remarkably restrained, and points to an eirenic spirit of compassion. The
candour and consciousness of his story carries conviction, and is strength­
ened by his readiness to forgive, if not forget. And the inclusion of an
epilogue describing a return journey to Japan in 1985 is heartfelt test­
imony to the fact that, for at least one Canadian prisoner, the memories of the
past, and the accompanying fears and doubts, could be turned to an
experience of renewed hope for the future.

University of British Columbia

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Grassroots Politicians: Party Activists in British Columbia, by Donald E.
Blake, R. K. Carty, and Lynda Erickson. Vancouver: University of

Admitting at the outset that little is known about “the men and women
who make up the parties in the provinces and who keep these political
organizations functioning at the grassroots” (p. 13), the authors of this
important new book have contributed a significant first to the growing
literature on Canada’s provincial party systems. To explain the pattern of
party polarization in British Columbia and its impact on those “who drive
the system,” Professors Blake, Carty, and Erickson have examined system­
atically the “values and beliefs of those who constitute the party cores”
(p. 13). They conducted a demographic and attitudinal survey of the
delegates in attendance at three provincial leadership conventions held
over a fourteen-month interval in 1986-87. This book is the product of
that research.

In keeping with the parties themselves, the conventions were a study in
contrasts. The governing Social Credit party replaced one William with
another (Bennett, the party modernizer, with Vander Zalm, the populist)
in what remains to this day, with its twelve leadership candidates, the most
contested convention in Canada’s history. The New Democrats, the only
other party with a legislative presence at the time, “quietly agreed” (p. 19)
on the ex-mayor of Vancouver, Mike Harcourt, in an uncontested con­
vention. And the Liberals, long accustomed to having no MLAs and to
winning only a fraction of the province-wide popular vote, chose an
obscure college instructor, Gordon Wilson, by acclamation.

By first establishing that the rhetoric “and sometimes the substance”
(p. 85) of British Columbia’s electoral politics is indeed as polarized as it
has been typically described, the authors demonstrate how that feature of
B.C. politics has manifested itself at the grassroots level. As in the des­
tination of the Anglican church being Britain’s Tory party at prayer, British
Columbia's Social Credit party can safely be said to be Canada's federal PCs at the provincial level. That much was confirmed by the survey responses. Socred activists were also found to be both more heterogeneous and less likely to have changed over time in their socio-economic characteristics than those in the NDP. Compared with those in the other two parties, New Democratic activists showed the greatest ideological cohesion. They also shared closely the beliefs and values of their national party. Liberal activists occupied the ideological centre in B.C. politics, as their party's rhetoric would have it, even though in terms of social characteristics they were found to resemble those in the NDP more than Social Credit activists.

The size of this book belies the wealth of data and the sophisticated analysis it contains. The authors set the stage for their examination of party activists with a particularly fine introductory chapter reviewing briefly the history of B.C. politics. It is followed by eight chapters that are a model for the comparative study of party politics. Those who willingly put in the hours to serve as the backbone of modern political parties are analyzed carefully, and astute observations are offered about their behaviour and attitudes. The final chapter draws on a small number of theories of party competition and raises important questions about the future direction of B.C. parties. The authors speculate about the social and attitudinal changes that must first take place among party activists if B.C.'s party system is to become more centrist and less polarized. Although one might question the authors' description of Anthony Downs' theory of two-party competition as leading "inevitably" to parties locating "themselves immediately adjacent to one another at the centre" (p. 121), the final chapter nonetheless deserves close attention for what it tells us about change in a dynamic two-party system.

Understandably, much is made in this book of British Columbia's polarized party system. For a reviewer from a province with equally polarized electoral two-party competition and a centrist party squeezed in the middle, the parallels are obvious. Veteran Saskatchewan voters recalling the electoral oscillation from Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd, and Alan Blakeney on the one hand to Ross Thatcher and Grant Divine on the other would have good cause to challenge the statement on page 124 that "party competition in British Columbia has a sharper left/right focus than in any other part of English-speaking North America." Polarized politics, in rhetoric and in substance, can be said to characterize at least two of Canada's provinces.

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