

Federalism, Conservatism, and the Social Credit Party in B.C.

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In British Columbia federalism has had a very visible impact on party politics. The effects of federal pressures and the strength of the left have driven national and provincial party systems so far apart that there are, in effect, two distinct party systems in federal and provincial politics.¹ The Social Credit Party focuses exclusively on provincial politics, the NDP is strong at both levels and the Liberals and Conservatives are competitive in national elections but have little support provincially. It has been argued that Social Credit simply provides a "cover" for federal Conservatives in provincial politics since the two parties share the support of a large part of the same electorate in British Columbia. On the other hand, the legislative ranks of Social Credit have contained many individuals with known connections to the Liberal Party, and in provincial elections the Social Credit Party depends on the support of many who vote Liberal nationally. This paper examines an important dimension of the linkages between the provincial Social Credit Party and the national Liberals and Progressive Conservatives by looking at ideology among activists in the three parties. Comparing the attitudes of provincial Social Credit and national Liberal and Conservative Party activists allows us to measure one aspect of the strength of ideological ties between these parties and to assess the extent to which B.C.'s governing party represents an ideological coalition of the two federal parties.

Our focus is on activists because they represent a stratum of political parties that plays a pivotal but often neglected role. While political scientists have focused considerable attention on the characteristics and behaviour of politicians on one hand, and voters on the other, little attention has been paid to the intermediary group of party activists. Yet party activists are the working core of any party; they exert considerable influence over the composition and perhaps the behaviour of the office-holding

¹ For a discussion of federal pressures on parties and party systems in Canada see Donald V. Smiley, *Canada in Question: Federalism in the Eighties* 3rd ed. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), ch. 5.

élite through their role in nominations, election campaigns, and leadership selection. They represent a constituency to which elected leaders must appear sensitive and they provide the pool from which many nominees for political office come.

Our samples of activists are from provincial and federal leadership conventions — the 1986 Social Credit leadership convention in British Columbia and the 1984 Liberal and 1983 Conservative national party leadership conventions.² The data allow us to look at elements of ideology within the Social Credit Party and to compare the Social Credit Party with the federal parties generally and with the national parties' B.C. stratum. This permits us to place Social Credit in a wider political context, and provides the basis for a comparison between it and the two national parties of which it is sometimes claimed to be a provincial coalition.

The Social Credit Party

With the exception of a brief period of NDP government from 1972 to 1975, the Social Credit Party has dominated provincial politics in British Columbia for over three decades. It came to office in 1952 in the wake of the collapse of the Liberal-Conservative coalition which had governed the province from 1941 to 1952. Social Credit soon usurped the free-enterprise mantle of the coalition, presenting itself as the bulwark against socialism represented by the CCF and its successor the NDP. Its first leader, W. A. C. Bennett, had been a Conservative member of the legislature who enjoyed the support of the national Conservatives in his two unsuccessful attempts to become leader of the provincial wing of that party.³ His leadership bids frustrated, Bennett managed to gain control of the fledgling Social Credit Party instead, and built a party organization largely on the ruins of Conservative provincial constituency organizations. Conservative MLAs soon disappeared from the legislature, made a brief reappearance

² A survey of the Social Credit convention was conducted by the authors immediately following the 1986 convention. Questionnaires were mailed to delegates during the week following the July convention and returns were received from 340 delegates, representing a response rate of approximately 27%. In comparing our sample to the convention population we found the sample closely matches the characteristics of the larger group on six different indicators including their voting patterns on the three leadership ballots. For details see Donald E. Blake, R. K. Carty, and Lynda Erickson, "Ratification or Repudiation: the British Columbia Social Credit Leadership Convention," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XXI, 3: 514. Data from the 1983 Conservative and 1984 Liberal leadership convention studies were made available by George Perlin of Queen's University. Professor Perlin bears no responsibility for the use made of that data in this paper.

³ Edwin R. Black, "Federal Strains within a Canadian Party," in Hugh Thorburn (ed.), *Party Politics in Canada* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 121-30.

in 1972, but were swept away in the realignment triggered by the New Democratic Party's election victory of that year.

Bennett envisioned Social Credit as a vehicle for those opposed to socialism who were willing to set aside their federal party affiliations in order to prevent a CCF/NDP provincial victory based on a split in the "free enterprise" vote. But he was never fully successful in eliminating the Liberal Party from provincial competition. It retained an average vote share of over 20 percent throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

Little is known about Social Credit activists during W. A. C. Bennett's tenure as leader except that the party's annual meetings attracted a curious mixture of religious fundamentalists, funny-money Socreds, and right-to-work advocates, much to the delight of columnists and editorial cartoonists. Policy resolutions were either ignored or derailed by the leadership, and Bennett's dominance of the party was never threatened. Moreover, it has been argued he played a pivotal role in securing the party leadership for his son, William R. Bennett, when he stepped down following the 1972 electoral defeat.⁴

It was William R. (Bill) Bennett who completed the job of consolidating the opposition to the NDP into a single party. Between the time he was elected leader of the Social Credit Party in 1973 and the 1975 election he and the party organization managed to convince most prominent provincial Liberals and Conservatives, inside and outside the legislature, to join Social Credit.⁵ In the 1975 election, of the fifty-five Social Credit nominees for the legislature, seventeen (ten Liberals and seven Conservatives) had been incumbents or well-known supporters of the other two opposition parties before the election.⁶ (This includes, of course, the present Premier, William Vander Zalm.)

We can only speculate about what effect these changes had on the ideological mixture among party activists. While high profile Liberal recruits seemingly outnumbered Conservative ones in Bill Bennett's rebuilding of Social Credit, his father's pre-1972 party had been built on a large number of supporters with previous affiliations to the provincial Con-

⁴ An account of W. A. C. Bennett's efforts, largely behind the scenes, is provided by David J. Mitchell, *W. A. C.: Bennett and the Rise of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1983), 435-37.

⁵ See Christopher Harris, "British Columbia 1972-75: The Genesis of a Two-Party System" (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia) and G. L. Kristianson, "The Non-Partisan Approach to B.C. Politics: The Search for a Unity Party, 1972-75," *BC Studies* 33 (Spring 1977): 13-29.

⁶ Harris, "British Columbia 1972-75: The Genesis of a Two-Party System." See Appendix E.

servative Party, many of whom presumably retained ties to the national Conservatives. Given this, one might expect their perspectives, if distinctive, to dominate.

If the pattern of élite differences is anything like that which exists among voters, we would also expect to find post-1972 Liberal recruits to be disproportionately "strategic Socreds," attracted to the party because of their distaste for socialism of the NDP variety and not because of the attractiveness of Social Credit as a policy vehicle.⁷ This group must have been somewhat troubled by the cast given to government policy by Bill Bennett following the 1983 election. The restraint program announced in July 1983 continued a wage freeze for public employees, set about reducing the number of civil servants by 25 percent while simultaneously shrinking public sector bargaining rights, reduced protection for tenants, restricted the scope of human rights guarantees, eliminated a number of social programs, and limited the budgetary authority of local school boards.⁸ For the first time Social Credit seemed to be offering a set of radical policy alternatives informed by a consistent neo-conservative ideology, albeit with some continuation of the welfare state, rather than simply promising competent management of the province's affairs.

It might be argued that in this respect the national Conservative Party and Social Credit have embarked on a similar undertaking, as the Conservatives also appear to have moved to the right in recent years.⁹ But the competitive demands of federal as opposed to provincial politics continue to force the Tories to build bridges across cultural and regional groups in a way that inevitably restrains ideological purity. Provincial parties, on the other hand, are not faced with the same level of institutionalized cultural and regional claims and thus are not forced to act as brokers in the way that national parties are. In addition, British Columbia politics is probably more charged with left versus right rhetoric than any other province. This reflects both the strength of the NDP and the strategy of Social Credit to portray itself primarily as an opponent of socialism. These considerations lead us to expect Social Credit activists will be more cohesive and conservative than the federal party with which they are usually compared.

⁷ See Donald E. Blake, *Two Political Worlds: Parties and Voting in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 32-34.

⁸ See Warren Magnusson, et al., *The New Reality: The Politics of Restraint in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1984).

⁹ On the ideological shift in the Conservative Party see M. Janine Brodie, "Tensions from Within: Regionalism and Party Policy in Canada," in Hugh G. Thorburn (ed.), *Party Politics in Canada* 5th edition (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1984).

But the differences between the demands placed on these two parties can be overdrawn. As one of only two competitive parties at the provincial level, the Social Credit Party is also faced with pressures to compromise a range of interests in order to maintain its pre-eminent position. These interests include the political claims of partisans from the competing federal parties. Although the most prominent divisions between Conservative and Liberal federal activists occur over the issues of foreign policy and language¹⁰ — which have limited significance for B.C. provincial politics — economic links with the U.S., privatization, and social welfare policies are also significant sources of federal inter-party differences, and they all appear on the provincial agenda. Moreover, delegates to the Social Credit leadership convention indicated they were sharply divided over the government's handling of restraint, suggesting the anti-socialist coalition is not entirely homogeneous.¹¹

Measuring Ideology

In the survey research literature, the term ideology has been given a variety of meanings. Some scholars reserve the term for issue opinions that are “structured” in the sense of being correlated with one another.¹² Others use it to refer to opinions on issues which relate to class interests, including issues such as labour rights, social welfare, and government regulation.¹³ Still others simply use the term to refer to aggregates of opinion in terms of a left-right continuum, whether the issues are directly relevant to class interests or not. We use the term in an eclectic sense because we think it useful to examine attitudes that relate to both class and other left-right issues, and because we think it important as well to look at the patterns of

¹⁰ See Donald E. Blake, “Division and Cohesion Among the Major Parties,” in George Perlin (ed.), *Party Democracy in Canada* (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1988), 32-53.

¹¹ For a description and discussion of heterogeneity among Social Credit Party activists see Lynda Erickson, R. K. Carty, and Donald Blake, “Ideology and Partisanship in British Columbia: Activists in a Bi-Polar System,” paper presented at the XIVth World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 1988.

¹² For the classic work using this conception of ideology see Phillip Converse, “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics,” in David Apter, *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964). For a study of American party activists using this conception see Ronald B. Rapoport, “Elite Attitudinal Constraint,” in Ronald B. Rapoport, Alan I. Abramowitz and John McGlennon (eds.), *The Life of the Parties* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press), 145-63.

¹³ See M. D. Ornstein and H. M. Stevenson, “Ideology and Public Policy in Canada,” *British Journal of Political Science* 14 (1984): 313-44.

relationships among policy attitudes. The results of factor analyses can suggest whether certain main themes direct issue responses within each group of delegates and, if so, whether these differ among the groups.¹⁴

To measure ideology among Social Credit Party activists we used their responses to a number of questions on free trade, foreign investment, government regulation, and the provincial government's restraint program, as well as more abstract questions regarding individual responsibility, the role and competence of government, and deference to élite opinion. The answers were used to form five simple additive indexes: a restraint scale; an anti-regulation scale; an individual versus collective responsibility scale; a continentalism scale; and a populism scale.¹⁵

The comparisons between national and provincial activists are more limited than is the analysis of provincial Social Credit activists because of the smaller number of questions (ten) that were asked of all three groups. Consequently, most of the cross-party comparisons use single items. We do, however, use factor analysis to look for signs of differences, between the parties and across levels, in the degree to which opinions are structured by a left-right dimension. That analysis provides support for the construction of a "continentalism index" and a three-item "social spending" index which we subsequently use to compare the intra-party differences and inter-party overlap.

Liberals and Conservatives in the Social Credit Party

Despite the prominence of former Liberals on the Social Credit front bench in the legislature, federal Liberals constitute a small minority among Social Credit activists. Only 6 percent of them voted Liberal in the 1984 election. Membership in federal parties is similarly skewed. Sixty percent of Social Credit activists acknowledged membership in a federal party, but virtually all of them (93 percent) are federal Conservatives. It is interesting to note that by 1986 there was only a trace of federal Social Credit members (1.7 percent). By contrast, in a sample of the 1973 provincial Social Credit convention, 42 percent of the delegates said they were Social Credit identifiers.¹⁶ Although we have no information on the federal partisanship

¹⁴ We must caution that in comparing differences between different sample groups the factor analysis evidence remains merely suggestive. This is because the variances of loadings and eigenvalues in factor analyses performed between different groups tend to be large.

¹⁵ For detailed discussion of these attitude scales see the Appendix.

¹⁶ See Norman J. Ruff, "A Profile of British Columbia Party Activists: Preliminary Analysis of Three Conventions, November, 1973" (unpublished ms., University of Victoria, 1974).

or voting patterns of the Social Credit Party membership as a whole, even given the vagaries of the delegate selection process, it is difficult to believe that the figures would be very different. Some Social Credit activists, especially those with no federal party membership, may have once supported the federal Liberal Party, but if they did it seems most of them are no longer voting for it.

TABLE 1
*Attitude Differences among Social Credit Activists
by 1984 Federal Vote*

<i>Attitude Scale*</i>	<i>Conservative</i>	<i>Liberal</i>	<i>Sig. Level</i>
Continentalism	2.33	2.19	.44
Individual versus Collective Responsibility	3.81	3.18	.04
Populism	2.38	1.75	.01
Anti-Regulation	2.83	1.83	.02
Pro-Restraint	2.73	1.57	.01

*Table entries are mean scores. A higher score indicates a position closer to that indicated by the name of the scale. For details see the appendix. Ns vary by scale because of varying amounts of missing data, but there are approximately 20 Liberals and 300 Conservatives in the table.

However tiny, the federal Liberal minority does constitute a distinctive group within the Social Credit Party on several policy dimensions. Looking at table 1 and comparing "Liberal" Socreds with their "Conservative" counterparts, we find the Liberals are less populist, less individualistic, less hostile to government regulation and more critical of the 1983 restraint program. Only on the continentalism index was there no significant difference between the two groups. Liberals differed from the other activists in several further respects not documented in table 1: the Liberals were more likely (65 percent to 55 percent) to agree that "the party has to be careful not to move too far to the right" and they are less likely (55 percent to 70 percent) to have supported Vander Zalm on the final ballot. This last result is rather ironic given the fact that Vander Zalm started his career as a Liberal, and Brian Smith, the runner-up, had well-known federal Conservative ties.

There seems little doubt that the Social Credit organization is dominated by those with Conservative federal preferences. However, we have appar-

ently found a trace of the "strategic Socreds." Given their antipathy to the NDP and the weakness of the provincial Liberal Party, this minority of federal Liberal supporters have no alternative home in provincial politics. But they are not as enthusiastic about conservative positions on social and economic issues as most of their fellow partisans.

Provincial Socreds and Federal Activists

Given the small number of Liberals among Socred activists, the claim that the Social Credit Party is the provincial equivalent of the national Conservative Party must be taken seriously. Yet while this would lead us to expect that Socred activists are closer to the national Tories than the national Liberals, the stronger brokerage pressures in the national arena, alluded to earlier, suggest that the national Tory party is likely to be less homogeneous and less distinctive in left-right terms than is Social Credit.¹⁷ This tendency may be reinforced by the differing vantage points of the two levels of government the parties seek to control. For federal activists their vantage point may introduce a regional or jurisdictional frame of reference that supersedes a left-right one. For example, environmental regulation may raise issues concerned with federal-provincial co-operation and Canadian/American negotiations for national parties and their activists, given that the federal government must negotiate with the U.S. but has limited jurisdiction over industrial sources of environmental damage. At the provincial level, however, environmental protection legislation is more likely to pose direct trade-offs with economic development, particularly in British Columbia which depends heavily on the exploitation of its natural resources. Thus for provincial activists more than federal ones, environmental issues may tend to pit the left against supporters of business interests.

Table 2 records the distribution of answers from the Social Credit, Liberal, and Conservative delegates on our ten comparable questions, and table 3 contains the results of a systematic comparison of the three groups using a simple "difference index."¹⁸ The difference index is arithmetically

¹⁷ For a discussion and analysis of regional cleavages within national parties see John C. Courtney and George Perlin, "The Role of Conventions in Regional Cleavages," in George Perlin (ed.), *Party Democracy in Canada*.

¹⁸ Each of the spending items and "job creation grants to business" in table 2 were part of a list of areas of government activity. Respondents were asked whether they thought government spending should be substantially increased, slightly increased, remain the same, be slightly decreased, or substantially decreased. Environmental protection and marketing of agricultural products were part of a list of areas now regulated by government. Respondents were asked whether government regulation

equivalent to the proportion of a given group who would have to change their opinion in order to make two distributions of responses identical. For example, the difference score of .16 on daycare spending means that a shift by 16 percent of the Socreds or 16 percent of the Conservatives from one category of answer to another would eliminate the differences between them.

As expected, the Social Credit activists share the right side of the political spectrum with delegates to the 1983 Conservative leadership convention. Moreover, although there are some exceptions, on most questions the Socreds as a group are located to the right of the federal Conservatives and thus rather further from the federal Liberals.

The sharpest differences between the Socreds and other two parties are found in the area of environmental protection, where 77 percent of the Liberals, 64 percent of the Conservatives, and only 23 percent of Socreds would like to see some extension (slight or substantial) in governmental regulation. Differences regarding educational spending are next (difference scores of .40 and .23) with 71 percent of Liberals, 55 percent of Tories, and only 31 percent of Socreds favouring increased spending. However, some of the differences on this question may be partly an artifact of differences in wording noted in table 2.

Welfare spending, daycare spending, and attitudes to free trade show a similar pattern but with smaller differences between the Socreds and Conservatives. The agricultural marketing issue shows much the same pattern, although Social Crediters are more sharply polarized on this question than are the other two parties, with 56 percent favouring decreased regulation while 43 percent favour increased regulation. On job creation grants, views on foreign ownership, and in their criticisms of welfare programs, the Socreds and Conservatives converge even more but remain to the left of the Liberals, with 43 percent and 58 percent respectively agreeing that Canada's independence must be preserved even at the cost of a lower standard of living. Only 33.3 percent of the Tories agreed with that statement.

should be substantially extended, slightly extended, kept as now, slightly reduced, or substantially reduced. The remaining questions were offered agree, disagree, or no opinion options. Their wording was as follows:

"A lot of welfare and social security programs we have now are unnecessary."

"Canada should have freer trade with the United States."

"Canada's independence is threatened by the large percentage of foreign ownership in key sectors of the economy."

"We must ensure an independent Canada even if that were to mean a lower standard of living for Canada."

TABLE 2

*Attitudinal Distributions among Provincial Social Credit
and Federal Conservative and Liberal Activists*

	<i>Liberal</i> %	<i>Conservative</i> %	<i>Social Credit</i> %
Environmental protection regulation:			
Increase	77.1	63.5	23.3
Decrease	3.0	6.2	30.9
Education spending: *			
Increase	71.4	55.1	30.9
Decrease	3.5	10.5	13.5
Agricultural marketing regulation:			
Increase	30.6	19.2	42.7
Decrease	29.5	54.8	56.2
Welfare spending: *			
Increase	48.5	32.3	15.0
Decrease	6.1	21.8	36.2
Ensure Independence	58.1	33.3	42.9
Daycare spending:			
Increase	59.7	33.8	17.3
Decrease	12.9	31.3	55.8
Free trade with U.S.	63.9	80.0	92.4
Unnecessary welfare programs	26.3	64.5	67.4
Job grants to business:			
Increase	54.6	47.9	44.4
Decrease	17.6	30.4	23.8
Independence threatened by foreign ownership	51.5	27.3	17.1

*The education spending question for federal activists specified "post-secondary" education. The welfare spending question in the Social Credit questionnaire referred to "welfare rates"; that for national Liberal and Conservative delegates to "direct relief payment to the poor." These results are based on 337 Socreds, 926 Conservatives, and 1,290 Liberals.

TABLE 3

*Attitudinal Differences between Provincial Social Credit
and Federal Conservative and Liberal Activists*

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Difference Score</i>		
	<i>Conservative versus Socred</i>	<i>Liberal versus Socred</i>	<i>Conservative versus Liberal</i>
Environmental protection	.40	.53	.19
Education spending	.23	.40	.16
Agricultural marketing	.17	.39	.25
Welfare spending	.17	.33	.16
Ensure independence	.16	.08	.22
Daycare spending	.16	.42	.26
Freer trade with U.S.	.14	.32	.19
Unnecessary welfare programs	.09	.44	.36
Job grants to business	.09	.11	.13
Independence threatened by foreign ownership	.08	.30	.23
MEAN	.17	.33	.22

These differences in the attitude patterns among activists in the three parties contain no major surprises. In part, this obviously reflects the more heterogeneous nature of the regional brokerage practised by the national parties. We can obtain some measure of this by now comparing Social Credit activists to just the British Columbia delegates to the national leadership conventions.

The spatial arrangement of the three parties on the left-right spectrum remains the same, but there is a sharp reduction in the magnitude of the differences between activists at the two levels of politics (see table 4). In particular, comparing Social Credit delegates to the B.C. Conservative ones, the difference scores for education, welfare, and daycare spending are now .15, .05, and .08 respectively compared to .23, .17, and .16 for all Conservatives. Freer trade with the U.S. produces a difference score of only .07 (compared to .14), and concern about foreign ownership produces a difference score of only .01 (as opposed to .08). Only on the

TABLE 4

*Attitudinal Differences between Provincial Social Credit
and Federal Conservative and Liberal Activists from B.C.**

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Difference Score</i>		
	<i>Conservative versus Socred</i>	<i>Liberal versus Socred</i>	<i>Conservative versus Liberal</i>
Environmental protection	.16	.24	.08
Education spending	.15	.18	.08
Agricultural marketing	.14	.16	.26
Welfare spending	.05	.20	.18
Ensure independence	.23	.14	.37
Daycare spending	.08	.25	.25
Freer trade with U.S.	.07	.22	.15
Unnecessary welfare programs	.05	.50	.49
Job grants to business	.10	.03	.13
Independence threatened by foreign ownership	.01	.34	.34
MEAN	.09	.23	.23

* These results are based on a total of 337 Socreds, 93 Conservatives, and 149 Liberals. Also see notes to table 2.

question of willingness to make economic sacrifices in order to preserve independence are B.C. Socreds closer to Conservatives as a whole than to the B.C. delegation.

The gap between the attitudes of Socreds and federal Liberals is also systematically reduced when only B.C. delegates to the federal convention are compared. But the figures do not suggest the Liberals as a group would sit easily in the Social Credit Party. Substantial differences remain on welfare and daycare spending, criticism of welfare programs, and attitudes towards freer trade and foreign ownership.

Given these differences in the centres of gravity among activists in the parties, we might also expect to find some differences in the structure of opinion underlying these attitudes, in particular with respect to the impact of federalism on the definition of issues. However, our attempts to find

TABLE 5
Factor Analysis of Activist Opinion
*(Loading on Principal Component)**

	<i>Socred</i>	<i>All P.C.</i>	<i>B.C. P.C.</i>	<i>All Libs.</i>	<i>B.C. Libs.</i>
Environmental protection	.48	.50	.20	.56	.62
Education spending	.56	.45	.33	.55	.56
Agricultural marketing	.47	.59	.31	.32	.42
Welfare spending	.55	.58	.67	.58	.56
Ensure independence	.11	.39	.36	.31	.43
Daycare spending	.68	.58	.55	.61	.61
Freer trade with U.S.	-.18	-.39	-.50	-.31	-.17
Unnecessary welfare programs	-.60	-.50	-.33	-.48	-.52
Job grants to business	.60	.49	.57	.40	.47
Independence threatened by foreign ownership	.26	.45	.26	.42	.53
Per cent common variance explained by factor	23.6	24.0	18.8	21.9	25.5

*Given the coding of responses, the signs of the factor loadings are consistent with the presumed right wing positions on all the issues, i.e., a preference for cuts rather than increases in spending on education, welfare, daycare, and job grants; a preference for deregulation in the areas of environmental protection and agricultural marketing; support for freer trade and rejection of the belief that independence is threatened by foreign ownership and that Canada's independence must be preserved at all costs; and agreement with the position that there are many "unnecessary welfare programs." Also see notes to tables 2 and 4.

such differences using factor analysis were not very successful.¹⁹ For all groups the first factor identified by principal components analysis seemed to be based on an underlying left-right dimension (table 5). The general pattern was for this factor to link all spending items, the assertion about unnecessary welfare programs, environmental regulation and the marketing of agricultural products. This was true despite the federal-provincial

¹⁹ This factor analysis procedure is similar to that used by Richard Johnston in his analysis of the structure of beliefs within the federal Liberal and Conservative parties. He argues that using correlations between pairs of policy items to measure the degree of constraint underestimates the degree of ideological constraint in a group. See Johnston, "The Ideological Structure of Opinion on Policy," in George Perlin (ed.), *Party Democracy in Canada*, 58-60, for a detailed rationale.

aspects of the latter two issues. The percentage of common variance accounted for by this factor does not seem to vary much by party. The B.C. delegates to the national Conservative convention were somewhat different from the other groups on this "left-right factor," having relatively low loadings on four of the relevant items. This is consistent with the hypothesis that federalism may affect the federal and provincial parties differently, but given that the direction of the loadings on these items even among B.C. Conservatives is consistent with those among other party activists, they are a weak exception to the more general pattern of no differences attributable to federalism.²⁰

The remaining items, all dealing in one way or another with Canada's relations with the U.S. (freer trade, ensure independence, and independence threatened), are less strongly correlated with the principal component. But again, there is some similarity in the pattern, given that varimax rotation confirmed the existence of a separate "continentalism" dimension for each group.²¹

The results of the factor analysis justify combining six of the items into two simple additive indexes. This has allowed us to portray graphically the similarities and differences among activists at the two levels. The first index, the "continentalist scale," combines responses to freer trade, foreign ownership and the preservation of Canada's independence (figure 1). The second index, a "social spending scale," combines responses to questions regarding welfare, education, and daycare (figure 2).

These graphs illustrate in a simple but direct fashion the basic pattern that emerged in the analysis above. There are very small differences on the continentalism dimension between Social Crediters and Conservatives, whether we take into account all Conservatives or only those from British Columbia.²² A plurality of each group expresses support for freer trade with the U.S., rejects the notion that foreign ownership threatens Canadian independence, and is unwilling to sacrifice living standards to preserve independence. The differences which do emerge are largely the result of the item concerning independence. Since an earlier study of Socreds based

²⁰ The national Liberals also had a relatively low loading on the agricultural marketing issue but otherwise showed similar results as B.C. Liberals, Social Credit, and the national Conservatives.

²¹ While the number of factors extracted after rotation differed by activist group, the continentalism items had their highest loadings on the second factor for all groups except B.C. Socreds, where they loaded on the third factor.

²² Mean scores on the continentalism scale are 2.45 for B.C. Tories, 2.31 for Social Crediters, 2.24 for all Conservatives, 1.53 for all Liberals and for B.C. Liberals. Higher scale scores indicate stronger support for what we have called the continentalist position.

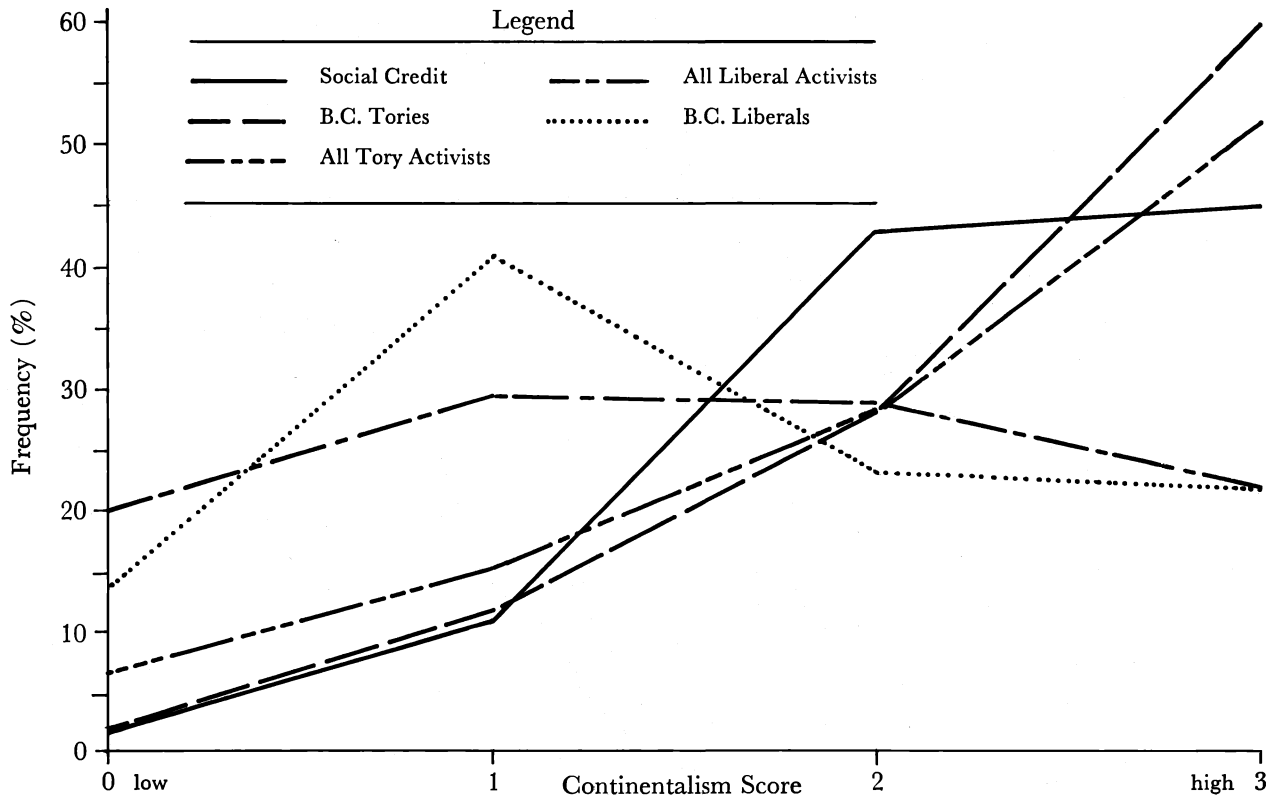


FIGURE 1
Continentalism: Social Credit, Liberal, and Conservative Activists

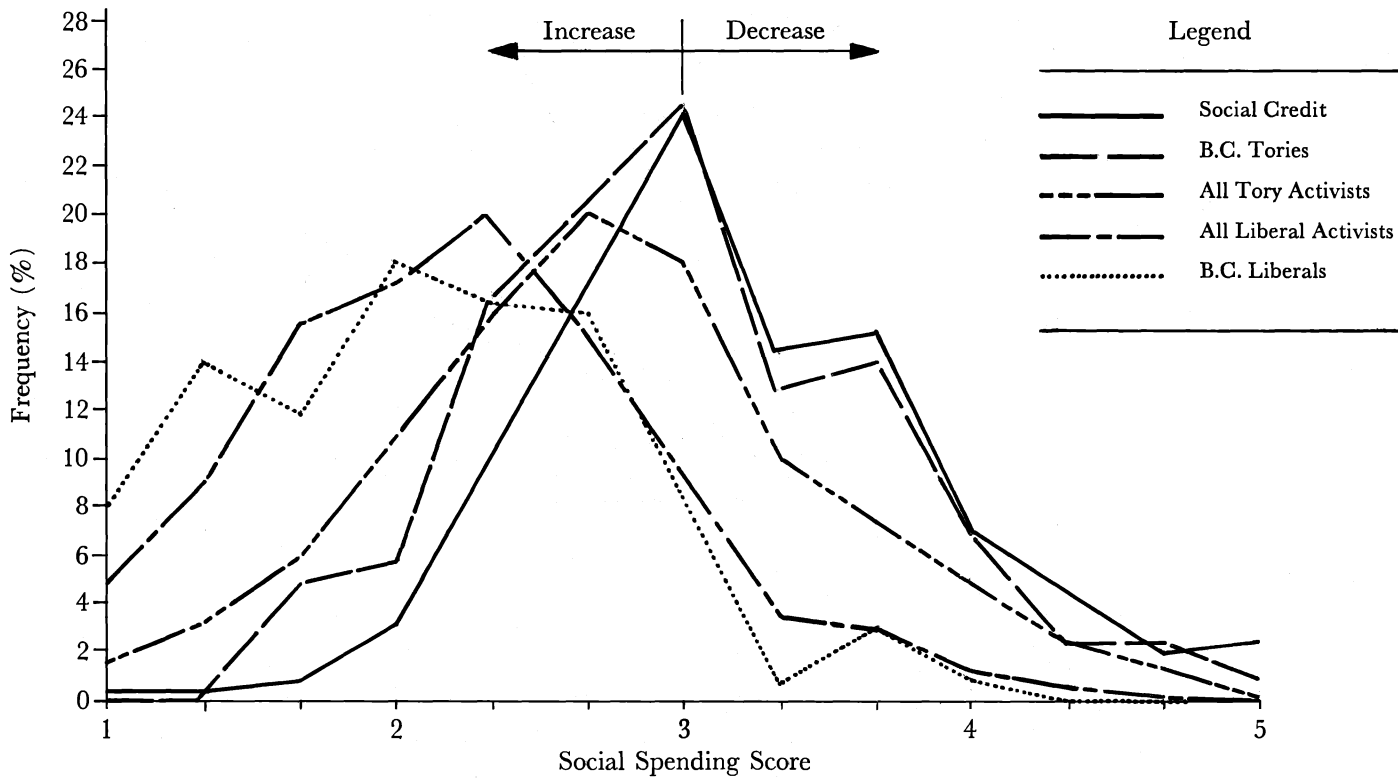


FIGURE 2
 Social Spending Attitudes: Social Credit, Liberal, and Conservative Activists

on these data²³ found this question on independence to be related to populist sentiments among Social Credit delegates, there is some evidence this question was not perceived as having links to the other economic issues associated with continentalism. While different from the Social Credit and Conservative delegates, the B.C. Liberals are virtually indistinguishable from Liberal activists as a group.²⁴ This is interesting in the light of regional dimensions that seem to have emerged subsequently in the free trade debate.

The scores shown in figure 2 were calculated by assigning a number from 1 to 5 to each respondent depending on whether he or she favoured substantial increases, slight increases, the status quo, slight decreases, or substantial decreases in spending on education, welfare, and daycare. Respondents' numbers for each question were then summed and divided by three in order to create a combined score in the original range (of 1 to 5). The average scores on the resulting index were 3.2 for Social Credit delegates, 3.0 for Conservative delegates from B.C., 2.8 for all Conservative delegates, 2.2 for Liberal delegates as a group, and 2.1 for Liberal delegates from B.C. A high score indicates greater support for cuts and more resistance to increases.

The pattern suggested by these scores is different from the distributions on the continentalist scale only in the slight shift of the Social Credit activists to the right of the B.C. Conservatives and the increased distance between these two groups and the national Conservative delegates. The national and B.C. Liberals remain very similar. A majority (over 80 percent) of the Liberals, regardless of level, favour increased spending compared to 55 percent for Conservatives as a whole and under 40 percent for B.C. Conservatives and Socreds.

Conclusion

Federal pressures combined with the strength of the left may have helped drive federal and provincial party systems apart in British Columbia, but they have apparently not severed the ideological links between them. The parties which have dominated recent federal and provincial elections have attracted activists with remarkably similar views. While Social Crediters are, on average, located to the right of federal Conservative activists, they share that position with Tory activists from their own province. Thus there is some evidence of a division in activists' attitudes associated with federalism, at least for the federal Conservatives. But given

²³ See Blake, Carty, and Erickson, "Ratification or Repudiation."

²⁴ For further details on scale construction see *ibid.*

the similarity in views between B.C. Tories and delegates to the Social Credit leadership convention, the effect seems to be linked to regional divisions rather than jurisdictional ones. This conclusion on regional versus jurisdictional divisions is supported by the evidence which suggests the various groups' internal differences of opinion are structured by a similar left-right ideological dimension.

This study also sheds light on the character of the modern Social Credit Party itself. Given the party's electoral dependence on substantial numbers of federal Liberal voters and the important contribution made by Liberals to the Social Credit revival following the NDP victory in 1972, the paucity of Liberals in the ranks of activists comes as a surprise. There are some, and they are clearly closer to the province's ideological centre, but they are not numerous enough to affect the basic balance of opinion among party activists.

At least two factors may be responsible for this. Liberals may simply not feel welcome in a party whose leaders were prominent and persistent critics of federal Liberal policies during Trudeau's time in office. Secondly, movement from the Liberal Party to Social Credit during the 1970s realignment was largely an élite phenomenon. The NDP may have benefited more than Social Credit from the collapse of the Liberal Party's provincial support, reducing the pool of potential Social Credit Party recruits.

Is Social Credit really B.C.'s provincial Conservative Party? At the level of activist ideology this analysis argues yes. Yet party activists do not want to think it is, or at least they do not believe that explicit recognition of the link would be to the advantage of the Social Credit Party. Fewer than 7 percent of our respondents favoured an association with the federal Conservative Party. Perhaps activists recognize that while they are conservative in attitudes and federal party membership, much of the party's electorate is not. Without Liberal support, the gap between Social Credit and the NDP would shrink, increasing the probability of an NDP victory.

While Social Credit activists are, at some level, aware of this dilemma, the implications of their ideological ties to the Conservatives pose potential problems for the party. They may be more likely (other things being equal) to be attracted to leadership candidates who share their ideological conservatism, but it is these candidates who are likely to move the party away from positions with which the party's Liberal voters could feel comfortable. Premier Vander Zalm represents some of these contradictions in the party. He was chosen, in part, by a party wanting to repudiate Bill Bennett's style of politics. Yet he too seems determined to reassert Social Credit's conservative faith and retest the limits of its Liberal wing.

APPENDIX

Attitude Scales

The attitude scales utilized in table 1 were derived from a large battery of agree/disagree items plus Likert-type items measuring degree of support for spending increases or decreases in a variety of policy areas and degree of support for increases or decreases in government regulation. The items used to construct each scale are given below. For "agree/disagree" items, the answer corresponding to the direction in which the scale is scored appears in parentheses. Where a scale item is based on the choice between a pair of statements, the choice corresponding to the direction of the scale is indicated. Items with more graduated response categories were dichotomized prior to scale construction. The category combinations corresponding to the direction in which the scale was scored are given in parentheses.²⁵

Collective versus Individual Responsibility

(Scale scored in individual responsibility direction)

1. After a person has worked until he is 65, it is proper for the community to support him. (Disagree)
2. The government ought to make sure that everyone has a decent standard of living. (Disagree)
3. Let's face it, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted to. (Agree)
4. Why should the government spend my tax dollars on sick people; my family always put aside something for a rainy day. (Agree)
5. Government regulation stifles personal initiative. OR Without government regulations, some people will just take advantage of the rest of us. (Chose first statement)
6. If I do my best, it is only right that the government should help me out when I get some bad breaks. OR Each individual should accept the consequences of their own actions. (Chose second statement)

Populism

(Scale scored in populist direction)

1. In the long run, I'll put my trust in the simple, down-to-earth thinking of ordinary people rather than the theories of experts and intellectuals. (Agree)

2. We would probably solve most of our big national problems if government could actually be brought back to the people at the grass roots. (Agree)

3. What we need is government that gets the job done without all this red tape. (Agree)

Restraint

(Scale scored in pro-restraint direction)

1. The size of government in B.C. should be reduced even if this means a lower level of public services. (Agree)

2. There should be a law requiring the government to balance the provincial budget. (Agree)

3. Government spending on public service salaries should be (slightly or substantially decreased).

4. Regulation of human rights should be (slightly or substantially reduced).

5. Government spending on education should be (slightly or substantially decreased).

6. Government spending on welfare rates should be (slightly or substantially decreased).

7. The restraint program was well intentioned but not well implemented. OR Opponents of the restraint program just could not accept losing the 1983 election. (Chose second statement)

Continentalism

(Scored in continentalist direction)

1. Canada should have freer trade with the United States. (Agree)

2. Canada's independence is threatened by the large percentage of foreign ownership in key sectors of our economy. (Disagree)

3. We must ensure an independent Canada even if that were to mean a lower standard of living for Canadians. (Disagree)

Antiregulation

This scale was created by summing the number of areas in which a respondent favoured slight or substantial reductions in government regulation. The policy areas were:

- environmental protection
- marketing of agricultural products
- land use
- sale of alcohol
- shopping hours
- gambling
- human rights