APATHY ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE mention the accompanying growth of the suburbs the plant is designed to produce, nor the fact that the new Quaker Oats Company will consume a million gallons of water each month when in operation.

MAYOR-COUNCIL REFERENDUM

This set the stage for the general election featuring the referendum question to abandon Manager-Commission government for a Mayor-Council system. This has been the most controversial issue in the spring campaigns.

Throughout the winter, a group called Citizens for Mayor-Council Government circulated petitions calling for the vote. Barely meeting the deadline required by law to have the question on the April ballot, more than 3,800 signatures were finally filed with torate to digest in a few short the County Clerk in late January.

Presently four of the five Commissioners hold four-year terms. Council members would all serve two-year terms.

The Mayor-Council issue, proponents argue, is essentially one of participation and Democratic representation. Their main criticism of the present system is that it lacks checks and balances and is designed to inhibit public involvement. The prime target is the unelected City Manager and the at-large elected Commission.

Opponents of the change defend the present system as more efficient and business-like and · argue that it is representative and responsive.

Twenty-five candidates and two referendum questions involve a lot of information for the elecweeks. As usual, a notable lack

cent of our registered voters exercized their right in local and national elections, sending direct representatives from their districts to these offices. While Lawrence's voter turnout in state and national elections has remained excellent, the turnout for local elections has dropped, almost steadily, for the last 12 years.

We place the blame for lack of interest squarely on our City government. More interested in building airports, and roadways than in repairing streets and picking up trash, our government has actively promoted growth and development as the salvation of the city. The results are growing cynicism and voter apathy.

Claims of responsiveness by our present Commissioners are hollow when you examine the issues. North City government when the sole mis-Lawrence begged for four years for just one traffic light. Pinckney battled with a petition drive, a

technicality. The list goes on and on.

If City government is so responsive, then why are so many people staying away from the polls and so many people are fighting Hall in one neighborhood crisis after another?

How did petition gatherers find so many thousands of citizens willing to sign petitions to abandon the form of City government all together?

The problem isn't with the voters; citizen turnout for national and state elections has been good, and when threatened directly, individuals can organize their neighborhoods and defend their interests in spite of City Hall.

But why should they have to fight sion of our government is to serve those very people, from whom it derives all its authority? This is a basic tenent of American Democracy. Our local government makes a mockery of it.

The people of Lawrence don't have adequate representation. Ties to the voters are weak, and the meaningful devices that give people direct control of their government are lost.

What are these devices? What are the basic tenents of representative Democracy in America? What elements of representation are lacking in Lawrence City government?

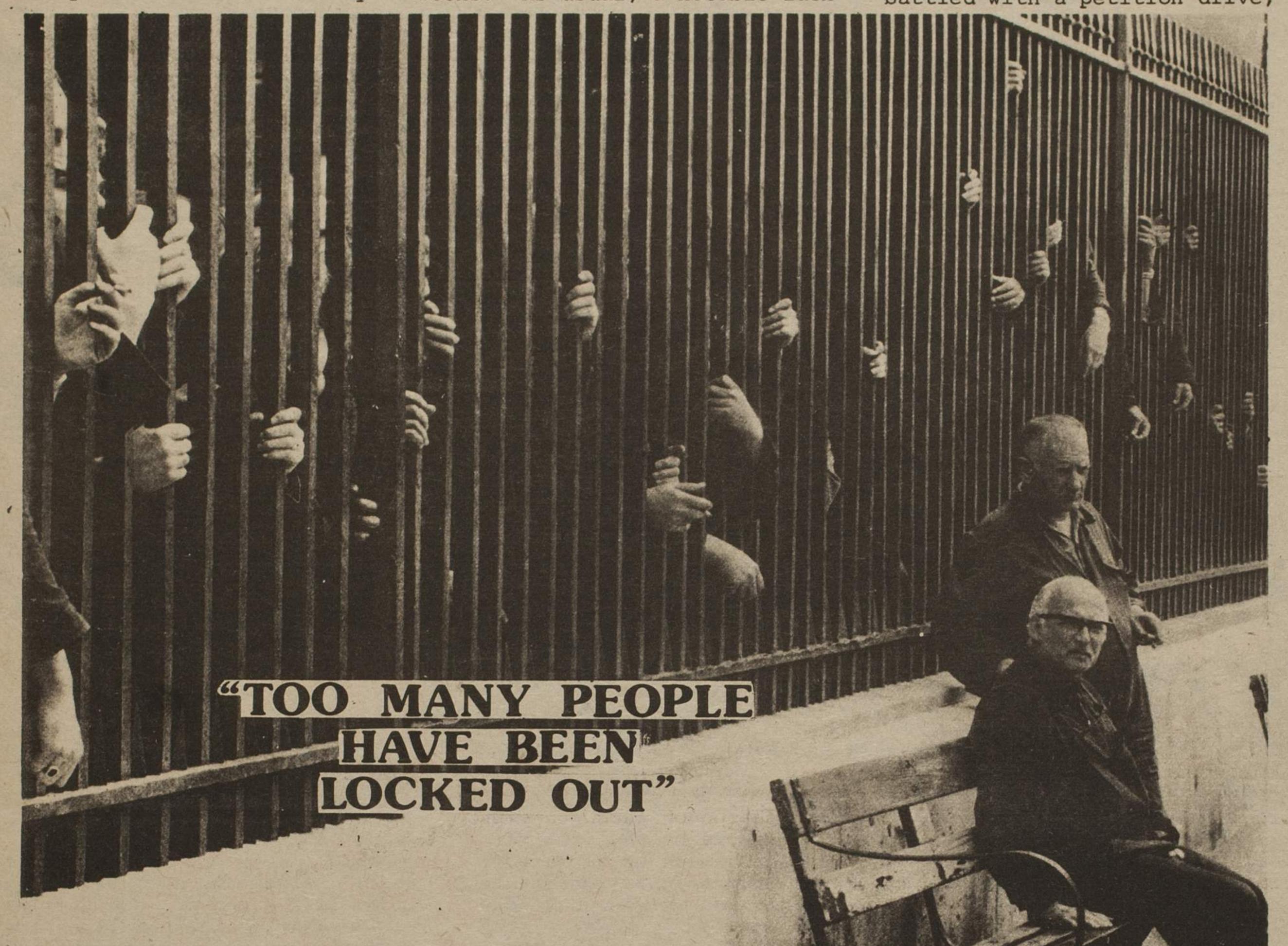
Strong ties between voters and their elected officials are needed. People aren't elected simply to rule, but to represent the needs and desires of all the people. Yet, since all the people, by definition, comprise such varying interests, no single idea or person can adequately represent them in total. So, it becomes necessary to divide the body into smaller groups and allow these groups to independently elect their representatives to a common council where interaction occurs.

District representation, seemingly so basic a concept in America, has been forgotten in Lawrence. But it's a simple way of proper decision-making.

Think of a meeting you've attended, be it for business, educational, religious or social reasons. If the whole group had a variety of tasks to perform or questions to address, your group probably divided itself into smaller groups in order to involve everyone in the discussion, and to discuss each matter more thoroughly. In this way, each individual is more able to speak on a topic that might not have commanded the Now, they're fighting a City-backed attention of the larger group. whole group are more likely to reflect the direct concerns expressed in the smaller groups. Had the discussion been left to the large group, many of the concerns would have gone unattended because of the multitude of various concerns competing for attention.

> This is the basis of the U.S. Supreme Court's one member -- one members of the U.S. Congress and every state legislature be elected from districts rather than at-large, thus insuring the people more direct representation.

This building block of Democracy is lacking in Lawrence government. The Commission is elected at-large and given a great responsibility, yet paid no compensatory sum. Direct ties to the electorate are diluted through the



It's a question Lawrence voters haven't faced in a quarter century, since the Manager-Commission system was adopted in 1950.

Today, Lawrence's City government consists of a 5-member Board of Commissioners, elected at-large, paid a token \$100 per year acting as a legislative body, and a City Manager, hired by those Commissioners and paid more than \$30,000 per year. The City Manager has dictatorial control over City Administration and nearly 600 employees.

Proponents of the Mayor-Council system want to replace the Commission with a Council of 8 people elected from at least four districts, two council members from each district. A Mayor would be elected at-large to head the administration.

of in-depth coverage by the daily newspaper and radio have made it impossible for voters to cast informed ballots.

The low-voter turnout reflects this lack of information. Without adequate information about the issues and candidates, most of the electorate made no decision at all. While not unique to Lawrence, the problem here is growing by leaps and bounds. In the 1975 general election, for example, only 54 more votes were cast than in 1963, despite the population increase of more than 40 per cent and despite the increase in eligible voters with 18 to 20 year olds given the right to vote.

PUBLIC NOTICE doesn't think the problem rests with the electorate. Last November 2, more than 85 per

court case and a Commission election to keep the City Maintenance Garage out of its neighborhood. Old West Lawrence recently watched Tennessee Street ripped up and widened without so much as a phone call to the neighborhood association.

plan for a highrise. East Lawrence Final decisions reached by the struggled for two and one-half years against the Haskell Loop, while the City turned a deaf ear to their heart-felt fear of the roadway's effect on the neighborhood. Schwegler, south and west of 19th and Louisiana, battled all the way to federal court to avoid paying for miles of sidewalk which the City put in their front yards without consultation. Alvamar, west of Kasold, battled the City to a draw to maintain open vote ruling which dictates that space on the basis of a legal

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