Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows: The B.C. Party System in the 1952 and 1953 Provincial Elections*

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Many observers of Canadian political parties assume that Social Credit is a right-wing party. Elmore Philpott, a columnist for the Vancouver *Sun*, repeatedly charged Social Credit with being the "new Conservatives without whiskers". In late 1952, for example, he averred that "any true Liberal or intelligent CCF-er who gives his first or second choice votes to Social Credit should have his head read, for that reactionary, extreme right-wing party is furthest removed from everything he really wants".[1] Such perceptions, of course, have some foundation. For example, the origins of Social Credit strength in B.C. could be traced largely to the defection from the provincial Conservative party of W. A. C. Bennett and Tilly Rolston and their subsequent role in the new Social Credit League. Furthermore, the "funny money" doctrines and religious fundamentalism of the Alberta Social Credit government probably led many residents to view the B.C. branch as very conservative. Social Credit candidates commonly denounced socialist and communist threats, and this rhetoric no doubt contributed to their image as right-wing.

Notwithstanding this common impression, there are good grounds for assuming that the Social Credit League of B.C. is a middle-of-the-road party. This view is apparently shared by the current premier, Bill Bennett: "No party of the extreme right or the extreme left can survive. We are a populist party slightly to the right of centre. The NDP is a populist party slightly to the left."[2] During the 1950s and 1960s, under Premier W. A. C. Bennett, many actions and policies of the Social Credit govern-

1 The Vancouver *Sun*, 3 November 1952, p. 4.

2 Allan Fotheringham, "Bennett the Second: Horatio Alger with a Head Start", *Weekend Magazine*, The Vancouver *Sun*, vol. 26, no. 8, 21 February 1976, pp. 4, 6. Mr. Bennett goes on to criticize his father for letting the party become too right-wing, but he does not specify the period to which he refers.

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ment might have been considered "socialistic" or at least not conservative. These included the purchase of B.C. Electric (now B.C. Hydro) and the takeover and operation of the ferry system.

Although there were no surveys or public opinion polls at the time of Social Credit's initial victories in 1952 and 1953, later polls indicate the mixture of perceptions that may also have characterized the party earlier. For example, the federal election studies of 1965 and 1968 contain extensive evidence that the perceptions of Social Credit were quite different in B.C. than in other provinces; among other things, it was viewed here as closer to the centre of the ideological spectrum than elsewhere. Interestingly, Social Credit's position on the left-right spectrum was judged differently by each party's supporters in B.C., whereas in Ontario and the east there was unanimity across parties in where to locate Social Credit.[3]

The ambiguous position of the B.C. Social Credit stems from at least two sources. First, Social Credit rhetoric and policies as well as the personal styles of W. A. C. Bennett and some of his cabinet ministers were characterized by a combination of populist and conservative features. When questioned, an observer of Social Credit could emphasize one or the other element and thereby place the party on the left, on the right, or in the middle. Second, the party formed the government, and governing parties typically moderate their tendencies compared to when they are in opposition.[4] This difference of perspective — in power vs. out of power — may explain why the supporters of different parties did not agree on Social Credit's ideological stance in B.C. In other parts of Canada, where Social Credit is a member of the opposition and often quite weak, its image seems more clear-cut.[5]

The evidence by which one could assess the position of Social Credit in the electorate's eyes has consisted so far mainly of responses to hypothetical situations. For example, voters have been asked for whom, if their favourite party had not nominated a candidate in their riding in the previous election, they would have voted.[6] While this sort of question may reveal implicit rankings of the parties, data on actual behaviour would supplement these hypothetical responses and test the party orderings more

[3] David J. Elkins, "The Perceived Structure of the Canadian Party Systems", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 7 (Sept. 1974), pp. 502-24.

[4] Alan Cairns suggested this second interpretation.

[5] In the concluding section, these hypotheses will be incorporated into a two-dimensional model of the B.C. party system.

[6] Elkins, *op. cit.*

rigorously. As it happens, such data do exist for two elections in B.C. —
1952 and 1953. These were, of course, among the most important and
interesting elections in this century, as they heralded the rise of Social
Credit in B.C. and the demise of the provincial Liberal and Conservative
parties. Only in these two instances were voters called upon to rank all
the candidates (or parties) in their riding. Votes were transferred, as
explained below, until a candidate received a majority. Hence by focus-
ing on transfers in the second and subsequent counts we can make infer-
ences about the voters' collective perceptions as to which parties were
"close" to each other and which were "distant" from each other. Per-
ceived distances can be used to test models about the underlying rankings
of the parties.

This article, therefore, tests two alternative hypotheses about the under-
lying rankings of the parties in the 1952 and 1953 B.C. elections. The
first hypothesis asserts that the parties were ranked as follows: CCF -
Liberal - Progressive Conservative - Social Credit. According to the alter-
native hypothesis they were ranked as CCF - SC - L - PC.[7] Other hypo-
theses can be imagined, but sufficient data exist that we need not be con-
cerned with them. For example, the CCF was certainly never thought of
as a right-wing party; nor were the Liberals and Conservatives left-wing.
The problematic datum involves whether Social Credit was ever per-
ceived as falling between CCF and the other parties or whether it was
viewed as a more right-wing party. If so, was there agreement on the
perception, or did the typical voter in one party have a different assess-
ment of Social Credit's location than typical voters in another party? As
we shall see, in the 1952 election CCF and Social Credit supporters
generally shared the perception of Social Credit as a centre party, but
this changed during 1953. In both elections, Liberals and Conservatives
acted on the assumption that Social Credit was a right-wing party, though
still preferable to the CCF.

The scope of this article is, therefore, quite restricted. It tests the two
hypotheses above for the 1952 and 1953 elections. It ignores many other
interesting aspects of those elections, and it cannot be considered a com-
prehensive analysis of either election. Although a definitive account of
that period has never been written, additional information may be found
in several well-known sources.[8]

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[7] I will generally abbreviate the party names in this way whenever presenting ranks or
labelling tables of data.

[8] Henry F. Angus, "The British Columbia Election, June, 1952", *Canadian Journal of
Economics and Political Science*, 18 (1952), pp. 518-25; Henry F. Angus, "Note on

The Transferable Vote System

In order to understand how inferences are made about party rankings, one must understand the balloting system and how the votes were counted. Although time-consuming in practice, the system involved a few simple principles.[9] The basic principle rested on the belief that democracy requires representatives to be elected by a majority rather than a mere plurality. If no one won a majority on the first ballot, one eliminated candidates until someone achieved a clear majority.

The second principle concerned the way preferences were expressed. Instead of having a series of elections and run-offs, dropping candidates whose showings were poor and then voting again, each voter ranked all the candidates starting with his first choice, then his second, and so on. This meant, of course, that no voter could change his vote to back the likely winner after seeing how the first count went. Hence, the ranks very likely reflect true preferences.

The third major principle governed the tabulation of votes. On first count, the total number of valid ballots determined the number of votes needed for a majority, namely 50 per cent of this total plus one vote. A candidate who achieved that critical threshold was declared elected. If no one had a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes was removed; the ballots for him were counted for their second-choice candidate; these second-choice votes were added to the first-choice votes candidates had already received; and a new figure was calculated for a majority, reflecting the reduction in the total votes due to "exhausted" ballots.[10] This procedure was repeated until a candidate reached an absolute majority.

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the British Columbia Election in June 1952", *Western Political Quarterly*, 5 (1952), pp. 585-91; Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Vancouver: Macmillan of Canada, 1958); Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province, 1934-1972* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1972); Martin Robin, "British Columbia: The Politics of Class Conflict", in *Canadian Provincial Politics*, ed. Martin Robin (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1972); Edwin Black, "British Columbia: The Politics of Exploitation", in *Social and Cultural Change in Canada*, ed. W. E. Mann (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970); Walter D. Young, *Democracy and Discontent: Progressivism, Socialism and Social Credit in the Canadian West* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1969); and Thomas M. Sanford, *The Politics of Protest: The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and Social Credit League in British Columbia*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of California, 1961.

[9] Its practical difficulties may be seen in the fact that, in 1952, official determination of the winning party was not known until nearly seven weeks after the election.

[10] Exhausted ballots are those in which voters have not ranked enough parties to allow their votes to be counted in the particular round. For example, if you ranked only one party, your ballot would be exhausted on the second count; if you ranked three parties, it would be exhausted on the fourth count.

If not before, a majority must have occurred when there remained only two candidates whose votes had not been transferred. The data on which this analysis rests, therefore, consist of the results of each separate count for each constituency in which no one won the first count.

If we had access to the ballots actually cast, we could simply total up the number of voters who ranked the parties in particular ways. For example, in terms of our two central hypotheses, we could see how many ranked the parties as (CCF - SC - L - PC), how many as (CCF - L - PC - SC), and how many in other ways. Given such information, this would be a much shorter article, since in its absence we must ascertain or infer the rankings indirectly.

Lacking access to the ballots, what we must do is answer this question: when a candidate was dropped and his supporters' second (or third or fourth) choice votes were counted, to which party did they move and in what magnitude? It should be clear, therefore, that all inferences and statements in this analysis concern *groups* of voters rather than individuals. For example, if 100 Conservative voters were transferred because their first-choice candidate, the Conservative, was dropped, and sixty of them voted for the Liberal as second choice, twenty for Social Credit, ten for CCF, and ten "exhausted" their ballot (i.e., did not have a second choice), then we would say that *collectively* their preferences were (PC - L - SC - CCF) in that order. Obviously, for twenty of them SC was ranked ahead of the Liberal candidate. Given the data, however, we must aggregate individual preferences into group or collective preferences in this way. It might be noted, in justification, that this is identical in principle to what we do when we say the voters of B.C. preferred Social Credit to the NDP in the December 1975 election. Many did, but some did not. Collective perceptions, therefore, are logically distinct from individual ones; this article concerns the former and must unfortunately ignore the latter entirely.

Collectively, the more people who choose a particular pair of alternatives (for example, switching from party A to party B when party A is dropped), the more similar these alternatives are thought to be. In other words, even though individuals with the same first preference may disagree about the second-best party, the *proportions* who switch to a given party may be assumed to indicate the general, average, or typical perceptions of party preferences for that group of voters.[11] In the ensuing analy-

[11] This is a standard assumption in measurement and scaling theory. See, for example, Warren Torgerson, *Theory and Methods of Scaling* (N.Y.: Wiley, 1958), ch. 9 and 14.

sis, this assumption will play a central role and its importance will be apparent. Before that, however, let us place these two provincial elections in their historical context.

Summary of the 1952 and 1953 Elections

After a decade of uneasy alliance, the Liberals and Conservatives disbanded the coalition government in January 1952, the Liberals continuing as a minority government until the 1952 election.[12] Before the breakup, however, these two "establishment" parties crafted the transferable vote system described above. Its purpose was to secure a free-enterprise vote against CCF.[13] In that regard it was quite successful, but the vote transfers favoured the Social Credit upstart more than the older parties.

Balloting took place on 12 June 1952 in all ridings. At stake were forty-eight seats and two plebiscites on daylight saving time and sale of liquor by the glass (both passed).[14] Only five seats were won outright on the first count, two by CCF candidates and three by Social Credit. Two more seats were won by the CCF after one more relevant count.[15] The remaining forty-one seats required two relevant transfers (i.e., two of the four parties were eliminated in recounts). No seat required more than two relevant transfers. These forty-one seats were distributed as: CCF - 14; SC - 16; L - 6; PC - 4; and one Labour Independent. Hence, party standing was: SC = 19, CCF = 18, L = 6, PC = 4, Labour = 1, for a total of forty-eight seats. Social Credit formed a minority government.

If any is needed, further evidence of Social Credit's tenuous hold on power may be gained from the popular votes. In Table 1, we see that, both on first count and on final count, CCF garnered more popular votes in 1952 than did Social Credit. Both parties gained votes on the basis of transfers, as did the Liberals; the Conservatives, other parties, and Independents lost votes due to transfers.

Equally enlightening is Table 2 which summarizes changes in seats

[12] The Liberals held twenty-three of the forty-eight seats, but they had the support of two other MLAs. Although "officially" a minority party, the Liberals were nevertheless assured of majority votes on most issues.

[13] Robin, *Pillars of Profit, op. cit.*, pp. 138-9; Sanford, *Politics of Protest, op. cit.*, pp. 158ff.

[14] Data have taken from the reports of the B.C. Chief Electoral Officer, *Statement of Votes*, 1952 and 1953.

[15] By relevant counts, I mean comprising the supporters of a major party. Votes and transfers by Independents and minor parties are generally ignored since in all cases except those mentioned in the text they constitute a tiny proportion of the vote totals.

between first and final counts.[16] The totals along the bottom give final standing in the Legislative Assembly. Along the right margin we see what the results would have been in a "first-past-the-post" plurality system. Clearly CCF, not Social Credit, would have been the likely party to form a minority government. The reasons for the change from first to final count are summarized in the table. For example, CCF led on seventeen seats which it finally won, but it led initially on three others which it eventually lost to Social Credit and on one which it lost to the Conservatives.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF POPULAR VOTE

	1952		1953	
	First Count	*Final Count*	*First Count*	*Final Count*
CCF	30.78%	34.30%	30.85%	29.48%
SC	27.20	30.18	37.75	45.54
L	23.46	25.26	23.59	23.36
PC	16.84	9.66	5.60	1.11
Other	1.72	0.60	2.21	0.51
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
rejected ballots		5.61%		5.67%
% of registered voters who voted	68.53%		70.55%	

TABLE 2
FIRST AND FINAL SEAT COUNTS (1952)

				Final Count			
		CCF	*SC*	*L*	*PC*	*Other*	*Total*
	CCF	17	3	0	1	0	21
	SC	0	14	0	0	0	14
First Count	L	1	2	6	0	0	9
	PC	0	0	0	3	0	3
	Other	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	18	19	6	4	1	48

[16] Common conceptions to the contrary, transferable voting systems are not a form of proportional representation. Votes translate into seats in complex ways, but it is safe to say that this system, like the "first-past-the-post" plurality system, favours parties with larger vote totals and penalizes parties with relatively small vote totals. See, for details, Douglas W. Rae, *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).

During the months of late 1952 and early 1953, Premier Bennett had a delicate position to maintain. He had to induce support from other parties without yielding control to them. Meanwhile, he had to appear as a stabilizing force in a period of great uncertainty. All of this manoeuvring had to be conducted with an unusually inexperienced caucus and cabinet. Bennett and Tilly Rolston had been long-time MLAs, but the other seventeen Social Credit MLAs were novices. Furthermore, there were no lawyers and no big businessmen in caucus; hence, Bennett had to go outside of caucus to appoint Robert Bonner as Attorney-General and Einar Gunderson as Minister of Finance. Neither held a seat in the Legislative Assembly when appointed, but both won by-elections in November 1952.[17]

In the spring 1953 sitting of the Legislature, a few matters of business were passed, but substantial legislation was difficult. Bennett could not force legislation through without support from the Liberals and others, but he resisted making concessions to them. The simplest course, therefore, from his point of view was to find the right issue on which to be defeated so he could ask for an election. The opposition parties strongly opposed certain provisions of a bill to change school financing. The premier refused to compromise, and the government fell in April. The opposition, while supporting the bill's lowering of taxes, foresaw other long-term costs and problems. Since lower taxes in the short-run are generally more attractive than future gains under an alternative scheme, Bennett had chosen a clever issue on which to campaign. Not only was his part — as the incumbent — the natural solution to the problem of instability, but it was apparently in favour of lower taxes!

Another aspect of the general chaos and uncertainty of this period which worked to the advantage of Social Credit concerned party leadership. In particular, all four parties chose new leaders between these two elections. Social Credit had no official leader until Bennett was chosen after the 1952 election. Harold Winch resigned as CCF leader just after the 1953 election was called; Arnold Webster replaced him and won a seat in 1953. Byron Johnson, long-time Liberal leader and premier, lost his seat in 1952 and resigned as leader. The convention to name his successor was postponed, however, from November 1952 until after the 1953

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[17] Bonner was elected on first count in Columbia constituency with only token opposition by CCF and Liberal candidates; the Conservatives did not contest the seat. Gunderson was elected on first count in Similkameen constituency, easily defeating his CCF opponent. An Independent Farmer Labour candidate received a few votes; but the Liberals and Conservatives did not contest the seat.

election had been announced; hence Art Laing (then a Liberal MP) had little time as leader before the elections. Herbert Anscomb had been Conservative party leader during coalition, but resigned after the 1952 election. He was eventually replaced by Deane Finlayson, who promptly lost in his bid for a seat in the 1953 election. Thus, although all the leaders were newly appointed, Bennett was chosen earlier than the others and gained visibility because of his position as premier. For an electorate looking for a point of stability, Bennett was the most realistic possibility.

Needless to say, incumbency, a visible and personable leader, and a position in favour of lower taxes constituted a potent combination. When voters went to the polls on 9 June 1953, it was quickly apparent that a stable government was more likely than the previous year. First, Social Credit's first-count vote total was up to 37.75 per cent, compared to CCF's 30.85 per cent (see Table 1). The Conservative party was the big loser on this first round of ballots, dropping over 10 per cent in a year. Second, although only five seats were decided on first count, as in 1952, there were twelve won after one relevant transfer, as against only two in 1952. Third, after all counts were complete, Bennett had led his party to twenty-eight seats (out of forty-eight), a clear majority, and 45.54 per cent of the vote (15 per cent more than the 1952 final count). Finally, the pattern of leads and reversals was different from 1952. Note that Social Credit would have won decisively on first count, unlike 1952. Furthermore, the Liberals and Conservatives led in no ridings on first count, picking up their few seats on vote transfers from other parties.

TABLE 3

FIRST AND FINAL SEAT COUNTS (1953)

		Final Count					
		CCF	*SC*	*L*	*PC*	*Other*	*Total*
	CCF	14	0	2	1	0	17
	SC	0	28	2	0	0	30
First Count	L	0	0	0	0	0	0
	PC	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Other	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Total	14	28	4	1	1	48

In short, this period was one of instability for voters, for the parties, and for the provincial government. Despite a very brief time between

elections, many changes occurred; it would be surprising if there were not also changes in how the electorate viewed the party system.[18]

Pairs of Vote Exchanges

Recall that the difference between our two hypothesized rankings of B.C. parties concerns the position of Social Credit. In one it lies between CCF and the Liberals; in the other it is to the right of both the Liberals and the Conservatives. We have assumed that the "distance" or degree of mutual attraction between two parties can be assessed by the proportions of the supporters of one party who switch, or give second choice votes, to the other party. Hence, in both hypotheses, we expect that Liberals and Conservatives will switch predominantly to each other. The two hypotheses stipulate different behaviour for Social Credit supporters. They will share their second-choice votes differentially with CCF or with the Liberals and Conservatives, depending on the hypothesis.

By all accounts, the original motivation for the transferable vote system in B.C. involved an expectation that mutual second-place votes shared between Liberals and Conservatives would keep them in power and keep out the CCF. While the system served to frustrate the CCF attempt to form a government, what surprised everyone was the fact that CCF and Social Credit candidates were frequently mutual second choices, thereby frustrating the Liberals and Conservatives. Hence, if we examine which party was dropped and which party received the *largest* share of the transferred votes, we can assess tentatively the degree of mutual attraction between each pair of parties. Tables 4 and 5 contain a summary of relevant transfers. One qualification must be borne in mind: if party A was dropped before party B, then it cannot receive transfers from B. This complicates the analysis, but the overall results are quite clear.

Looking first at 1952 (Table 4), the most striking feature is the bipolar pattern of exchanges. Conservatives received seven transfers from the Liberals out of seven possible cases (i.e., where the PC candidate had not already been dropped). Conversely, the Liberals received thirty-three out of a possible thirty-four Conservative transfer blocs. Out of all cases where the partner was still on the ballot, these two parties exchanged the largest blocs in forty out of forty-one instances, a clear indication of mutual attraction.[19]

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[18] There was a federal election on 10 August 1953. Hence, it did not interfere with perceptions of the provincial parties, as it might have if it had occurred earlier in 1953.

[19] It is, of course, an open question whether "mutual attraction" indicates ideological similarity or strategic advantage or both.

TABLE 4

ORIGIN AND DESTINATION OF TRANSFER VOTES (1952)

		Party Receiving Largest % of Votes on Transfer					*No. of Times Dropped*
		PC	L	SC	CCF	Labour	
	PC	X	33	3[1]	0	0	36
Party	L	7	X	6[2]	0	0	13
Dropped	SC	0	2[3]	X	19	1	22
	CCF	0	0	12	X	1	13

NOTES:

[1] In two of these cases, the Liberal was eliminated on a prior count.

[2] In all six cases, the PC candidate had been eliminated on previous counts.

[3] In one of these two cases, the CCF candidate had been eliminated on the previous count.

TABLE 5

ORIGIN AND DESTINATION OF TRANSFER VOTES (1953)

		Party Receiving Largest % of Votes on Transfer					*No. of Times Dropped*
		PC	L	SC	CCF	Labour	
	PC	X	33	0	0	0	33
Party	L	1[1]	X	15[3]	2	0	18
Dropped	SC	1[2]	7	X	0	1	9
	CCF	0	10	2	X	0	12

NOTES:

[1] This was the only case in which a Liberal candidate was transferred before the PC candidate was dropped.

[2] In all 15 cases the PC had been dropped in a previous count.

[3] In this case the Liberal had been dropped in the previous count.

Similarly, the exchanges between SC and CCF were substantial, and they favoured few other parties with any sizeable bloc of votes. Out of the cases where exchange could occur, these two "partners in protest"[20] exchanged principal blocs in thirty-one out of thirty-three cases: again a strong show of mutual attraction.

By 1953 (Table 5), the situation had changed markedly. Although the Liberals and Conservatives were still mutually beneficial, Social Credit and the CCF were no longer partners. Because of the wholesale elimina-

[20] This phrase was suggested by Sanford's analysis of CCF and Social Credit as constituting a "protest party system"; Sanford, *Politics of Protest, op. cit.*, ch. VI.

tion of PC candidates in early counts, one must be careful in assessing these figures. Clearly, if we remove the cases where a potential partner has been dropped, the Liberals and Conservatives actually strengthened their alliance: thirty-four out of thirty-four cases where each was available, the largest transfer bloc went to the correct partner. Social Credit gave and received many more blocs of votes with Liberals and Conservatives than in 1952.

The break-up of the SC-CCF partnership may be seen in the fact that only two out of twenty possible bloc transfers were made. Instead each of these parties gave its principal bloc shares to the Liberals, though SC continued to support Thomas Uphill, the Labour candidate in Fernie.[21] What is remarkable is that the Liberals won so few seats considering that every other major party offered them second-choice votes. They simply started with too few first-place votes to capitalize on their second ballot strength (see Table 1).

On the basis of this simplified analysis, two tentative conclusions stand out. First, there were substantial differences in vote exchanges, and presumably therefore in mutual attractiveness of the parties, from 1952 to 1953. This was expected given the strategic considerations and leadership changes mentioned above. Second, the patterns of exchanges in Tables 4 and 5 suggest strongly that Social Credit moved — or at least was seen to move — considerably to the right of their 1952 location when it had been implicitly allied with the CCF. As early as 1953, therefore, one can perhaps discern the formation of the "free enterprise versus socialism" structure which has characterized the B.C. provincial party system in recent years. Before we accept the ranking (CCF - L - PC - SC), however, we must consider some other possibilities.

Consider the ranking (CCF - L - SC - PC). Would this be a reasonable inference about how the party rankings were viewed in 1953? Although there were undoubtedly some voters who perceived Social Credit as falling between the two former coalition partners, the bulk of the transfer votes contradicts this ordering. If Social Credit were generally viewed in this way, one would expect that both Liberals and Conservatives would give more second-place votes to it than to each other. In fact, as the tables above make clear, these two parties generally gave their largest vote trans-

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[21] Uphill was a long-time representative of the coal miners in the Kootenay area. Although he voted with the opposition to defeat Social Credit on the school financing bill, he had supported Bennett over Winch as Premier in 1952. (Paddy Sherman, *Bennett* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1966), p. 119, as cited by Martin Robin, *Pillars of Profit, op. cit.*, p. 164.) Perhaps this explains why he received Social Credit support.

fers to Social Credit candidates only when one or the other had been eliminated, leaving a choice between Social Credit and CCF (or an exhausted ballot). The logical possibility, then, is that Liberals and Conservatives saw Social Credit as located on their right.

This inference is strengthened if we consider one further possibility. Suppose the ranking in 1953 was (CCF - SC - L - PC), but the distance between CCF and SC had become very large and that between SC and L had narrowed. In other words, in 1952 the distances were (CCF - SC — L - PC) while by 1953 the distances were (CCF — SC - L - PC). While this would be congruent with the pattern of exchanges between SC and L or PC, it contradicts the fairly extensive exchanges between CCF and the Liberals, which greatly exceeded those between CCF and Social Credit. Of course, a multi-dimensional model (which I explore below) can overcome this contradiction, but if we restrict ourselves to the left-right dimension, the pattern which best fits the data in 1953 is (CCF - L - PC - SC). Since this conclusion is based on the patterns of *largest* second-choice vote blocs, it ignores information on third- and fourth-choice blocs. To analyse that more complex pattern we must introduce a more sophisticated measurement technique, to which we now turn. As we shall see, this approach corroborates the conclusions so far.

"Unfolding" Preference Data

We have assumed that voters' rankings of parties on their ballots constituted a measure of their preferences. Preference data require different analytic techniques than some other forms of data. A useful technique developed by the psychologist Clyde Coombs has been called "unfolding" a preference scale.[22] Whereas a judgment scale requires each respondent to locate himself or a stimulus object on a predetermined scale, preferential data consist of preferences among a set of stimuli on the basis of preceived "distance" from the respondent. The resulting datum indicates that subject X prefers stimulus A to stimulus B. This is assumed to mean that the distance from X to A is less than that from X to B. When more individuals prefer A than prefer B, the distance from A is defined as closer to them than B. Since we focus here on party voters in B.C. the data may be interpreted as showing that "supporters of party X prefer party A to party B".

Suppose we ask three individuals (X, Y, Z) to tell us their preferences among four alternatives (such as the parties A, B, C, D). It is possible

[22] Clyde Coombs, *A Theory of Data* (N.Y.: Wiley, 1964), ch. 5.

that we will get the same rank order for each. If we do, no unfolding is necessary; but if they give different orders, we ask ourselves whether they are all responding to the same underlying structure or ordering but assessing it from *different points of view.* Imagine that these three persons stated the following preferences (from their most-preferred to least-preferred party): ABCD (for person X), CBDA (for Y), and DCBA (for Z). Note first that the preference orders for individuals X and Z are mirror images: what is most preferred for one is least for the other, and so on. That means that both rankings are consistent with a single common dimension on which both rank the parties, but they prefer opposite ends of this dimension. The crucial question then is, can the ordering of individual Y be interpreted as also consistent with that common dimension?

To see that Y's responses are consistent with those of X and Z, note that Y's perspective may lie between those of X and Z. Imagine that the common dimension on which they all rank the parties had been "folded over" by person Y; then the parties which are equally to the left and right of him would be ranked at the same point in his preference hierarchy. If one "unfolded" his ordering these parties would then be on opposite sides of him. By examining Figure I, the reader may verify that an unfolding of the preferences for Y (CBDA) can yield the same underlying common dimension as for individuals X and Z. Since party C is the closest to Y, he ranks it first, party B is next closest (though when unfolded it rests on the other side of Y from C) and so forth.

If we can unfold several distinct preferences to produce the same underlying order, as indicated in Figure II, then we may hypothesize that individuals have in mind the same common dimension and furthermore rank the parties on *that dimension* in the same order. It will thus be seen that, depending on the perspective of the respondent based on his own place on the dimension, very different *preferences* may be clues to the same rank order on an underlying dimension (such as left-right). At the same time, there are preferences which would violate this hypothesis: for example, in Figure I, if Y gave as his preferred order CADB, it could not be unfolded in a manner consistent with the preferences expressed by X and Z.

The unfolding technique is hence a stringent test of the hypothesis that groups of respondents share a common dimension. A set of preferences for several people will fail to unfold uniformly if the ordering on the common dimension is different for different respondents or if they are employing different dimensions altogether in making their judgments.
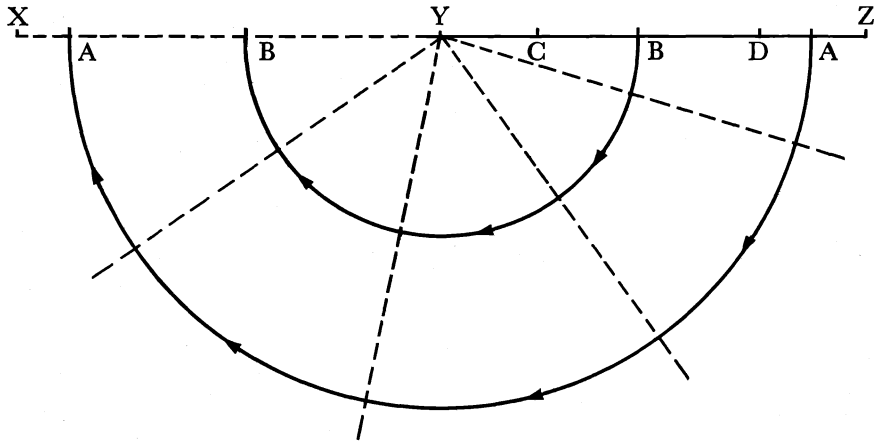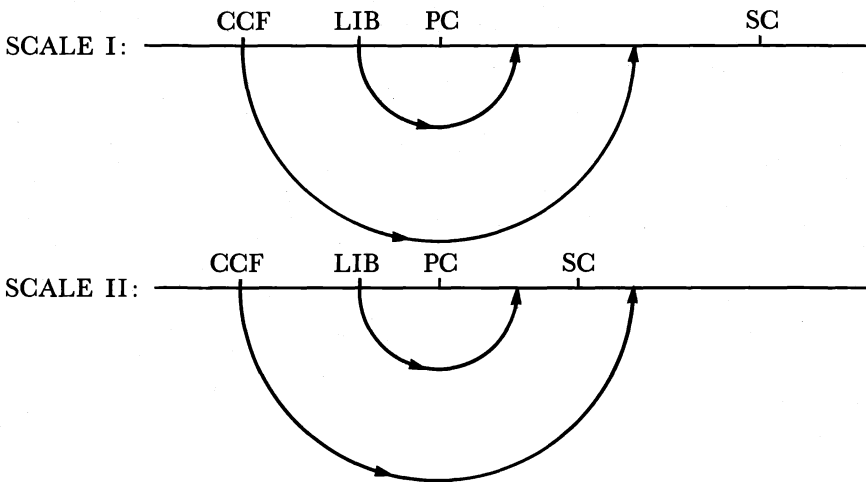
FIGURE I

HYPOTHETICAL SCALE

FIGURE II

IDENTICAL HYPOTHETICAL SCALES WITH DIFFERENT DISTANCES

BETWEEN PARTIES

Scale I: respondent located at PC would give his preference as: PC-LIB-CCF-SC, by folding the scale as indicated.

Scale II: respondent located at PC would give his preference as: PC-LIB-SC-CCF, by folding the scale as indicated.

Since we do not have data on the party preferences marked on the ballots, we must infer these preferences from the transfer votes. In order to infer the collective perceptions of party rankings, we must make at least five assumptions. Some are quite reasonable; others cannot be proven or disproven but are simply asserted. The assumptions are:

1. Rankings of parties are the same for the supporters of dropped candidates and for the electorate as a whole. Since the only ballots in which subsequent rankings are counted consist of those for candidates who do poorly, there is a danger that these are not a representative sample. The assumption is probably reasonable for the 1952 election, since the Liberals and Conservatives were frequently dropped and most voters probably believed these parties would win as they had in all previous elections. By 1953, however, one cannot know what voter expectations were.

2. Voters rank the parties on their ballots according to their actual preferences and not simply according to who they think will win. Since they do not get to vote after the results of each round are announced, this assumption may be plausible.

3. Exhausted ballots may be safely ignored. How safe it is to ignore them depends on whether exhausted ballots indicate that voters have misunderstood the procedures or were wholly ignorant of the candidates. If the voters exhaust their ballots because of strategic considerations, the assumption is secure. For example, plumping involves voting for your first preference and penalizing everyone else. (It does not always work, but it is a rational strategy compatible with the second assumption above.) Since the number of ballots declared invalid was not markedly different from previous elections, it may be safe to assume that voters understood the system and exhausted their ballots for strategic reasons. Another reasonable version of this assumption is that when the distance from a voter's first-choice party to other parties passes beyond some "distance threshold", he ceases to rank the parties and exhausts his ballot. When this happens, we can ignore exhausted ballots because they implicitly place the unnamed parties last on the list; that is, the unranked parties are too far away from the voter for him even to consider switching to them.[23]

4. Rankings on third (and later) counts are not seriously contaminated by previous transfers. That is, ballots for a party on a given count can be

[23] Exhausted ballots can sometimes result from the elimination of parties on prior counts. A detailed analysis of exhausted ballots when particular parties have or have not been previously eliminated can reveal interesting features of the rankings; however useful such information might be, space does not permit its exploration here.

divided into two groups: its own first-choice supporters and supporters of other parties who were transferred to it previously. Obviously this is not a problem on the first count and on the first transfer, but it becomes an increasingly vexing problem with each subsequent count. The severity of the problem is reduced by two features:

a. Minor parties and Independents rarely get more than a handful of votes; hence, their transfers do not contaminate later counts very much; and

b. In no case were more than two major parties transferred and often only one.

In a majority of the cases analysed, there was no significant contamination because no relevant transfers had previously occurred. In about one-third of the cases, some degree of contamination must be present.

5. The proportion of second- or later-choice votes transferred from a given party or candidates is an accurate measure of the perceived rank order of the parties by those voters. In fact, all of the votes transferred are second preferences for people who had the same first preference. Despite this, one must use as the measure of order and distance the relative magnitude (or proportion) of these second choices as though they were actually second, third and fourth preferences. This assumption can be justified. Fewer votes given to a party on second choice mean that this group of voters must have given more third- or later-choice votes to that party; and more votes on a later count necessarily mean that more voters have ranked that party lower. Hence, counterintuitive though it may appear at first, this assumption rests on strong logical grounds. This is especially the case if assumption three is interpreted to mean that exhausted ballots indicate that parties are ranked so low as to pass a threshold.[24]

Partisan Perceptions in 1952

Since each voter casts his first-choice vote for a specific party, supporters of different parties perceive the system from quite distinct vantage points. Hence, their scales of party preferences are "folded" around different points. Their first-choice vote determines the point of "folding"; and the proportion of these supporters who, when transferred, list another party as their next choice determines the rank order of preferences which must be "unfolded" for the supporters of a given party. Can the prefer-

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[24] The detailed description of voting in Alberni constituency in 1952, below, will clarify the use of these assumptions in the analysis.

ences for all four parties in all constituencies be unfolded to yield a common scale or ordering for the parties? In other words, can we interpret *divergent preferences* as consistent with *collective perceptions*, or are the partisan groups different not only in preferences but also in the underlying ordering along the left-right dimension?[25]

To illustrate the use of the unfolding technique and to assess the degree of possible error in our inferences, let us examine in some detail the transfers in Alberni constituency in 1952. After the first count, the Labour Progressive Party (LPP) candidate had only 196 votes and was dropped. The CCF received 138 LPP transfer votes, SC nine votes, the Liberal five votes, the PC one vote, and forty-three ballots were exhausted. This illustrates three of the assumptions above. First, the very left-wing LPP would clearly be judged by most observers to be closer to the CCF than to other parties; and the massive shift of second-choice votes to CCF reflects this. Second, the "distance" from LPP to other candidates was so large that exhausted ballots accounted for the next largest bloc after CCF, with only minimal attraction for other parties judging by the few votes for them. Third, eventually PC and SC candidates were dropped, and "contamination" due to LPP transfers was negligible (one out of 1,205 votes for PC and nine out of 1,375 for SC).

On the second transfer (the first "relevant" or major party transfer), the Conservative candidate was dropped. His 1,205 votes consisted of 1,204 first-choice votes plus one transfer from LPP; they divided as follows: 543 for the Liberal candidate, 193 for the CCF, 175 for Social Credit, and 294 exhausted. Given the fact that the exhausted ballots exceeded those for either CCF or SC, the distance from PC to those parties must have been perceived as very large by many PC voters in this constituency. Looking only at transfers among parties, the rank preferences of the group of PC first-choice voters were: (PC - 1204; L - 543; CCF - 193; SC - 175). Unfolding around the point (PC), the only scale consistent with either of our two hypothesized rankings was: (CCF - L - PC - SC). Other unfoldings do not make sense in light of other data. For example, none of the following are plausible, though all are logically possible:

(a) (CCF - PC - L - SC)

(b) (SC - CCF - PC - L)

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[25] Although no evidence from the votes themselves can reveal that left-right is the basic dimension, ample evidence exists in sample surveys and public opinion polls to substantiate this assumption.

(c) (SC - CCF - L - PC)

(d) (SC - PC - L - CCF)

(e) (SC - L - PC - CCF).

According to assumption five above, the proportions of second-choice votes reveal what the group's actual second, third and fourth choices were. This simplifying assumption introduces a certain degree of error which can be estimated in the following manner. The actual patterns of first and second choices among Alberni Conservatives in 1952 were:

(a) PC - L (543 people)

(b) PC - CCF (193 people)

(c) PC - SC (175 people).

Regardless of the third- and fourth-place choices of the 543 people in group (a), they can all be unfolded according to (CCF - L - PC - SC), the order noted above.[26] For group (b), so long as nineteen more voters prefer L than prefer SC, the maximum error will be found in group (c), which requires a more detailed analysis. For group (c) there are two possibilities. If their third and fourth choices resulted in the preference order (PC - SC - L - CCF), they too can be unfolded as (CCF - L - PC - SC). In that event all individuals in (a), (b), and (c) could have been responding to the same underlying dimension (except those persons in (b) who preferred SC to L).

If their third and fourth choices resulted in the preference order (PC - SC - CCF - L), on the other hand, they would not unfold as (CCF - L - PC - SC), since that would violate the preference ordering of CCF and L. How large our error is, then, depends on the relative proportions of individuals whose first and second preferences were (PC - SC) who gave as third and fourth choices (CCF - L) compared to (L - CCF). Imagine the worst situation, from the point of view of assumption five, namely that all 175 of the people in group (c) gave the preference order (PC - SC - CCF - L). In that event, 14.5 per cent (175 out of 1,205) of the Conservative voters were misclassified. If only two-thirds of group (c) gave that preference and one-third gave (PC - SC - L - CCF), then the error was only about 10 per cent (roughly two-thirds of 14.5 per cent). Since unanimity is unlikely, we can be virtually certain the error lies somewhere between zero and 14.5 per cent, with 10 per cent being a good guess. Spot checks of other constituencies suggest that 10 per cent

[26] For why this is so, see the example in Figure II above.

is probably an average degree of error. Whether that is too much error or an acceptable amount is left to the reader to decide. I will simply note that in most applications of scaling procedures, a reliability level of 90 per cent (as is implied by an error of 10 per cent) has generally been considered satisfactory.

For Alberni in 1952, therefore, we can conclude with roughly 90 per cent certainty that the Conservative voters were responding to a hypo- thetical party ranking of (CCF - L - PC - SC) rather than the alternative hypothesis of (CCF - SC - L - PC).

For the Liberals, eleven cases are relevant, and in every one of them the unfolded scales are consonant with (CCF - L - PC - SC) while some are not compatible with the alternative model. It is quite clear, therefore, that for these two older parties, there is a common dimension along which they rank all four parties in the same way.

The Social Credit candidate was dropped in twenty-two instances, of which one is not suitable for analysis because the Labour candidate who eventually won the seat was not opposed by a CCF candidate. Of the twenty-one relevant transfers, not a single one can be unfolded consistent with the model placing SC on the far right. All twenty-one require the assumption that SC is next to CCF; eighteen of these unfold as (CCF - SC - L - PC) and three as (CCF - SC - PC - L). Either we conclude that no unfolding is possible, or we consider the reversal of Liberals and Con- servatives in three cases as acceptable error or "noise".[27] Regardless, we must definitely reject the traditional ordering of (CCF - L - PC - SC).

The transfer votes when the thirteen CCF candidates were dropped reveal an unequivocal ordering. None is consistent with (CCF - L - PC - SC), and every one is consistent with (CCF - SC - L - PC) as the under- lying model.

In short, the 1952 election produced, in two different senses, a bipolar pattern of alliances. First, we saw that predominant blocs of second- choice votes were exchanged by L and PC, and by SC and CCF; but relatively little exchange was evident between the opposite pairs. Second, we have now seen that when all orderings are considered, the four parties occupied two quite different perceptual worlds. The Liberals and Con-

[27] If we consider that in these three constituencies the SC transfer votes actually unfold as (CCF - SC - L - PC), we misclassify 14.7 per cent of the voters in Lillooet, 13.8 per cent in Nanaimo and the Islands, and 5.2 per cent in Saanich. Since the number of exhausted ballots was large in each case and greatly exceeds the difference between Liberals and Conservatives, we may consider these "reversals" as simply acceptable error. They constitute less than 1 per cent of the Social Credit voters in the province.

servatives saw the parties ordered as (CCF - L - PC - SC), while the Social Credit and CCF supporters generally agreed on (CCF - SC - L - PC).[28]

Partisan Perceptions in 1953

Applying the standards of the previous section, there were several clear differences in 1953. For the PC transfers, thirty-two of the thirty-three present the preference order (PC - L - SC - CCF) which can be unfolded in ways compatible with both models. The other case is identical, except that the CCF candidate was dropped first and thus does not get ranked; this case can also be unfolded both ways if CCF had been ranked fourth.

Although both models fit the data, parsimony requires an assumption of minimal change. Therefore, we assume that the PC supporters had an underlying model or perception of the parties as (CCF - L - PC - SC). The stability of pair-wise vote exchanges, in Tables 4 and 5, suggests that for the Conservatives the same underlying model applied in both years.

The same general conclusion applies to the Liberals. Considering all eighteen transfer situations, they can be unfolded as (CCF - L - PC - SC) but not as (CCF - SC - L - PC). Hence, this reinforces the view that the two older parties maintained the same underlying collective perception in both election years.

The CCF shows the most vivid change. Whereas it unfolded perfectly with SC in the middle in 1952, in 1953 no unfolding is possible. Two of the twelve transfer sets unfold as (CCF - SC - L - PC), the order in 1952. Nine of the twelve unfold as (CCF - L - PC - SC), and one set unfolds with SC between L and PC. Hence, while a majority of ridings favour the same unfolding as that of the Liberals and Conservatives, in fact no uniform unfolding is possible.[29] This no doubt reflects the genuine confusion felt by CCF-ers in the wake of their narrow defeat by Social Credit in 1952.

Social Credit also presents an ambiguous face, but in a different way than CCF. Leaving aside as irrelevant one riding with no CCF or PC candidate, there are eight relevant cases of SC transfers. All eight are compatible, when unfolded, with both models of the party system. Par-

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[28] If we do not count the three exceptions mentioned in the previous footnote, CCF and Social Credit agree; otherwise, they do not completely agree.

[29] These reversals of ordering cannot be considered simply minor errors; unlike the ones mentioned in footnote 27, these represent substantial proportions of CCF voters in their constituencies.

simony would, therefore, require the assumption that their underlying model remained the same as for 1952. This contradicts the clear evidence of change noted above — namely, the shift of second-place votes from predominantly CCF candidates to predominantly Liberal candidates. Hence, the safest conclusion which accounts for all the evidence is that Social Credit supporters came to perceive the party system differently in 1953. In particular, they no longer viewed themselves as a middle party with close links to the CCF but as a more right-wing or at least "free enterprise" party. Without survey data it would be impossible to be more precise about the exact structure of their collective perceptions.
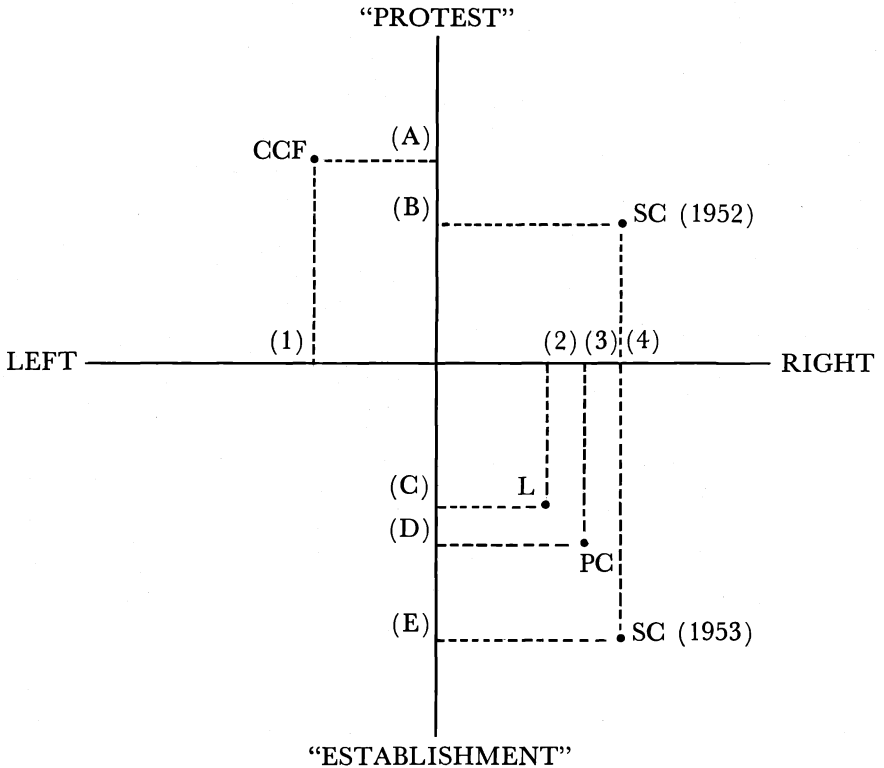

FIGURE III

A TWO-DIMENSIONAL MODEL OF THE B.C. PARTY SYSTEM

A Two-Dimensional Model

So far we have assumed that there was one underlying dimension, left-right, and have tried to ascertain whether there was agreement about the location of parties or candidates on that dimension. We have seen that there was no general agreement among the four major parties in the two elections. In conclusion, I shall offer a two-dimensional model which accounts for all of the data and which is quite plausible. By assuming that different groups emphasized one dimension or the other, we can account for the differences between parties in 1952 and for the changes in perception from 1952 to 1953.

One of the dimensions, of course, is the left-right axis we have investigated. The other dimension has no clear label; it might be called "elitist-populist" or "establishment-protest" or the equivalent. In Walter Young's terminology, this dimension may reflect the continuum between "party" and "movement".[30] Regardless of nomenclature, the fundamental idea is to distinguish between parties which are patronage-oriented, concerned primarily with being elected, and see themselves as likely to be elected versus some which are social movements, populist, non-status-quo oriented (whether leftist or rightist), and not central in the current power distribution. Recognizing the imprecision, I shall nevertheless call this dimension "protest vs. establishment".[31]

In Figure III, I have sketched a pattern of party distributions which encompasses these two dimensions. Notice that all parties except Social Credit occupy exactly the same point in both 1952 and 1953. There may have been changes of a minor sort, of course, in the ways that CCF, Liberals and Conservatives were viewed. Given the results above, however, they must have been fairly minor. Social Credit, on the other hand, has been assumed to have remained stationary on the left-right axis but to have moved (and been perceived to have moved) from a "protest" to an "establishment" position as a result of forming the minority government of 1952-53.

If a voter thought primarily in terms of left-right, as the Liberals and Conservatives may have done in both years, there would be no change in his perceptions from one election to the other. Such a voter would have continued to believe the parties were located on the left-right axis as indicated by the numbers in parentheses. If a voter thought primarily of

[30] Walter D. Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-61* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

[31] Sanford, *op. cit.*, ch. VI and VII, emphasizes this dimension.

the parties as either "ins" or "outs", as Social Credit and the CCF may have done in 1952, the rankings along the vertical axis would be indicated by the letters A, B, C, D. By 1953, however, such a voter, whether CCF or SC, would have ranked them as A, C, D, E. In other words, the changes in CCF and Social Credit rankings noted above may have reflected real shifts in the location of SC in the two-dimensional "party space" of B.C.

The implication of this model, if correct, would be that Social Credit voters in 1953 were ranking the parties in the same order as voters of Liberal or Conservative persuasion, but for a very different reason. For Social Creditors, left-right may have been a relatively unimportant dimension compared to voters who supported the old coalition partners; instead politics was viewed as a world of "ins" and "outs". When Social Credit became the government, its supporters' perceptual world changed, since it is difficult to maintain the *élan* of protest when you are in charge.

Finally, other models are plausible. For example, if Social Credit moved nearer to the centre of the left-right spectrum while simultaneously moving into an "establishment" position, that would also be consistent with the data so long as it did not move to the left of the Liberals and Conservatives. All of these models must remain speculative, of course, unless additional evidence can be adduced. Nevertheless, the analysis of transfer votes in the 1952 and 1953 elections suggests the theoretical value of considering a two-dimensional model, whatever its exact characteristics. This analysis has also provided strong support for the conclusion that partisan perceptions in B.C. differed by party in at least the early years of Social Credit dominance and that they changed in the short period between the 1952 and 1953 B.C. provincial elections.