Social Credit and the British Columbia Electorate*

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The Social Credit Party of British Columbia has enjoyed uninterrupted tenure as government of the province since 1952, a nineteen year period embracing no less than seven general elections. Apart from the first of these elections when the party was returned as a minority government, it has never secured less than 39% of the province-wide vote, and in the last election, in 1969, it secured almost 47% of the vote in returning 38 MLA's out of a total of 55 (see Table I).

This continued long-run success of the Social Credit Party with the B.C. electorate has not gone unnoticed by political scientists. Two alternative explanations have been offered: (1) that the Social Credit Party is the party of the middle classes in a province where all politics are class politics,[1] and (2) that the Social Credit Party is supported by a coalition of the unorganized ranks of the lower class, of the lower middle classes and of the small businessmen, as a form of "institutionalized protest against established social elites".[2] It is the purpose of this paper to reappraise both of these explanations with the aid of census and, to a lesser degree, survey data as well. The evidence will show that neither of the two explanations may be valid. In the light of this, a third interpretation is offered, which, although not completely and rigorously tested, does appear to fit the reality of B.C. provincial electoral behaviour better than the current conceptualizations.[3]

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1 Martin Robin, "The Social Basis of Party Politics in British Columbia", *Queen's Quarterly*, Vol. 72, 1966, reprinted in Hugh G. Thorburn, *Party Politics in Canada*, Prentice-Hall, 2nd Edition, 1967, pp. 201-211.

2 Edwin R. Black, "British Columbia: The Politics of Exploitation", in Ronald A. Shearer (ed.), *Exploiting Our Economic Potential: Public Policy and the British Columbia Economy*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968, pp. 23-41, at p. 31.

3 For a study which attempts, in a systematic manner, to account for some patterns of B.C. electoral behaviour largely in federal elections, see Jean A. Laponce, *People vs. Politics*, University of Toronto Press, 1969.

Table I. Votes and Seats of the Provincial Parties in B.C., 1945-69

Election Year	Total Seats	Social Credit		CCF/NDP		Liberal		P.C.		Others[c]	
		% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats	% Vote	Seats
1945	48	1.42	0	37.62	10		55.83	37[b]		1.62	1
1949	48	1.66	0	35.10	7		61.35	39[b]		1.89	2
1952[a]	48	30.18	19	34.30	18	25.26	6	9.66	4	0.60	1
1953[a]	48	45.54	28	29.48	14	23.36	4	1.11	1	0.53	1
1956	52	45.84	39	28.32	10	21.77	2	3.11	0	0.96	1
1960	52	38.83	32	32.73	16	20.90	4	6.72	0	0.57	0
1963	52	40.83	33	27.80	14	19.98	5	11.27	0	0.12	0
1966	55	45.59	33	33.62	16	20.24	6		0.55	0[d]	
1969	55	46.79	38	33.92	12	19.03	5		0.26	0[d]	

Notes: [a]The final vote under the alternative ballot system used in 1952 and 1953 is given for all parties.

[b]The Liberals and Progressive Conservatives fought as a coalition in 1945 and 1949.

[c]A member of the Labour Progressive Party was elected in 1945, 1949, 1952, 1953 and 1956, and an Independent was elected in 1949.

[d]The vote totals for the Progressive Conservative and Other candidates in 1966 and 1969 are combined because of their small size.

Sources: B.C., *Statement of Votes: General Election* (for each election year), Queen's Printer, Victoria.

Class and Voting in B.C.

Can voting behaviour in British Columbia be explained in class terms? At least one political commentator appears to think so. Martin Robin has argued that the predominance of the CCF/NDP and Social Credit Parties in provincial politics reflects the deep class cleavage in B.C. society.[4] The core of the NDP support lies, he argues, in the radical and militant ranks of the organized working classes, while the Social Credit Party is based around the middle classes, particularly a highly conservative farming community and a conservative business section. Even the elitist professional sectors vote Social Credit because that party is "the legitimate expression of the indignation of the possessing classes and the effective guarantee of their hegemony".[5] Robin's argument is, however, sustained entirely on the basis of personal impressions, and doubts about the validity of his conclusions have already been raised by the Vancouver-Burrard surveys which found that manual workers (particularly if in trade unions) voted NDP both federally and provincially, but that those voters in other occupations split evenly among the three other parties.[6] It would appear opportune to re-examine Robin's thesis.

Two distinct sets of data, that include three different measures of class and two different measures of party preference, are used. They will be detailed in turn.[7]

The first set of data uses the occupational categories of the 1961 *Census of Canada* as the basis of the measure of class, and the polling station proportion of votes for the four parties in the 1960 provincial election as the measure of party preference. The 1961 *Census* broke down the population into seven occupational categories by small geographical areas or tracts.[8] The 1960 *Statement of Votes* compiled by the Chief Electoral Officer of British Columbia also reported the proportion of votes given to each party candidate by small geographical areas of polls.[9] The propor-

[4] Robin, *op. cit.*

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[6] Laponce, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-7. Unfortunately for our purposes of inferring about provincial voting patterns, Laponce's conclusions are based on an aggregation of both federal voting data in 1963 and 1965, and provincial voting data in 1963.

[7] On the importance of using multiple indicators of social concepts, each of which are hypothesized to share in the theoretically relevant components of the concepts but having different patterns of irrelevant components, see especially, Eugene J. Webb et al., *Unobtrusive Measures,* Rand McNally, 1966, pp. 3-10.

[8] Dominion Bureau of Statistics, *Census of Canada 1961,* Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1961.

[9] B.C., *Statement of Votes, September 12th, 1960,* Queen's Printer, Victoria, 1961.

tion of party votes for each poll within each tract were summed to give the proportion of party votes for each tract, and the procedure was repeated for a representative sample of 78 tracts for the whole of British Columbia.[10] Almost one half of the votes cast (49.6%) in the 1960 provincial election, which was selected because of its closeness in time to the gathering of the census data, was included in this first set of data.

The second set of data is drawn from a survey of a randomly selected group of 109 municipal voters (mainly, but not exclusively, home-owners) in the suburban municipality of Saanich, who were interviewed in March 1970 on a series of items designed to elicit some correlates of political participation. The measure of party preference used in this second set of data was that of party identification, or self-assigned allegiance to one of the four parties or to an independent stance in provincial politics.[11] Measures of class were also included in the survey: (1) a ninefold categorization of occupations (later collapsed into five categories because of the size of the sample), (2) a fivefold categorization of education based on the number of grades completed in school, and (3) a fivefold categorization of monthly income levels. These three measures are often combined in sociological surveys into a single measure of socio-economic status, something which was not done here because of the differing relationships they independently displayed when correlated with party identification. Because the sample is unrepresentative of the entire B.C. electorate, any inferences made about the impact of class on provincial voting behaviour must, of necessity, be highly tentative.

[10] When the polls and the tract boundaries overlapped, the polls were sub-divided into blocks, and the number of votes cast for each party in each block were then added to the returns for the tract in which the block was located. This method is based on the assumption, which cannot be verified by the available data, that each block proportions its votes among the parties as does its poll collectively. The sample of polls used was not drawn directly, but the polls in Victoria were first examined, and then additional polls in Vancouver were added for inspection, until the sample mean for the Census categories matched the true mean for the Province at a significance level of 0.01. For further elaboration, see Leonard F. Hindle, "The Significance of Class Upon Provincial Voting Behaviour", Honours Graduating Essay, University of Victoria, Department of Political Science, 1970.

[11] This measure has been shown to be by far the single best predictor of a respondent's voting behaviour in the United States, United Kingdom and some other Western democracies. Recently unpublished reports of the research of Professor John Meisel of Queen's University, based on the first two nationwide surveys of Canadian federal electorial behaviour (1965 and 1968), indicate that this variable is of prime importance in Canada too. For a study which reports and uses some of Meisel's data, see Alan Kornberg *et al.*, "Some Differences in the Political Socialization Patterns of Canadian and American Party Officials: A Preliminary Report", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 2, 1969, pp. 64-88.

Table II. Class and Party in British Columbia Provincial Election of 1960

Occupational Category	Assigned Class	Social Credit			CCF			Liberal			P.C.		
		R.C.[1]	SE[2]	Ranking[3]	R.C.[1]	SE[2]	Ranking[3]	R.C.[1]	SE[2]	Ranking[3]	R.C.[1]	SE[2]	Ranking[3]
Professional	middle	—0.24	0.13	2*	—0.03	0.20	7	0.18	0.14	4	0.13	0.08	4*
Managerial	middle	0.13	0.18	5	—0.23	0.27	5	0.27	0.19	2*	—0.23	0.10	2*
Self Employed	middle	0.24	0.17	3*	—0.44	0.27	2*	0.12	0.19	5	0.14	0.10	3*
Sales	lower middle	0.09	0.28	6	0.12	0.43	6	—0.10	0.31	6	—0.06	0.17	5
Clerical, service & recreation	lower middle	0.08	0.09	4	—0.15	0.13	4	0.03	0.10	7	—0.31	0.05	7*
Transport & communication, craftsmen, production process & related workers	working	—0.33	0.12	1*	0.87	0.18	1*	—0.39	0.13	1*	—0.17	0.07	1*
Laourers, primary workers	working	0.29	0.16	7	—0.36	0.26	3	0.24	0.19	3*	0.07	0.10	6

Notes: [1]R.C. stands for Regression Coefficient.

[2]SE stands for Standard Error.

[3]Ranking indicates the relative importance of the 7 occupational variables for the particular party as sorted by a stepwise regression analysis.

—A negative sign of the coefficient indicates the negative direction of the relationship between the occupational and party variables, while an absence of a negative sign indicates a positive relationship.

*An asterisk indicates a significant regression coefficient at the level of 0.10.

Source: Hindle, *op. cit.*

The findings of the first set of data, the census data, show that class, as measured by occupation, displays no consistent relationships with party preference (see Table II). When the party preferences were regressed against the occupational variables, only 16 out of a possible 28 were found to be significant at the level of 0.10. Moreover, it was only one of the occupational categories, that of "transport and communication, craftsmen, production process and related workers" (the category in which one would anticipate the greatest degree of unionization) that distributed itself consistently for one party (the CCF) and against all others. Finally, only one of the regression coefficients exceeded 0.50, that of the aforementioned "transport . . ." category with a positive CCF preference, indicating that the other 15 significant regressions display a relatively weak association. In sum, the census data analysis indicates that Robin's assertions about a deep class cleavage leading to the current pattern of provincial voting in B.C. are highly suspect.

An analysis of the survey data reveals much the same type of conclusion. No relationship appears to exist between class, as measured by either education or occupation, and party preference (Tables III and IV). Moreover, there is a trace of a relationship (as indicated by a Cramer's V score of 0.284) between higher income and preferring the NDP[12] (see Table V). These results give additional grounds for rejecting Robin's analysis of the dynamics of provincial voting behaviour.

One caveat should, however, be advanced on behalf of the class cleavage thesis. All three of our indications of class (occupation, education and income) are objective measures of class, as opposed to subjective measures of class "identification", "preference" or "consciousness". It is possible that studies using such subjective measures could come to differing conclusions from this one. However, in the light of the findings of the one study using Canadian data that has compared the predictability of objective and subjective measures of class or party preference, and concluded that objective measures are more predictive, the burden of proof rests squarely on the class cleavage advocates.[13]

[12] This relationship should be treated with considerable suspicion since it contradicts every other study on class and party in Canada. It may be a result merely of the small number of NDP identifiers found in the sample.

[13] The Canadian study is John Wilson "Politics and Social Class in Canada: The Case of Waterloo South", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 1, 1968, pp. 288-309. The weight of the U.S. data is in favour of subjective measures for predicting voting behaviour, ever since the pathfinding work of Richard Centers, *The Psychology of Social Classes*, Princeton U.P., 1949.

Table III. Class (Education) and Party in Saanich, 1970

Education	*Social Credit*	*NDP*	*Liberal*	*P.C.*	*Independent*	*Refusals*
Elementary	4.3%	7.1%	4.2%	7.7%	0.0%	10.0%
Junior High	30.4	14.3	20.8	30.8	24.0	20.0
Senior High	34.8	57.1	45.8	38.5	60.0	50.0
University	30.8	14.3	25.0	23.1	16.0	20.0
Post-University	0.0	7.1	4.2	0.0	0.0	0.0

$X^2 = 11.577$ Cramer V = 0.163

Table IV: Class (Occupation) and Party in Saanich, 1970

Occupation	*Assigned Class*	*Social Credit*	*NDP*	*Liberal*	*P.C.*	*Independent*	*Refusals*
		%	%	%	%	%	%
Retired	Not assigned	8.7	14.3	12.5	30.8	12.0	0.0
Housewife	Not assigned	30.4	21.4	37.5	15.4	20.0	20.0
White Collar	Middle Class	34.8	28.6	29.2	46.2	24.0	40.0
Services	Lwr Middle Class	17.4	14.3	4.2	7.7	12.0	20.0
Blue Collar	Working Class	8.7	21.4	16.7	0.0	32.0	20.0

$X^2 = 18.227$ Cramer's V = 0.204

Table V: Class (Income) and Party in Saanich, 1970

Income Level	*Assigned Class*	*Social Credit*	*NDP*	*Liberal*	*P.C.*	*Independent*	*Refusals*
(Per mo.)		%	%	%	%	%	%
Under $300	Lower Working	13.0	14.3	12.5	7.7	8.0	0.0
$300-$600	Upper Working	30.4	21.4	20.8	53.8	40.0	50.0
$600-$1000	Lower Middle	39.1	28.6	16.7	7.7	36.0	50.0
Over $1000	Upper Middle	13.0	35.7	20.8	30.8	12.0	0.0
Refusals	Unassigned	4.3	0.0	29.2	0.0	4.0	0.0

$X^2 = 35.186$ Cramer's V = 0.284

Anti-Elitism and Voting in B.C.

The second major interpretation of voting behaviour and the success of the Social Credit Party in British Columbia is that made by Edwin R. Black.[14] He argues, like Robin on the basis of personal impressions, that in a highly materialistic political culture that has experienced rapid immigration, the Social Credit Party has put together a coalition of electoral supporters who are characterized only by their animosity toward established social elites. In demographic terms, this coalition consists of the unorganized ranks of the lower class and lower middle class groups, and of the small and medium sized businessmen. While our data is not directed toward an analysis of the political culture of B.C., it can be used to shed some light on the validity of the groups assumed to be supporters of Social Credit at the polls.

Our first set of data is particularly useful in this regard, since it indicates (see Table II) not only what occupational groupings are ranged behind a political party, but also what groupings are repelled by the appeals of any party. First, the "laborers and primary workers" (who we would anticipate to be the unorganized ranks of the working class) are neither particularly attracted to or repelled by the Social Credit Party. They constitute the third most significant grouping, on the other hand, favourably disposed toward the Liberal Party. Certainly, if there are any unorganized working classes in the "transport and communication, craftsmen, production process and related workers" category, they constitute such a small element as to be obscured by the repulsion that this group finds toward all parties but the CCF.

Secondly, the lower middle classes have no particular favorite party. They range themselves across all four parties, and only the antipathy of the "clerical, service and recreation" grouping toward the Tory Party is significant at the 0.10 level.

The support of the small and medium sized businessmen (whom we would anticipate to lie in the "self employed" grouping) for the Social Credit Party does, however, emerge from the data. They are, in fact, the only social grouping that has a positive leaning toward Social Credit. The party must obviously have a more generalized appeal to other groupings to win elections so consistently. In terms of Black's hypothesized coalition, therefore, only the small and medium sized businessmen's category appear to support Social Credit. Moreover, if we may infer from Black's argu-

[14] *Op. cit.* See also Donald V. Smiley, "Canada's Poujadists: A New Look at Social Credit", *Canadian Forum*, Vol. 42, 1962, pp. 121-23.

ment that the professional and managerial groupings, as social elites, would be repelled by Social Credit, then our data does little to substantiate the inference. The managerial grouping is not favorably or unfavorably inclined toward any particular party, except the Tories. Only the professional category leans in the direction that may be inferred from the anti-elitist argument; they are repelled by the Socred image (a negative repression coefficient of 0.24).

In sum, the anti-elitist argument is found wanting at a number of critical junctures. The unorganized working classes and the lower middle classes are no particular supporters of Social Credit, while the managerial elites are not repelled by that party. Only the support of the small and medium sized businessmen's group and the repulsion of the professional groups may be offered as evidence on behalf of Black's thesis.[15]

The 1970 survey data tends to substantiate these conclusions (see Tables II and V). The educated elites are not repelled by Social Credit; those with university education constitute over 30% of its supporters, a higher proportion than among any of the other parties. On the other hand, the Social Credit Party has fewer supporters among the income elites (those earning over $1,000.00 per month) than the other parties.[16] In other words, there are enough inconsistencies in both our survey and census data to warrant the conclusion that the anti-elitist arguments may be inaccurate.

An Alternative Interpretation of Social Credit Success.

In view of the inadequacies of both the "class cleavage" and "anti-elitist" explanations of Social Credit electoral success in British Columbia, an alternative interpretation appears essential. One such interpretation is now offered, by using some of the concepts and relationships found to have some predictive value in analyzing electoral behaviour in other Western Democracies. It is only an interpretation, rather than a theoretical explanation, since much of the data to sustain the interpretation is not fully available, and further research is required to test it in its entirety.

[15] It is interesting to note that the CCF did not repel the middle classes in the Election of 1960, with the exception of the "self-employed", to any statistically significant degree. One wonders, therefore, whether the debates within the Party, as to the need to change its image and leadership to appeal to these middle classes, have been largely spurious.

[16] It is impossible to use the survey data on occupational groupings and party preference (Table IV) to examine Black's thesis, since sample size precluded an extensive breakdown of occupations into pertinent categories along the lines of those arrayed in Table II.

Social Credit initially came to power as a result of an overwhelming electoral surge against the two established parties,[17] but as early as 1953 it had begun to build a core of adherents from persons who had previously supported not only the CCF but also the Liberals and Progressive Conservatives. If we compare the first and second preference votes under the transferable ballot electoral system operative in 1952,[18] we find that Social Credit voters gave their second preferences to the CCF, and vice versa, and the Tories and Liberals exchanged preferences. But there were no occasions revealed by our method[19] in which (1) CCF gave second preferences to either Liberals or Tories, (2) Social Credit gave second preferences to either Liberals or Tories, or (3) Liberals gave second preferences to either the CCF or the Social Credit. In other words, in 1952, there were two distinct voting cleavages, a cleavage formed by the voters supporting the old parties, and a cleavage formed by voters supporting CCF and Social Credit. When we repeat the examination of second preferences cast in the 1953 election, we find, not two distinct cleavages, but a much more complex system of interchanged votes. This time there was not a single instance revealed in which CCF voters cast their second preferences for Social Credit and vice-versa. But there was, on the other hand, an interchanging of votes between (1) Social Credit,

[17] The remnants of this surge against the established parties possibly account for some of the elements of anti-elitism that have been ascribed by Black and others to the Social Credit Party.

[18] Under this system, voters rank each candidate in order of preference, and if no candidate achieves an absolute majority (50% + 1) of the first preferences, the votes of the least preferred candidate are then redistributed to the other candidates on the basis of second preferences. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority on the second count, the process continues until an "absolute" victory is recorded. The system was evidently introduced by the Coalition Parties as an attempt to exclude the CCF from obtaining office by securing less than an absolute majority of votes. See Henry F. Angus, "The British Columbia Election, June 1952", *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, Vol. 18, 1952, p. 518.

[19] The method used was to take all those constituencies, numbering 29 in 1952 and 19 in 1953, where (a) there was no candidate declared winner in the first ballot, and where (b) there was no candidate of a minor party or an Independent who ranked lowest on the first ballot or who received the majority of the transferred votes on the second ballot. Once these constituencies were identified, then each case in which the majority of the second preference votes of the party ranking lowest on the first ballot were allocated to one of the other three parties, was deemed an instance or occasion of vote interchange between those parties. This method deals with statistical aggregates, and no inference should be made from this data about the preferences of the individual voter in 1952 and 1953. Unfortunately, no way exists of administering a survey to the voters in 1952 and 1953 about their individual preferences! cf. Galen A. Irwin and Duane A. Meeter, "Building Voter Transition Models from Aggregate Data", *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 13, 1969, pp. 565-66.

Table VI: Vote Interchanges,[1] 1952

		First Preferences			
		Social Credit	*CCF*	*Liberal*	*P.C.*
Second Preferences	Social Credit	—	3	0	1
	CCF	2	—	0	0
	Liberal	0	0	—	20
	P.C.	0	0	3	—

NOTES: 1. For a definition of Vote Interchanges, see Footnote 19.

SOURCE: *B.C., Statement of Votes, June 12, 1952,* (Queen's Printer, 1953).

Table VII: Vote Interchanges,[1] 1953

		First Preferences			
		Social Credit	*CCF*	*Liberal*	*P.C.*
Second Preferences	Social Credit	—	0	2	0
	CCF	0	—	1	0
	Liberal	1	2	—	11
	P.C.	0	0	0	—

NOTES: 1. For a definition of Vote Interchanges, see Footnote 19.

SOURCE: *B.C. Statement of Votes, June 9, 1953,* (Queen's Printer, 1953).

Table VIII: Strength of Party Identification, Saanich, 1970

		Party Self Identification			
		Social Credit	*NDP*	*Liberal*	*P.C.*
		%	%	%	%
Strength of Party Identification	Not So Strong	34.8	42.9	25.0	30.8
	Fairly Strong	30.4	42.9	45.8	61.5
	Very Strong	30.4	14.3	25.0	7.7
	Total Identified	21.1	12.8	22.0	11.9

$X^2 = 108.238$ Cramer's V = 0.575

NOTE: 4.3% of the Social Credit Identifiers and 4.2% of the Liberal Identifiers were unable to locate the strength of their party identification, hence the first three cells in these parties' columns do not sum to 100%.

Progressive Conservatives and Liberals, and (2) CCF and Liberals.[20] (See Tables VI and VII).

Since the early 1950's, the Social Credit Party has been returned to power as a result of two basic processes. First, a sizeable proportion of the electorate has come to identify with the party at the provincial level,[21] finding, in other words, the policies of the party instrumental for their own values.[22] Our aforementioned survey data indicates that 21.1% of the respondents identify with the Social Credit Party at the provincial level of government, while the percentages for the NDP, Liberals, Conservatives and Independents are, respectively, 12.8%, 22%, 11.9% and 22.9%.[23] Secondly, the Social Credit Party has had a net partisan advantage from election to election in pulling over more of the weaker identified NDP, Liberal and Tory voters, and more of the Independents, into a winning electoral coalition than has any of its opposition parties.[24] Although we have no data on actual shifts from election to election, our survey data indicates considerable differences between parties in the strength in which party identification is held (see Table VIII).

It is suggested that the short-run shifts in support of the Social Credit Party at election time have resulted from an electoral process of "sponsored conceptual ideology." We know from recent electoral studies that parties do not merely appeal to the voters on the basis of what they think are the salient issues for the electorate. Instead, the electorate tends to

[20] These patterns of electoral migration are similar to those found by Laponce in Vancouver-Burrard when comparing party switches in voting from provincial to federal levels and vice-versa. See, Laponce, *op. cit.*, Chapter 8.

[21] It is important to stress that it appears as if the electorate in Canada discriminates in its party identification between provincial and federal parties. See Kornberg *et al., op cit.* For evidence about the much weaker tendencies of the U.S. electorate to so discriminate, see M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, "Party Identification at Multiple Levels of Government", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72, 1966, pp. 86-101.

[22] This is only one of a number of competing interpretations of party identification, but the one that recent research indicates is the most valid. See, especially, Arthur S. Goldberg, "Social Determinism and Rationality as Bases of Party Identification", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, 1969, pp. 5-25; Michael J. Shapiro, "Rational Political Man: A Synthesis of Economic and Social -Psychological Perspectives", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, 1969, pp. 1106-1119; V. O. Key, *The Responsible Electorate*, Harvard U.P., 1966.

[23] Unfortunately, we do not have any appropriate data at the attitudinal level to indicate the primary values of the B.C. electorate. They may, of course, include those values of economic growth and development suggested by Black.

[24] This is now a well-accepted dynamic of short-run election shifts in voting among party identifiers and independents. See, in particular, Philip E. Converse, "The Concept of a Normal Vote", in Angus Campbell, *et al.* (eds), *Elections and the Political Order*, Wiley, 1966, Chap. 2.

respond to those sets of alternatives placed before them for consideration by the parties, and the reactions of the electorate then to feedback onto the programmatic postures of the political parties.[25] In diagrammatic terms, the process is not merely one of:

voters' predispositions ⟶ (leading to) partisan appeals

but the much more complex process of:

➤ salient electoral issues ⟶ (leading to) partisan appeals ⟵

We also know from recent electoral studies that the so-called "decline of ideology" in western democracies, evidenced particularly in Europe and the United States during the 1950's, may be explained by this dynamic paradigm; the political parties in these political systems and during these times rarely structured the electoral alternatives in ideological terms.[26] In British Columbia, on the other hand, the Social Credit Party has consistently defined the issue alternatives for the electorate in ideological terms, as a battle between "free enterprise and socialism",[27] and the actions of the electorate may be interpreted as a response to such a "sponsored" ideology. It appears, moreover that this sponsored ideology is of the "conceptual type", in that voters are asked to evaluate all political objects in terms of this one dimensional ordering.[28]

Why has this sponsored conceptual ideology been influential in B.C.

25 Like so many other areas of electoral behaviour, this dynamic paradigm was first codified by the late V. O. Key. See especially his *Public Opinion and American Democracy*, Knopf, 1961, Chap. 16.

26 The leading studies in this revisionary perspective, made possible by the availability of longitudinal survey data, are John C. Pierce, "Party Identification and the Changing Role of Ideology in American Politics", *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, 1970, pp. 25-42; Herbert F. Weisburg and Jerrold G. Rusk, "Dimensions of Candidate Evaluation", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 64, 1970, pp. 1167-85.

27 This conclusion is based on a review, albeit cursory, of the campaign appeals of the Social Credit Party as reported in the following newspapers: *The Daily Colonist* and *Daily Times* (Victoria), and *The Province* and *The Sun* (Vancouver).

28 This type of ideological thinking was first measured and employed in Angus Campbell *et al.*, *The American Voter*, Wiley, 1960, Chap. 10. It must be distinguished from "informational" ideological thinking in which the individual makes his own definition of "conservatism" and "liberalism" and then identifies the parties as being more or less conservative according to his own informational levels. The latter type of measure was first employed in Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics" in David Apter (ed), *Ideology and Discontent*, Free Press, 1964, pp. 206-61. See Laponce, *op. cit.*, Chap. 7, for an attempt to devise effective measures of ideological influence manifestation, among a B.C. sample, by tapping psychological orientations to the four major Canadian parties.

politics? We know from electoral behaviour research, that in political cultures with a large number of mediating social groups, where voters are likely to take their attitudinal cues from such groups as well as from the political parties, there is a "breakage" effect or a "two-step flow of influence" from the partisan appeals through the norms of the mediating groups to the electorate.[29] In British Columbia, on the other hand, such an intermediate structure of group influence has not existed (with the possible exception of trade union influence on its members).[30] As a consequence, the electorate has been directly exposed to a "one-step flow" of information coming from the governing and opposition parties, which, we have suggested, takes the form of a "sponsored conceptual ideology". These conditions, we further suggest, have led to the migration of most of the independent and weakly identified partisan voters into the Social Credit "camp" at election time.

Conclusion.

The consistent success of the Social Credit Party in provincial elections in British Columbia may be interpreted in the light of current knowledge about the dynamics of electoral behaviour. In particular, the long run stability of party identification and the short run election migrations in response to the information flow in the political culture, appear to fit the existing empirical evidence of the B.C. electorate. Further research is, however, imperative. Meanwhile, the current "class cleavage" and "anti-elitist" interpretations may be safely left aside.

[29] This dynamic was first measured in Paul F. Lazarsfeld *et al., The People's Choice,* Columbia U.P., 1944.

[30] Possibly because of the rate of immigration into the province.