, 8.

separate times) the city deliberately tried to stifle freedom of expression by taking advantage of vague laws to prosecute the underground newspaper in conversation with the B.C. Attorney General's office. The expressed intent of the legal campaign, as evidenced in this thesis, was the suppression of the *Georgia Straight*.

The legal campaign waged against the youth culture and the *Georgia Straight*, represented nothing less than an assault on freedom of expression and relied on the manipulation of the laws to try the *Georgia Straight* and the Vancouver Police Department to arrest members of the youth culture. Remarkably, though the expressed intent of the campaign was to kill the newspaper, the *Georgia Straight*, working with the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association and prominent members of the American counterculture organized in response, and continued to print the newspaper, raising the funds necessary to fight the state in court. Their ability to organize in response and raise the funds necessary to fight off the legal charges and associated fines that were leveled against them speaks to the newspaper's ability to function as a social network and organizational tool. More than just a means of communication, or for advocating for the youth culture, it was the "glue," Korky Day would recall on Fourth Avenue 50 years after the paper's founding, that kept Vancouver's countercultural community together.<sup>293</sup>

But in almost uncanny fashion, through its many trials and tribulations, near constant federal surveillance, and over thirty criminal charges in its first five years, the *Georgia Straight*, once the "tip of Vancouver's countercultural spear," and started as a radical media collective to confront injustice, is still publishing, and still ruffling the feathers of the City of Vancouver and Province of British Columbia.<sup>294</sup> In 2003, the provincial government sent the

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<sup>293</sup> Korky Day, interview by Jake Sherman.

<sup>294</sup> Doug Sarti, "Straight 50: The *Georgia Straight* Celebrates a Golden Milestone," the *Georgia Straight*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.straight.com/news/903621/straight-50-georgia-straight-celebrates-golden-milestone>

*Georgia Straight* a more than one million dollar invoice for outstanding sales tax. Newspapers in British Columbia have been exempt from sales tax since 1966. In 2003, the provincial revenue agency determined that a “newspaper” was defined by having at least 25 per cent “editorial and news” content. Subsequently the government ruled the *Georgia Straight* was not one, ordering that it pay a number of years worth of sales tax it did not lawfully owe. The matter in question was the newspaper’s hefty events listing, which the government ruled constituted advertising. Dan McLeod, still the publisher of the independent newspaper, and no stranger to government harassment, would comment that it was clearly a political decision. “We’re the only paper that is consistently critical of the government in our editorials week after week,” he said at a news conference. “And we’re the only paper that’s being fined a million dollars. So I put two and two together.” Following a media backlash, the B.C. government declared the *Georgia Straight*, “clearly a newspaper,” and therefore still exempt from paying sales tax.<sup>295</sup>

Likewise, the newspaper continues to opine and challenge mainstream media. In May 2018, editor Charlie Smith, in an appeal to legislators to take action on climate change, commented that the lack of coverage on the issue in mainstream media has to do with the “pursuit of page views,” arguing that reporters today are understood like “baseball players,” with statistics compiled by data companies that measure how many page views they generate per month and year. According to Smith, this has encouraged a media landscape that results in a dearth of coverage of serious issues like the environment and municipal politics, which are less likely to be shared on social media than a piece about a new restaurant opening or cannabis, and consequently cause politicians to feel less pressure to take action on serious

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<sup>295</sup> Vaughn Palmer, “the Straight’s Tax Case Curious and Confused,” the *Vancouver Sun*, October 10, 2003, “Tax Move was Wrong, so are Straight’s Rantings,” the *Vancouver Sun*, October 11, 2003, Craig McInness and Michael McCullough, “Victoria Reconsiders Straight Tax Bill,” the *Vancouver Sun*, October 15, 2003.

issues. He pleaded with readers to share challenging articles, and to engage with issues and discourse that makes them uncomfortable, in order to confront changing trends that are dominating the landscape of information sharing.<sup>296</sup>

In a time when the nature of information and its consumption is changing, and freedom of the press is under threat, the story of the *Georgia Straight* is a timely one to be telling. Founded as part of a radical zeitgeist, the now weekly newspaper continues to challenge the state and remains in a world of conglomerated media and manufactured “news,” a bastion of freedom of expression. It is a reminder that a vision of a small group of committed activists can indeed, despite the sometimes-overwhelming power of the judicial, state actors and associations, change the world. One story at a time.

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<sup>296</sup> Charlie Smith, “British Columbia Floods, Human Extinction, and the Pursuit of Page Views,” the *Georgia Straight*, May 17, 2018.

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