

# Sources of Change in the B.C. Party System\*

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Observers of British Columbia's politics often find them peculiar. Distinctive features include: the virtual elimination of the major federal parties; the reputed power of organized labour matched by that of business;<sup>1</sup> the salience of class in voting;<sup>2</sup> the volatility of election results;<sup>3</sup> the populist flavour of both Social Credit and NDP election campaigns;<sup>4</sup> and bitterness and personal animosity in legislative debate. The stakes in provincial politics are seen to be high enough to justify, among other things, the sabotage of the provincial Liberal party by its own leadership and continued opposition by federal Tories to the revival of their provincial party. Parties sabotage each other as well.

In this paper we look for pattern beneath the surface chaos of B.C. politics. In particular we shall examine the extent to which the elections of the 1970s reflected short-term strategic considerations and long-term policy or ideological ones. We shall show that the development of the two coalitions which now command the support of nearly 95 percent of B.C. voters has been asymmetric in two senses. First, voters attaching themselves to one or the other of the coalitions have done so for quite different

\* Research for this paper was supported by SSHRC grant 410-78-0578. Research assistance provided by Kathy Teghtsoonian, Pam Frost and Bruce Mussellam is gratefully acknowledged. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the 1980 annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Montreal. Comments by William Irvine are gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Robin has been the foremost exponent of this view of the province's politics. See his chapter on B.C. in Martin Robin (ed.), *Canadian Provincial Politics*, 2nd ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> See especially Jane Jenson, "Party Systems," in David J. Bellamy, Jon H. Pammett and Donald C. Rowat (eds.), *The Provincial Political Systems* (Toronto: Methuen, 1976), pp. 121-23.

<sup>3</sup> This conventional view seems more apt for federal politics than provincial politics, at least since the early 1950s.

<sup>4</sup> See Edwin R. Black, "British Columbia: The Politics of Exploitation," in Hugh Thorburn (ed.), *Party Politics in Canada*, 4th ed. (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1979), for an analysis of the anti-traditional, anti-elitist characteristics of both parties.

reasons and with different degrees of enthusiasm. Second, the growth of the NDP popular vote over the last fifteen years has not been matched by complementary changes in the Social Credit vote. The two parties have converged on the political centre, but by building coalitions with very different strengths and weaknesses, and with different histories. We shall also show that this realignment can be traced to structural changes in the economy of the province, especially growth of the unionized workforce and geographic diffusion of large-scale industry.

### *Vote Shifts from 1972 to 1979*

Table 1 presents a summary of the official election results from 1966 to 1979. The aggregate pattern seems simple enough — a temporary dip in Social Credit support in 1972 matched by gains in NDP strength, with the Conservative party playing a spoiler role and assuring an NDP victory. An analysis of riding level results does not support this view. In fact, only nine seats were won by the NDP over Social Credit by less than the percentage of the vote won by Conservative candidates. Social Credit victories in these cases would not have been sufficient to eliminate the NDP majority, but, taken together with continued support for the Liberals, helped to convince many that the NDP could be defeated (and would not have won) were it not for the fractionalization of non-NDP support.

A “coalition of the right” did materialize in 1975 and seems to have been crucial to the defeat of the NDP government — it lost the election while receiving almost exactly the same share of the vote which brought it to office in 1972. In 1979 the “right” received another scare. The final collapse of the Liberals and a poor Conservative performance did not add significantly to the anti-NDP vote. NDP support increased sufficiently to bring them within five seats of the government.

TABLE 1  
*B.C. Provincial Election Results, 1966-1979*

	1966	1969	1972	1975	1979
Social Credit	45.6	46.8	31.2	49.3	48.2
NDP	33.6	33.9	39.6	39.2	46.0
Liberal	20.2	19.0	16.4	7.2	0.5
Conservative	0.1	0.1	12.7	3.9	5.1

SOURCE: British Columbia *Statement of Votes* (Victoria: Queen's Printer).

While the aggregate pattern seems clear, survey data show that, in fact, it masked a great deal of movement at the individual level.<sup>5</sup> The 1975 NDP vote did not represent a complete repeat of its 1972 support — without compensating defections from other parties, its defeat would have been very convincing. The 1979 election seemed to complete the electoral collapse of the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties begun in 1975, but Social Credit was not the only beneficiary.

Only half the respondents who voted Liberal in 1972 repeated that choice in 1975 although candidates were available in most areas, with most of the switchers moving to Social Credit (Table 2). Many of them undoubtedly followed the sitting Liberal MLAs who joined Social Credit prior to the 1975 election. Two of the best known, Garde Gardom and Pat McGeer (a former leader of the provincial Liberal party), raised their level of support in the double-member riding of Point Grey from 43 percent as Liberals to 58 percent as Social Credit candidates. Both entered the cabinet following the election. One of our sample ridings, North Vancouver-Seymour, was wrested from the NDP's Colin Gabelmann by Jack Davis, a former federal Liberal cabinet minister turned Social Credit, despite the fact that Gabelmann increased his vote slightly. The combined Liberal and Conservative support in the riding was 48 percent in 1972. In 1975 it dropped to 11 percent.

TABLE 2  
*Provincial Vote Shifts, 1972-1975*

		1972 Vote					
		<i>Liberal</i>	<i>PC</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Socred</i>	<i>Did not vote</i>	<i>Total</i>
1975 Vote	Liberal	53.1	0.0	1.2	0.0	6.7	4.5
	PC	0.0	82.9	5.2	2.9	8.6	9.4
	NDP	15.6	2.9	76.0	4.6	47.6	42.5
	Socred	31.3	14.3	17.6	92.6	37.1	43.6
		(32)	(35)	(250)	(175)	(105)	

The Conservatives managed to hold on to their vote in another sample riding, Oak Bay, largely because of the popularity of the then party leader, Scott Wallace. Much of his support was undoubtedly personal.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed description of the survey see Appendix.

When he left the Social Credit party to run as a Conservative in 1972, he received almost exactly the same share of the riding's vote. Conversely, after he retired as leader, his riding was won by Social Credit in 1979 by a 2:1 margin over the new Conservative leader who had won the riding in a 1978 by-election.

Table 3 completes the story. Only a quarter of those who voted Conservative in 1975 repeated that choice in 1979, while a third of the 1975 Liberals did so. All but three of our sample ridings were contested by the Conservatives, but only one had a Liberal candidate. While these proportions mirror the proportion of seats the parties contested in the province as a whole, the numbers of respondents are sufficiently small to make precise estimation of patterns of change difficult. However, an analysis of changes in party identification helps to confirm these patterns with the major caveat that focusing on the elections of 1975 and 1979 underestimates the support picked up by the NDP from the provincial Liberal party — support it gained before 1972.

TABLE 3  
*Provincial Vote Shifts, 1975-1979*

		1975 Vote					
		<i>Liberal</i>	<i>PC</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Socred</i>	<i>Did not vote</i>	<i>Total</i>
	Liberal	34.8	2.0	0.4	1.6	1.5	2.3
1979	PC	13.0	24.0	2.2	4.0	5.2	5.4
Vote	NDP	26.1	22.0	90.0	5.2	50.0	44.4
	Socred	26.1	52.0	7.3	89.2	43.3	47.8
		(23)	(50)	(232)	(250)	(134)	

While disintegration of the Liberal and Conservative electorate has been the most prominent feature of the 1970s, Table 2 makes it clear that the Barrett NDP government was the victim of defections to Social Credit from the NDP's own coalition. Social Credit, on the other hand, retained over 90 percent of its 1972 support and added to it the bulk of defections from the Liberal and Conservative parties. The survey data reveal a rather more complex picture of change than implied by the negligible net shift in the aggregate level of NDP support. Most commentators, pointing out that the NDP lost the 1975 election while maintaining its share of the vote, have assumed that they were defeated by a

non-left coalition. While it is impossible to reconstruct the 1975 electorate exactly with our sample, there is clear evidence that defections of their own supporters were a factor as well. The aggregate results masked this loss, the compensating defections from other parties, and the NDP support gained from those who did not vote in 1972.

The short-lived NDP administration made a number of enemies among voters — just over 20 percent of those who changed their vote in 1975 cited “poor performance” of the NDP government as a major reason. Almost the same number cited dislike of the party in general or of particular policies as reasons for joining the coalition of forces to oust the government.

The 1975 Social Credit coalition emerged more from antipathy to the NDP than from positive attachment to Social Credit itself, its policies or its leader. These allegiances, discussed in more detail below, were sufficient to sustain Social Credit in 1979, despite a slight vote loss, as roughly 90 percent of 1975 New Democrats and Socreds stayed with their party. The Social Credit party maintained its lead among former Liberals and Conservatives but, again, the NDP won the support of most new voters.

These developments may shed light on the apparent volatility of the B.C. electorate. As recently as the 1972 election the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties commanded the support of nearly 30 percent of the province’s voters. By 1975 that share had dropped to 11 percent and by 1979 to less than 6 percent. The 1979 electorate undoubtedly contained many voters whose normal loyalties would lie with the two older parties but who were unable to vote for them in nearly half the ridings in the case of the Conservatives and all but four ridings in the case of the Liberals.

Table 4 provides a profile of the 1979 Social Credit and NDP electorates constructed with these factors in mind. Roughly 12 percent of the Social Credit and 5 percent of the NDP electorate consisted of those who reported attachment to the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties in response to the standard question on party identification.<sup>6</sup> A further 17 percent of the Social Credit electorate and 20 percent of the NDP electorate was made up of former Liberals and Conservatives who have apparently come to identify with the party for which they vote. If we add to these figures the percentages who came to the NDP and Social

<sup>6</sup> The exact question was: “Thinking of provincial politics here in B.C. do you *usually* think of yourself as a Liberal, Progressive Conservative, NDP, Social Credit or what?” It was then followed by a question asking for an assessment of the strength of that attachment.

TABLE 4  
*Composition of Social Credit and NDP Electorates, 1979,  
 by Partisan History*

	<i>Social Credit</i>	<i>NDP</i>
Independents, other	15.3	11.8
PC identifiers	4.9	2.3
Liberal identifiers	7.6	2.6
Own identifiers	43.7	55.1
Former PC	9.2	5.6
Former Liberal	7.6	14.4
Former opponent*	10.4	6.6
Current opponent*	0.9	1.0
Returned defectors*	0.3	0.7
	(327)	(305)

\* "Former opponents" are former Social Credit identifiers in the case of the NDP, former New Democrats in the case of Social Credit. "Current opponents" are those who claim to have never changed partisan allegiance, but in 1979 voted for the NDP in the case of Social Credit identifiers and for Social Credit in the case of NDP identifiers. "Returned defectors" are those who claim to have switched allegiance from NDP to Social Credit or vice versa, but in 1979 voted for the party they switched *from*.

Credit from each other (called "former opponents" in the table), both voting blocs contained approximately 27 percent who at some time were attached to a party other than the one to which they now claim allegiance.

The strength of these new commitments as well as the relatively greater significance of newly arrived or non-identifiers in the Social Credit electorate have important implications for the stability of the Social Credit coalition and for the success of attempts to revive the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties. The NDP electorate also exhibits some vulnerability. While a larger proportion is made up of those who have never identified with another party, rather more NDP supporters than Social Credit supporters have had ties to the Liberals or Tories.

#### *Formation of the NDP and Social Credit Coalitions*

Table 5 provides a profile of the destinations of all those who have at some time changed their provincial party identification. Liberals have

TABLE 5

*Destination of All Those Changing Provincial Party Identification*

	Changed from:			
	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>PC</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Social Credit</i>
Changed to:				
Independent, other	6.0	8.0	13.2	6.5
Liberal	—	12.0	11.8	14.5
PC	10.0	—	14.5	19.4
NDP	53.0	26.7	—	59.7
Social Credit	31.0	53.3	60.5	—
	(100)	(75)	(76)	(62)

tended to become New Democrats and Conservatives to join Social Credit. The two major provincial parties have exchanged roughly equal proportions of their own “defectors” although, since the absolute number of NDP defectors has been higher, Social Credit has come out slightly ahead. The magnitude of exchanges between these two supposedly bitter enemies is startling although, as noted in Table 4, these defections make up only 10 percent and 7 percent, respectively, of the Social Credit and NDP electorates. Nevertheless, in an election which saw the two parties separated by roughly two percentage points, these components are crucial.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the disintegration of Liberal and Conservative voting support, 15 percent of all provincial identifiers remain attached to those parties.<sup>8</sup> Retention of ties to parties with such bleak electoral futures in the short term may reflect a relative lack of interest in provincial politics. Our survey indicates that those who retained ties to the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties are much less likely than NDP or Social Credit partisans to give “provincial” as an answer to questions probing level of government respondents felt closer to, perceived as more important, paid

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the aggregate impact of party switching and strategic voting using B.C. data see Richard G. C. Johnston, David J. Elkins, and Donald E. Blake, “Strategic Voting: Individual Reasoning and Collective Consequences,” presented at the 1980 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C.

<sup>8</sup> The strength of attachment on the part of those still loyal to the provincial Liberal and Conservative parties is not noticeably weaker than that of provincial Social Credit and New Democrats are much more likely to express very strong attachments to the party.

more attention to, or felt provided an election with "higher stakes" in May 1979.<sup>9</sup>

We argued earlier that 1972 to 1975 marked a period of realignment in B.C. politics, although the weakness of the Liberal and Conservative parties goes back to 1952, the first election after the breakup of coalition, and the penetration of the NDP and Social Credit parties into previously unrewarding areas of the province can be traced back to the mid-sixties. Table 6 provides some evidence of when major changes took place. The table is organized by decade until 1970, when periods immediately preceding and including the elections of 1972, 1975 and 1979 are demarcated. This division acknowledges the difficulty of recalling specific dates in the past and helps to focus attention on those elections most responsible for the current partisan division. The fourth column for each party provides a rough indication of the "normal" growth of each party's core — the time when those claiming never to have changed their partisan ties became attached to the party.

A plurality (21.3 percent) of current Social Credit identifiers became associated with that party in its infancy in B.C., although some undoubtedly carried support for Alberta's Social Credit party with them when they moved to B.C. If we add to the 1950s figure most of the 14.7 percent who cannot recall an exact date but report they have been Social Credit most of their lives, the significance of the 1950s in the party's history becomes even more apparent. From one-sixth to one-fifth of defections to Social Credit from the other three parties also occurred in that decade, suggesting that roughly one-third of all Social Credit identifiers have been attached to that party for at least twenty years.

The realignment of the 1970s is also reflected in the table. The period following the election of 1972 accounts for 26 percent of those who have always been Social Credit, but for nearly half the defections from the Liberal, Conservative and NDP parties. These data reinforce the observation made earlier about the misleading impression of stability in NDP support conveyed by the official results of the 1975 election.

The relative youthfulness of the NDP coalition (mean age of 40 com-

<sup>9</sup> John Wilson and David Hoffman have detected what may be a weaker version of a comparable phenomenon in Ontario — the existence of, in their case, Liberal partisans whose primary orientation is to the federal level of politics and who disproportionately abstain or vote Conservative at the provincial level. See their "The Liberal Party in Contemporary Ontario Politics," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 3 (June 1970): 177-204.



TABLE 6  
*When Current Provincial Party Attachment  
 Formed by Party of Origin*

## Current New Democrats:

	<i>Former Liberal</i>	<i>Former PC</i>	<i>Former Socred</i>	<i>Always NDP</i>	<i>Total</i>
Long time ago*	7.7	0.0	10.8	13.6	11.8
pre-1950	7.7	0.0	0.0	12.3	9.6
1950-59	9.6	11.8	5.4	6.0	6.8
1960-69	23.1	35.3	10.8	17.0	17.5
1970-72	26.9	29.4	29.7	18.7	21.4
1973-75	7.7	17.6	13.5	15.7	14.6
1976-79	17.3	11.8	27.0	16.6	18.0
	(52)	(20)	(37)	(236)	

## Current Social Credit:

	<i>Former Liberal</i>	<i>Former PC</i>	<i>Former NDP</i>	<i>Always Socred</i>	<i>Total</i>
Long time ago*	3.2	7.5	7.1	14.7	11.5
pre-1950	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.4	2.6
1950-59	16.1	20.0	19.0	21.3	20.0
1960-69	19.4	20.0	19.0	19.6	19.3
1970-72	12.9	7.5	11.9	13.1	11.8
1973-75	29.0	17.5	26.2	10.9	16.1
1976-79	16.1	27.5	16.7	15.3	18.0
	(28)	(40)	(44)	(182)	

\* This category includes those who cannot name a specified date or era, but state that the tie was formed early in life or existed most of their lives.

pared to 45 for Social Credit)<sup>10</sup> is apparent from these data. As must almost inevitably have been the case given the growth of the party from its "threshold" of roughly one-third of the vote — a figure some scholars thought (and many opponents hoped) it could never exceed — over

<sup>10</sup> The higher average age of Social Credit identifiers characterizes all components of the coalitions identified in Tables 7 and 8 except perhaps former Liberals, whose average age is 45 compared to 44 for their counterparts in the NDP.

one-half of the current NDP identifiers formed their attachments during the 1970s. Moreover, well over half the defections from other parties among current identifiers took place at this time, although the decade of the 1960s accounts for many of the Liberal and Conservative shifts to NDP. Lest we overstress the novelty of an attachment to the NDP we should point out that our sample of NDP identifiers includes over one-quarter whose attachments have been for twenty years or longer; one respondent was even present at the signing of the Regina Manifesto in 1933.

The magnitude of change in the 1970s and the fact that nearly 40 percent and over 30 percent, respectively, of current Social Credit and NDP identifiers came from other partisan backgrounds make it essential to our future expectations about provincial politics to try to assess the likelihood of these new patterns persisting. The partisan battles of 1975 and 1979 were exceedingly bitter. The stakes were perceived to be sufficiently high that the B.C. Liberal leader was abandoned by his colleagues in the legislature prior to the 1975 election; the B.C. Conservative leader was allegedly the victim of a sell-out by his federal counterpart during the 1979 campaign; and a number of stories about "friendly persuasion" used against would-be Conservative and Liberal provincial candidates in both elections appeared in the press. Given long-term developments, detailed below, the roughly even division of the electorate produced in 1979 may signal the inauguration of a new two-party era in the province.

The election of 1975 witnessed a good deal of "negative voting," and that seems to characterize many of the attachments formed to the Social Credit party itself. Table 7 summarizes a variety of reasons our respondents gave for their current ties to Social Credit, Table 8 the same information for NDP partisans.

In coding responses (up to three for each individual) we distinguished between reasons which stressed qualities of parties, leaders or candidates being *avoided* and those which stressed qualities of *current* partisanship. The former sentiments, which involve explicit rejection of parties and personnel, we have labelled "negative," to distinguish them from direct "positive" statements. The tables make it quite clear that negative reactions are particularly characteristic of former Liberals and Conservatives who now consider themselves Social Credit. Over one-third of each group make critical comments about other parties — especially the NDP — in justifying their current allegiance. Conversely, over 40 percent of those former Conservatives and Liberals who switched to the NDP cite attractive features of the party as reasons for doing so. Moreover, nearly

TABLE 7  
Reasons for Becoming Attached to Social Credit  
by Party of Origin\*

	Previous Partisanship			Always Socred
	Former Liberal	Former PC	Former NDP	
Specific issues	3.6	5.0	0.0	13.1
Free enterprise/socialism	14.3	5.0	6.8	12.6
Other ideological	3.6	0.0	6.8	0.0
Gov't management	3.6	2.5	9.1	3.3
Gov't mismanagement	3.6	0.0	2.3	2.2
Leader positive	17.9	22.5	6.8	11.5
Leader negative	0.0	5.0	9.1	3.3
Candidate positive	0.0	2.5	2.3	0.0
Candidate negative	0.0	2.5	0.0	0.5
Social Credit party positive†	21.4	25.0	38.6	29.7
Other party negative	35.7	35.0	13.6	14.8
Social influences positive‡	7.1	5.0	18.2	16.3
Social influences negative	0.0	0.0	2.3	0.5
Other reasons§	3.6	5.0	2.3	9.7
	(28)	(40)	(44)	(182)

\* Percentages may not add to 100% because of multiple responses.

† This category contains generalized positive references to a party or its policies which did not mention specific issues or policies.

‡ Including influence from friends, family and co-workers.

§ Including positive and negative references to politics in other provinces or other countries, absence or weakness of a preferred party, credibility or honesty of parties.

one-third of the Liberals who switched to the NDP cite specific issues — welfare policy, environmental and resource issues figure prominently — as reasons for doing so. If we combine the first three categories of reasons as signifying attachment to party as a policy vehicle, each category of New Democrat (except former Tories) exhibits this characteristic at a higher level than the Social Credit counterpart.

Lest we overdraw the contrast between the two coalitions, we should point out that former Liberals and Conservatives among the Socreds are quite likely to make positive statements about the party leadership and do have positive things to say about the party. If Social Credit can con-

TABLE 8  
*Reasons for Becoming Attached to the New Democratic Party  
 by Party of Origin\**

	<i>Previous Partisanship</i>			
	<i>Former Liberal</i>	<i>Former PC</i>	<i>Former Socred</i>	<i>Always NDP</i>
Specific issues	32.7	10.0	35.1	16.5
Free enterprise/socialism	7.7	0.0	0.0	5.9
Other ideological	11.5	0.0	8.1	6.8
Gov't management	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3
Gov't mismanagement	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
Leader positive	5.8	15.0	5.4	7.6
Leader negative	1.9	5.0	8.1	1.3
Candidate positive	5.8	5.0	0.0	0.8
Candidate negative	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
NDP positive	42.3	40.0	43.2	40.7
Other party negative	17.3	15.0	2.7	8.5
Social influences positive	5.8	5.0	8.1	20.3
Social influences negative	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.4
Other reasons	3.8	5.0	2.7	8.9
	(52)	(20)	(37)	(236)

\* See notes to Table 7.

tinue to provide the best insurance against an NDP victory, there is no reason to expect relative lack of affect for the party to hurt it electorally. In addition, stronger ties to party might develop with longer association. Nevertheless, there are tensions within the party on policy questions between those who endorse policies which characterized the party under W. A. C. Bennett and those who see it as a revival of the coalition of the 1940s. Most of those former Liberals and Conservatives who directly mentioned positive qualities of Social Credit leadership in fact switched to Social Credit prior to 1973 and must have had W. A. C. Bennett in mind. Moreover, those citing negative features of other parties as reasons for joining Social Credit are more likely to have adopted that attachment after the 1972 election.

The NDP also enjoys roughly a ten point edge over Social Credit in the percentage of its partisans who report very strong ties, a lead which

is even slightly larger among those who have never identified with any other party and among former Liberals. Slightly more former Conservatives claim very strong Social Credit ties than do their counterparts in the NDP, but that lead may be illusory given that nearly half the former PC identifiers in the Social Credit party report ties which are not very strong. This may be a reflection of the fact that roughly 28 percent of them formed their attachment just prior to or during the 1979 campaign.

The very fact that steady growth in support for the NDP led to the transformation of the Social Credit party may, of course, be sufficient to maintain the party despite weaknesses in the loyalties it has fostered. We expect, however, that debate will continue over whether Social Credit is the appropriate vehicle given an NDP "threat" which is unlikely to weaken significantly. The party is an alliance in the electorate *and* in the legislature. Future close calls such as that in 1979 could lead former Liberals and Conservatives in the party to demand leadership changes to assist the party in reaching their former co-partisans who have remained aloof from provincial politics or who are reluctant to endorse Social Credit until it sheds more features of the W. A. C. Bennett era.

At the mass level, loyalty to Social Credit, at least among former Liberals and Conservatives, may reflect the type of party attachment discussed by W. Phillips Shively in analyzing party systems with salient class or ideological divisions. According to Shively:

Such association differs from party identification . . . in that there is no direct tie to the party. The party itself is not a guide to voting choice, but is rather an expression of that choice. Expressed partisanship, then, will be synonymous with the vote and parties as such will not serve as guides to organize behavior. Under the proper organizational circumstances, support for such parties may be quite volatile, if various parties compete to represent the same class.<sup>11</sup>

The applicability of this model of partisanship to B.C. is supported by several pieces of evidence. While 65 percent of the electorate agree with the statement that B.C. elections are contests between free enterprise and socialism, over 80 percent of former Liberals and Conservatives in the Social Credit camp feel this way. They have higher incomes than those who remained loyal to those parties or who switched to the NDP, and are more likely to feel that more was at stake in the 1975 provincial election than in 1979. The contingent quality of their support for Social

<sup>11</sup> W. Phillips Shively, "The Development of Party Identification among Adults: Exploration of a Functional Model," *American Political Science Review* 73 (December 1979): 1042.

Credit is further indicated by the fact that over 50 percent would switch to another party in order to prevent victory by a party they strongly disliked. In this they are joined by an equal proportion of those who have never had any party loyalty other than Social Credit. This proportion is 20 points higher than among those who have always been New Democrats or who switched to the NDP from the Liberals.

The NDP is not immune to the possible effects of strategic voting — half the former Tories and Social Crediters now loyal to the party would consider second-choice voting, but given the policy focus of many of its adherents and its history as a programmatic mass party we suspect it could be vulnerable to policy disagreements. The party's rise to a competitive position was rapid and unexpected, leaving it, many believe, unprepared to govern in 1972 and then torn between the objectives of implementing democratic socialism and seeking re-election. Further movement towards the centre might cost it the campaign efforts or lead to abstention of those who have never supported any other party.<sup>12</sup> Movement towards the left further cements the Social Credit alliance and makes the NDP vulnerable to policy appeals from Social Credit, whose credibility is enhanced by the presence of so many prominent former Liberals and Conservatives in government. In short, while Social Credit may appear more vulnerable to strategic considerations, it may also have more freedom to manoeuvre on policy questions.

### *Regional Trends in Party Support, 1966-1979*

The survey evidence documenting the realignment is compelling and is corroborated by longer-term trends in party support. The 1972-1979 change was prefigured by movements at least as early as 1966. Although Table 1 indicates no interesting net province-wide shift before 1972, the province-wide figures mask important changes in particular regions. The raw material for a regional analysis appears in Table 9, which gives party shares of each region's popular vote from 1966 to 1979.<sup>13</sup> Table

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of constraints on vote-maximizing behaviour which considers party activists seeking ideological gratification as well as voters see David Robertson, *A Theory of Party Competition* (London: Wiley, 1977), pp. 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> The regional classification of ridings is based on that by Jeremy Wilson, "The Impact of Modernization on British Columbia Electoral Patterns" (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1978). Ridings were grouped as follows, with additions from the 1978 redistribution noted in parentheses:

Greater Victoria: Victoria, Saanich and the Islands, Esquimalt, Oak Bay  
 Island & Central North Coast: Alberni, Nanaimo, Cowichan-Malahat, Comox,  
 Mackenzie, Prince Rupert, (North Island in 1979)

10 abstracts from Table 9 aspects of the 1966-1979 trend, where a regional trend exists.<sup>14</sup> Whatever the variation in a region, the character of 1966-1979 changes differs profoundly between Social Credit and the NDP.

For Social Credit, one can hardly speak of a trend. The trend lines calculated for Social Credit typically have small slopes. In most regions, the departure of each election from trend is greater than the average inter-election increment in the Social Credit base. The coefficient of determination for the trend is typically weak. Social Credit flux has been governed apparently by election-specific factors, among which may be strategic calculations entertained by voters seeking to avert NDP victories.

Recent years have produced some net long-term gains for Social Credit. Such a shift was especially apparent in the Upper Status Vancouver region, where several Liberal MLAs carried their mass support with them into Social Credit. Social Credit gains elsewhere did not really affect the party's competitive position. Modest Social Credit gains in the Vancouver-Burnaby region were matched almost exactly by NDP gains. Gains in the Vancouver Suburbs-Valley, Central Interior, and Peace regions only reinforced Social Credit's earlier dominance of those areas.

A very different pattern holds for the NDP. In contrast to the election-specific flux for Social Credit, the pattern for the NDP has been one of steady, secular growth. The rate of 1966-1979 gain was strongly

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Upper Status Vancouver: West Vancouver-Howe Sound, North Vancouver-Capilano, Vancouver-Point Grey

Vancouver-Burnaby: Burnaby Edmonds, Burnaby North, Burnaby Willingdon, New Westminster, North Vancouver-Seymour, Burrard, Centre, East, Little Mountain, South

Vancouver Suburbs & Valley: Chilliwack, Coquitlam, Delta, Dewdney, Langley, Richmond, Surrey (Central Fraser Valley, Maillardville-Coquitlam, Coquitlam-Moody in 1979)

Central Interior: Cariboo, Kamloops, Yale-Lillooet

Okanagan: North & South Okanagan, Shuswap, Boundary-Similkameen, (Shuswap-Revelstoke in 1979)

Kootenays: Columbia River, Kootenay, Nelson-Creston, Revelstoke-Slocan, Rossland-Trail

North: Atlin, Fort George, Omineca, Skeena (Prince George North and South in 1979)

Peace: North and South Peace River

<sup>14</sup> In Table 10,  $b_1$  measures the trend, the average percentage point growth or decline in the party's share of the vote from election to election. The values for  $b_0$  reflect the 1966 level of support for each party.  $R^2$  is a measure of how well the estimated trend line fits the actual trend for each party.

TABLE 9  
*B.C. Provincial Party Support by Region, 1966-1979*

	<i>Greater Victoria</i>	<i>Island &amp; N. Coast</i>	<i>Upper Status Vancouver</i>	<i>Vancouver Burnaby</i>	<i>Vancouver Suburbs &amp; Valley</i>	<i>Central Interior</i>	<i>Okanagan</i>	<i>Kootenays</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>Peace</i>
<b>Social Credit:</b>										
1966	51.5	49.4	35.3	41.5	47.9	50.7	59.2	49.5	59.1	54.5
1969	52.6	46.6	30.5	42.8	48.4	45.9	60.2	48.1	58.3	71.7
1972	29.3	29.8	23.6	30.8	31.6	34.4	42.3	35.1	35.4	44.1
1975	42.0	41.0	57.1	50.0	55.5	55.2	51.6	46.5	55.3	65.4
1979	43.9	40.7	55.2	45.5	50.3	55.9	52.2	43.7	54.2	70.9
<b>NDP:</b>										
1966	15.6	43.0	11.2	41.1	40.1	38.5	24.9	32.2	30.4	16.9
1969	27.8	44.0	14.1	39.2	37.5	30.4	25.1	38.1	32.8	18.9
1972	21.7	54.5	15.7	46.3	44.3	39.7	31.5	49.4	41.9	20.0
1975	34.9	47.6	21.5	45.1	36.7	34.8	37.9	50.9	35.3	29.8
1979	46.7	55.4	34.7	49.6	44.2	38.6	38.8	53.0	45.3	29.1
<b>PC &amp; Liberal:</b>										
1966	20.9	7.6	53.5	16.9	11.9	10.8	15.5	18.0	10.6	18.1
1969	19.3	9.6	47.7	17.9	14.1	23.7	14.8	13.1	8.9	9.5
1972	48.8	15.4	60.6	22.6	24.0	25.8	26.1	15.5	21.9	36.3
1975	22.7	10.9	21.3	7.9	7.4	10.0	10.4	2.6	9.3	4.8
1979	8.8	3.6	6.6	3.6	5.3	4.8	9.0	3.3	0.0	0.0



TABLE 10  
*Aspects of 1966-1979 Trends in the Social Credit and NDP  
 Popular Vote by Region*

Region	Social Credit			NDP		
	$b_0$	$b_1$	$R^2$	$b_0$	$b_1$	$R^2$
Greater Victoria	49.0	-2.6	0.19	15.5	+6.9	0.83
Island-Coast	46.2	-2.4	0.25	43.2	+2.8	0.60
Upper Status Vancouver	27.1	+6.6	0.49	8.6	+5.4	0.85
Vancouver-Burnaby	39.1	+1.5	0.11	39.7	+2.3	0.76
Vancouver Suburbs & Valley	44.4	+1.2	0.04	39.1	+0.7	0.11
Central Interior	44.5	+2.0	0.13	35.5	+0.5	0.04
Okanagan	53.6	-1.3	0.11	23.5	+4.1	0.92
Kootenays	47.2	-1.3	0.13	33.8	+5.4	0.90
North	55.0	-1.3	0.04	30.7	+3.2	0.66
Peace	56.0	+2.7	0.13	15.9	+3.5	0.85
$\bar{X}$	46.2	+0.5	0.16	28.6	+3.5	0.65

related to the party's weakness in 1966. Even so, only in the Central Interior and the Vancouver Suburbs-Valley regions did the NDP not really grow. The party's shares grew modestly in the Vancouver-Burnaby and Island-North Coast regions, already areas of strength. More marked was the change in the North and Peace areas. In the Peace, NDP growth was matched by that of Social Credit. In the North, however, the NDP has closed the gap, making the region now very competitive. NDP growth has been even greater in two areas in which one might little expect it, the Okanagan and Upper Status Vancouver. Each region used to be one-sided, but it is now on the verge of becoming competitive. The greatest NDP gains of all came in the Kootenays and Greater Victoria.

The NDP trends in Table 10 pre-date 1972 and have continued through the 1970s, almost regardless of shifts to and from other parties. The typical slope for a trend line is impressive; across the ten regions, the NDP vote grew an average of 3.5 points between each election. The coefficient of determination for an NDP 1966-1979 trend line is typically four times as high as for Social Credit. In some regions (in particular,

Island-North Coast, Vancouver-Burnaby, Central Interior, Okanagan, North, and Peace), one could do very well predicting the 1979 vote from a trend line calculated on the four elections from 1966 to 1975.

Table 11 transposes the information just described to bring out its implications for British Columbia's electoral map.<sup>15</sup> The province has become geographically much more homogeneous than before. A small part of this homogenization has come from shifts in the Social Credit coalition, particularly in the Vancouver metropolitan area. Much more impressive, however, has been the geographic homogenization of the NDP vote. As the NDP province-wide share has grown from 34 to 46 percent, the standard deviation of that vote distribution across the ten regions has shrunk.<sup>16</sup> Table 11 suggests that, as the Liberal and Conservative coalitions withered, the NDP and Social Credit came to mirror

TABLE 11  
*Geographic Concentration of the Social Credit and  
NDP Vote, 1966-1979*

	<i>Social Credit</i>		<i>NDP</i>	
	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Coefficient of Variation</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Coefficient of Variation</i>
1966	7.3	0.15	11.7	0.40
1969	11.1	0.22	9.5	0.31
1972	6.1	0.18	13.5	0.37
1975	7.4	0.14	8.7	0.23
1979	8.8	0.17	8.3	0.19

Standard deviations and coefficients of variation calculated over the ten regions in Table 9.

<sup>15</sup> The standard deviation indicates the geographic concentration of a party's vote in that the greater the vote share differences between geographic units, the larger the standard deviation. Conversely, the more similar vote shares are to each other, the smaller will be the standard deviation. The coefficient of variation is simply the standard deviation divided by the mean of the distribution. In effect, the coefficient of variation controls for party size and is more appropriate for comparing geographic concentrations where party shares differ.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Wilson, "The Impact of Communications Developments on British Columbia Electoral Patterns, 1903-1975," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 13 (Sept. 1980): 509-536, focusing on inter-election swings in party support since the mid-thirties, demonstrates an even longer term trend towards homogenization, although much of the homogenization he observes took place *within* the ten regions rather than between them. It may be that the increase in the average between-region variation from Wilson's 1953-63 period to his 1966-75 one reflects the different trends in each region that we report in Table 10.

each other and that the NDP is now no more heterogenous geographically than Social Credit.

The geographic stereotypes of both Social Credit and the NDP no longer hold. The image of Social Credit as a party of the province's interior and farming regions is no longer warranted. While it is true that Social Credit still has vote surpluses in the Peace and the Fraser Valley, it no longer dominates other non-metropolitan regions. At the same time, Upper Status Vancouver has become one of the party's very bastions, while in other parts of metropolitan Vancouver the party is certainly competitive. The NDP, meanwhile, has become at least as much a party of the interior and the northern parts of the province as it is a party of Vancouver. Even Victoria is now an NDP stronghold. The stereotypical image of each party is not really warranted even for seats. The NDP holds eleven, or 48 percent, of the 23 seats in metropolitan Vancouver and fifteen, or 44 percent, of the seats in the rest of the province.<sup>17</sup>

In short, the last fifteen years have produced a sea change in British Columbia's party system. No longer is the opposition NDP too far behind the governing Social Credit party to be a serious threat. Each major party now enters competition with roughly equally sized bases, at least so far as the official returns allow us to infer underlying party loyalties. This competitive system has come about through the steady secular growth of the NDP vote. Social Credit, in contrast, has recorded marked net gains only in Upper Status Vancouver, and there only through the co-operation of Liberal MLAs and their respective mass followings. The growth in the NDP vote has been inversely related to earlier strength, such that the party now is geographically as homogeneous as Social Credit.

### *Sources of Party System Transformation*

Both survey and aggregate data point to the same conclusion — a nearly even division of the electorate between parties perceived to offer very different political agendas, and a division which has developed steadily over time and across space. The pattern seems straightforward,

<sup>17</sup> Conventional wisdom says that the electoral system is malapportioned and that Social Credit benefits from the malapportionment. Social Credit allegedly wins the small, rural seats. In fact, the electoral system favours the NDP. The typical NDP MLA now represents 40,735 residents, while the typical Social Credit MLA represents 45,403.

but what is one to make of it? We think the political change reflects underlying changes in the province's economy.

In both private and public employment, increasing numbers of British Columbians find themselves in work settings which encourage NDP support. Geographically, such work settings are now fairly common throughout the province. In the Interior and the North, as in the older industrial areas, many British Columbians work in large-scale, capital intensive firms. Work relations throughout the province are often impersonal and mediated by unions. Union membership tends to insulate individuals against relatively conservative political influences at the same time as it connects those individuals to a province-wide social influence network favouring the NDP. The argument takes on special force for public employees. The latter may have a direct stake in public sector growth, as advocated by the NDP, and are now protected against partisan reprisal.<sup>18</sup>

At the core of the changes has been a deepening and a spatial dispersion of the province's capital stock. Table 12 indicates two facets of the change. The number of employees per manufacturing firm has increased markedly and increases have tended to be sharpest in regions with the lowest average number per firm in 1967. There is now rather less variation across regions than before in firm size. Similarly, value added per employee has grown more quickly in regions in which the 1967 values were low. In each region, of course, much of the 1967-1977 increase in value added is simply inflation.<sup>19</sup> Specific industries bear out the general

<sup>18</sup> Our emphases differ from those in Wilson, "The Impact of Communications Developments," although some of our findings complement his. To the extent that we emphasize the role of union membership in linking individuals in different parts of the province, we complement his concern with communication patterns. But we want also to suggest that industrialization and unionization have promoted substantive policy conflict and that this conflict has become more similar across locales.

<sup>19</sup> Some of the change in Table 12 is an artifact of 1967-77 census region boundary changes. Most important is the transfer of Trail from the West Kootenay region to the Okanagan region; the latter is thus made to seem one of the very highest growth regions. Other changes had equivocal effects or were compensated for by yet other boundary changes. The northern Columbia River area was transferred from East Kootenay to West Kootenay (the latter region is now called Central Kootenay; we have retained the 1967 nomenclature as more consistent with ordinary usage). The Shuswap Lake area was moved from Thompson-Lillooet to West Kootenay. Squamish moved from the Lower Mainland to Thompson-Lillooet. Powell River moved from Skeena-Stikine to the Lower Mainland (in fact, Powell River and Ocean Falls together made up the Central Mainland Coast region, but employment and productivity figures for the region were merged with the Skeena figures; the census reorganization abolished the region and assigned Ocean Falls and Powell River to the adjacent coastal regions). Finally, Williams Lake was moved from Thompson-Lillooet to Central British Columbia.

TABLE 12  
*Firm Size and Productivity, 1967-1977,  
 by Census Regions*

Region	Employees per Firm			Value Added per Employee (\$000)		
	1967	1977	1967-1977 % Change	1967	1977	1967-1977 % Change
East Kootenay	25.5	36.1	+ 42%	14.4	43.0	+199%
West Kootenay	65.4	50.2	- 23.2%	11.1	35.5	+220%
Okanagan	16.2	44.7	+176%	9.1	29.7	+226%
Lower Mainland	32.8	39.3	+ 20%	11.8	30.8	+161%
Vancouver Island	45.4	54.5	+ 20%	13.8	37.6	+172%
Thompson-Lillooet	21.0	56.2	+168%	11.3	39.6	+250%
Central B.C.	26.9	84.2	+213%	10.5	40.4	+285%
Skeena-Stikine	114.2	139.4	+ 22%	16.2	44.0	+172%
Peace-Liard	13.9	35.6	+179%	10.2	38.8	+280%
$\bar{X}$	40.1	60.0		12.0	37.7	
Standard Deviation	32.1	33.3		2.3	5.0	
Coefficient of Variation	0.80	0.55		0.19	0.13	

SOURCES: Canada. Dominion Bureau of Statistics. *Manufacturing Industries of Canada: Geographical Distribution, 1967* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1971), Catalogue 31-209.

Canada. Statistics Canada. *Manufacturing Industries of Canada: Sub-Provincial Areas, 1977* (Ottawa: Supply and Services, 1980), Catalogue 31-209.

pattern. In 1961, eighteen of the twenty-nine sawmills with a daily capacity over 100,000 board feet were located in the Lower Mainland or on Vancouver Island. In 1971, fifty-seven mills exceeded 100,000 board feet daily capacity; of these, forty were outside the Lower Mainland-Vancouver Island areas. Over the same period, the number of mills with less than 100,000 board feet capacity dropped drastically, while the smaller mills that remained were generally of greater than 50,000 board feet capacity.<sup>20</sup> An even sharper pattern holds for pulp and paper capacity. In 1961, pulp and paper mills in the Vancouver Island-Lower

<sup>20</sup> A. L. Farley, *Atlas of British Columbia: People, Environment and Resource Use* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1979), maps 30 and 31, pp. 65, 67.

Mainland areas numbered eleven; outside that area only three mills existed. In 1975, the Island-Lower Mainland total had increased by only two mills, to thirteen. Outside that area the number had increased to twelve.<sup>21</sup> The story for mining is more complicated, but does correspond to that for manufacturing. From 1949 to 1953, over half the total provincial production originated in the Fort Steele mining division, which includes both Kimberley and the Crowsnest Pass. From 1969 to 1973, the production pattern was more dispersed. Production values from the Liard district rivalled those from Fort Steele, while a number of divisions on the Interior Plateau gained importance. In the 1970s, the Fort Steele division regained some of its prominence, with increased coal activity, but the Interior Plateau and Liard divisions remained important.<sup>22</sup> In sum, economic activity spread as it deepened.

It is our sense that as economic activity has become geographically more homogeneous, so has union membership. One is now as likely to encounter a union member in an Interior locale as in a Coastal one. This is not to say, of course, that everyone has become a union member. Indeed, part of the convergence of regions may have come about as union membership declined in some regions. The shift to non-union service occupations, common throughout the province, may have been especially pronounced in the metropolitan area. This is only an impression, however. It is not possible to calculate the percentage unionized of a region's labour force. Employment data and union membership data are collected in different units and union data are especially fragmentary.

We do have information about the effect of union membership from our survey. Age differences in the survey should reflect the historical patterns in union membership and party growth. The reflection will not be precise, of course, as individuals may move into or out of unions at any point in their careers just as they may switch parties; immigration clouds the picture as well. Table 13 gives the components of age differences in NDP support. From older to younger groups, union membership increases. Some of this may reflect the presence of retired persons in the oldest group. But the pattern holds across the three remaining groups, none of which will contain persons retired for reasons of age. In each age group, the union/non-union difference in NDP identification is substantial. Thus, the simple growth in union membership must have been a factor in NDP growth. In the 1963-1969 group, the difference made by

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, maps 32 and 33, pp. 69, 71.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, maps 34 and 35, pp. 73, 75.

TABLE 13

*Union/Non-Union Components of Age Differences in NDP Support*

<i>First Election Eligible to Vote</i>	<i>Non-Union Households</i>			<i>Union Households</i>			<i>(3)+(6)</i>	<i>(N)</i>
	<i>(1)</i>	<i>(2)</i>	<i>(3)</i>	<i>(4)</i>	<i>(5)</i>	<i>(6)</i>		
	<i>% of House- holds</i>	<i>× % NDP</i>	<i>Non-union = Contri- bution</i>	<i>% of House- holds</i>	<i>× % NDP</i>	<i>Union = Contri- bution</i>	<i>Total % NDP</i>	
1949 or Before	70	34	24	30	51	15	39	(299)
1952-1960	60	28	17	40	44	18	34	(126)
1963-1969	54	28	15	46	60	28	43	(166)
1972-1979	46	49	22	54	60	32	55	(177)
1972-1949 Difference	-24	+15	-2	+24	+9	+17	+16	

NOTES: (a) A respondent is classed as living in a union household if any member of the household, the respondent or otherwise, is reported to be a union member.

(b) Only respondents eligible to vote in 1979 provincial election are included.

union membership is especially great. So far, then, the data seem to confirm the interpretation above. But the 1972-1979 group indicates a diversification of the NDP coalition. Union growth was clearly a factor for the relatively young voters, as it was for older groups. But in the youngest group, the NDP percentage among non-members is impressively large, and the union/non-union difference is smaller than in the immediately older group. This may represent the addition of middle-class voters, interested in environment and natural resource issues and the like, to the NDP coalition.<sup>23</sup>

Public employees deserve special mention. Provincial public employment, broadly defined, grew more quickly from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s in British Columbia than elsewhere. From 1965 to 1975, the number of tax returns from direct employees of the province (but not of provincial crown corporations) increased by 88 percent. The national average increase was 73 percent. Even more telling, the number of educational employees increased by 62 percent in British Columbia, but by only 35 percent in the country as a whole. "Institutional" employment (mostly in health care) grew by 107 percent in British Columbia, and by only 73 percent in the country as a whole. In each of these categories,

<sup>23</sup> See above, Table 8.

more than two-thirds of the 1965-1975 employment growth took place between 1972 and 1975.<sup>24</sup> Not only did the NDP government sponsor the greatest growth in the sector, but the NDP also furthered its unionization. The impact of these changes may have been especially great in Greater Victoria, the region with the greatest NDP growth, but public sector growth should have been a factor elsewhere in the province.

### *Conclusion*

Our paper documents the main features of provincial electoral politics in the 1970s: the growth of the NDP, its capture of a substantial share of the political centre, and the transformation of the Social Credit party to meet this challenge. Additions to the Social Credit coalition reflect strategic considerations, although concern with the competence of the Barrett government was also a factor. Attachment to the NDP more often reflects policy or ideological beliefs, frequently associated with concern for the externalities of rapid economic development and resource exploitation.

Economic development and resource policy play an even deeper role, we believe, than our survey data indicate. But the role is ironic: the real father of the new NDP is W. A. C. Bennett. Development of the resource economy was absolutely central to the Social Credit program in the 1950s. The development strategy, involving inducements to large-scale private investment and massive infrastructure investments by the government itself, not only added greatly to the province's capital stock but also dispersed it much more evenly over the landscape than had earlier development episodes. As a result, resource sector employment outside Vancouver and a few coastal mill towns is now much more likely than before to be in large-scale, unionized firms. Parallel to these developments was a transformation of employment in the public sector. Numbers in public and para-public employment grew, jobs became less seasonal and came to include many white-collar skills, and the sector became

<sup>24</sup> Public employment data are notoriously difficult to gather for British Columbia. The government of the province refuses to divulge the employment data on which Statistics Canada bases its *Provincial Government Employment* series (Catalogue 72-007). Revenue Canada *Taxation Statistics* must serve instead. Tax return series for the 1946-1975 period are available in David K. Foot (ed.), *Public Employment in Canada: Statistical Series* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1979), vol. 4 in the IRPP Series on Public Sector Employment in Canada. Figures in the text are from pp. 20-21 and pp. 26-27. For thoughts on the electoral role of public employees see Richard Johnston, "Bureaucrats and Elections," in Meyer W. Bucovetsky (ed.), *Studies in Public Employment and Compensation* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1979), vol. 2 in the IRPP Series on Public Sector Employment in Canada, pp. 262-77.



unionized. We believe, then, that just as change in the Social Credit coalition was a response to NDP growth, the growth of the NDP was an outcome of Social Credit policy.

## APPENDIX

### Description of the Sample

The survey was conducted during the summer and fall of 1979 and produced 1,051 usable interviews. Field work was done by Canadian Facts Ltd. under the direction of Sherrill Selander. The sample design was a multi-stage, stratified cluster sample. Ten provincial ridings were pre-selected on the basis of political and geographical characteristics to give representation to interior, Vancouver Island, and metropolitan ridings, NDP and Social Credit strongholds as well as competitive ridings, and ridings divided by or contained within federal constituencies. The ten ridings mirror almost exactly the age, religious and ethnic composition of the province as a whole. Sampling locations within ridings were chosen as follows: census enumeration areas within provincial ridings were chosen with probability of selection based on the EA population age 15 or over according to the 1976 census. Within these clusters dwelling units were chosen using a randomly chosen starting point and a random interval between dwelling units. Households contacted were inventoried for residents age 16 or over and an individual selected for interview on the basis of a selection pattern which also varied randomly. No substitutions were permitted. Approximately three interviews were completed per cluster. It should be noted that our sample is based on the population age 16 and over and not eligible voters.

A target of 150 interviews per riding was set but could not be met in all cases because of the calling of the 1980 federal election. Nevertheless, the resulting sample proved remarkably representative of the B.C. population and of the 1979 election results. When our sample is weighted by probability of selection according to household size and to compensate for over- or under-sampling certain ridings, the vote distribution corresponds closely to the actual result:

	<i>Weighted Vote Distribution in Sample</i>	<i>Official Results</i>
Liberal	2.1%	0.5%
Conservative	4.6	5.1
NDP	43.7	45.6
Social Credit	49.6	48.2
Other	0.1	0.3

The weighted (and unweighted) distributions of age and mother tongue in the sample correspond closely to the distributions in the 1976 census. Weighting, in fact, makes little difference to the results and the analysis in this paper has been undertaken using unweighted data.