

Class, Regional and Institutional Sources of Party Support Within British Columbia*

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In a recent article, Patricia Marchak commented that survey research has not adequately investigated electoral behaviour for the possibility of interaction influences among the variables of class, region and institutional sector.¹ Marchak speculates:

We would expect to discover regional differences in voting behaviour within the same class. We would also expect to find a division in support for the status quo within international unions.²

In addition, she has suggested that analyses of electoral cleavages within B.C. require further attention to institutional differences among members of the employed population.³

This paper will examine some of the issues raised by Marchak. First, however, it will be useful to summarize Marchak's conceptualization of class, region and institutional sector. For "class" Marchak suggests a four-class model which includes the policy-directing class, the managerial class, workers and the permanently unemployed or marginally employed. By "institutional sector" Marchak means groupings of organizations which possess varying degrees of control over industrial wealth. Six of these are discussed: industrial and financial corporations operating within an oligopolistic market; government and the public sector; unions; small businesses, independent professional practices and independent farms; non-government and non-commercial institutions, particularly churches; and the family.

For the regional dimension, Marchak distinguishes between the metrop-

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¹ Patricia Marchak, "Class, Regional and Institutional Sources of Social Conflict in B.C.," *BC Studies*, no. 27 (Autumn 1975), pp. 30-49.

² *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

olis and the hinterland. By the metropolis is meant a region exercising a high degree of control over industrial wealth, whereas the hinterland refers to a region in which little or no such control is exercised. Within British Columbia she views the Vancouver-Victoria centre as metropolis, while northern and interior regions are viewed as hinterland. Finally, for an examination of electoral cleavages in terms of class, institution and region, Marchak suggests that support of the status quo be defined as a vote for the Liberals or Conservatives — or for Social Credit when this is the only alternative to socialism.

Marchak's conceptualization of class, region and institutional sector creates at least three difficulties in attempting to examine her hypotheses by means of survey research. First, her typology would involve a cross-tabulation yielding 144 possible cells (4 classes by 2 regions by 6 institutional sectors by 3 "parties"). In addition to the problem of obtaining *any* respondent for some cells, a very large sample of 2,880 respondents would be required to average only 20 respondents per cell.

The second problem is more serious. It would be extremely difficult to obtain sufficient information by survey research to categorize some respondents into one of the four classes proposed by Marchak. For example, in many cases it would be difficult to decide if one belonged to the "policy-directing" or to the "managerial" class, while in others the distinctions would be unclear between "workers" and the "managerial class" on the one hand, or workers and the marginally employed on the other.

Most importantly, an unambiguous categorization by institutional sectors ("groupings of organizations") would be difficult, if not impossible, in terms of Marchak's discussion. For example, would one classify a unionized employee of MacMillan Bloedel as belonging to the institutional sector of "industrial . . . market" or of "unions"? How would one classify a regularly employed but non-unionized waitress who also happens to be a mother, a school board trustee and an influential figure in her church? Marchak is not at all clear on this point⁴ which, of course, renders

⁴ It is possible that Marchak (*Op cit.*) recognizes the possibility of multiple-sector involvement, but this interpretation appears to be ruled out not only by her assertion that "only two groups are unambiguously in the same position whether they are engaged in a class or an institutional struggle: the corporate elite and the unemployed families" (pp. 37, 40), but also her two-dimensional diagram of classes and institutional sectors (p. 38). In addition, it is unclear whether she is referring to sectoral involvement of *all* voters, or only of institutional influentials ("The organizations develop their own momentum and transcend their individual participants" [p. 35, italics supplied]). If such sector involvement refers only to influentials, then the problem of testing her hypotheses by survey research data is greatly compounded.

virtually impossible a test of her hypothesis with data obtained by survey research.

In short, one reason why the questions posed by Marchak have not been researched is that, at least in their present form, they cannot be answered by survey research. Nevertheless, the concerns which Marchak has raised can be partly investigated by analysing data collected from two province-wide random samples of the British Columbia electorate. One of these surveys was conducted in March 1974, the other in March 1975. There were 956 and 1,516 respondents, respectively, with response rates of 39 and 58 per cent.⁵

Two additional data sets are also available, though they include two few respondents for a meaningful three dimensional analysis. The first of these includes 446 respondents. It constitutes a modified panel sample based upon data from three related surveys in 1972-73 with individual response rates of 30, 31 and 41 per cent. The other supplemental data set includes 436 respondents from a January 1975 survey with a response rate of 28 per cent. In this paper, only the larger data sets will be used in three-dimensional analyses. However, to permit more accurate estimates of mean party support over time, all four data sets will be utilized in two-dimensional analyses.

From these four data sets, we have selected five indicators of class, two of region and one of institutional sector. Of course, the variables in question do not perfectly correspond to those which Marchak would prefer, but they do enable a limited examination of some of the hypotheses which she has raised. However, categories have been collapsed for most variables to provide a sufficient number of respondents in each cell, and Liberal and Progressive Conservative party preferences have also been combined into one category (Lib/PC) in an effort to mirror Marchak's conceptualizations and to permit a partial test of her hypotheses.

In addition to data on provincial political party preference, the following variables are partial indicators of Marchak's concepts. For class, we used *self-reported class* (lower/working and middle/upper); annual household income, trichotomized (with cutting points at \$10,000 and \$15,000); labour union membership (yes, no); an objective job classification;⁶ and a subjective job classification.⁷ For region, one classification

⁵ This difference in response rates is primarily attributable to the use of a complete follow-up mailing in the 1975 survey.

⁶ Job titles were classified into the categories of professional, technical and kindred; managers, officials and proprietors; clerical and kindred workers; sales workers; craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers; operatives and kindred workers; service workers, including private household; farmers and farm managers, including labourers and

categorized respondents as residing in the metropolis if they were on the voters list for a riding approximating the Vancouver or Victoria regions;⁸ otherwise they were categorized as hinterland. The other classification was based on the respondents' report of the area in which (s)he lived or worked. This was trichotomized into the lower mainland, a community of at least 40,000 outside of the lower mainland, or a community of less than 40,000 outside of the lower mainland.

Finally, institutional sector was measured by the respondents' self-reports of the service or product of the organization for which they worked. After collapsing reasonably related categories to provide a sufficient number of respondents in each category, the following categories resulted: legal authority, including finance and records; manufacturing, including transportation as well as building maintenance and construction; commerce, including service; extraction, including mining, logging, fishing and farming; and education and research, including health and welfare as well as arts and recreation.

Before presenting data relevant to Marchak's concern about simul-

foremen; labourers; members of the Canadian Forces; and students. All but the last two categories followed the classification scheme found in John P. Robinson, Robert Athanasiou and Kindra B. Head, *Measures of Occupational Attitudes and Occupational Characteristics* (Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, Survey Research Center, 1969), pp. 344-356. In an attempt to approximate Marchak's four-class model, we collapsed the categories of professional, managerial, sales, clerical, Canadian Forces and students into the "managerial class," described by Marchak (*Op cit.*, p. 32) as a class with "no ownership rights and no guaranteed job security . . . (but) more personal job control . . . (and) individual bargaining power than other employees." The class of "workers whose productivity is determined by others" was considered to be craftsmen, foremen, and kindred workers. Finally, the categories of service, private household, farmers, farm labourers, operatives, and labourers, as well as the unemployed and disabled workers, were collapsed into the class of "the permanently unemployed or marginally unemployed." No attempt was made to classify a "policy-directing class." It is doubtful that such individuals respond in sufficient numbers to permit analysis. Moreover, it is almost impossible to obtain data necessary for such a classification by means of survey research.

⁷ This classification was identical with the objective job classification. However, rather than categorizing respondents on the basis of job title, respondents self-categorized themselves into the occupational groupings of professional, managerial, etc.

⁸ For purposes of this classification, the following federal ridings were defined as metropolis: Burnaby-Richmond; Burnaby-Seymour; Capilano; Esquimalt-Saanich; Fraser Valley West; New Westminster; Surrey-White Rock; Vancouver-Centre; Vancouver-East, Vancouver-Kingsway; Vancouver-Quadra; Vancouver-South; Victoria. Where the federal riding was not known, the provincial riding was used with the following considered to be metropolis: Burnaby-Edmonds; Burnaby North; Burnaby-Willington; Coquitlam; Delta; Esquimalt; New Westminster; North Vancouver-Capilano; North Vancouver-Seymour; Oak Bay; Richmond; Saanich and the Islands; Surrey; Vancouver-Burrard; Vancouver Centre; Vancouver East; Vancouver-Little Mountain; Vancouver-Point Grey; Vancouver South; Victoria.

taneous effects of class, region and institutional sector upon electoral behaviour, we shall briefly examine average variation in party preference by indicators of these individual variables.

As can be seen in Table 1, on all indicators of class, the share of NDP support is highest at the lower end of the measures, while the reverse is generally true for the Lib/PC and Social Credit parties. There were only negligible differences in party support by region, but Lib/PC support was somewhat stronger in the metropolis than in the hinterland. With respect to institutional sectors, NDP support increases consistently as one moves from commerce to legal authority to manufacturing to extraction to education. The educational and commercial sectors provide the strongest Lib/PC support, while Social Credit strength is greatest within legal authority and weakest in education.

Thus the simple two-dimensional cross-tabulations discussed above show that there is, indeed, a consistent difference in party support within each of our five partial indicators of class. Some support is also found for Marchak's conjecture that there will be differentials in party support by institutional sector, a finding which we will examine in greater detail later. Contrary to Marchak's expectations, however, the difference in party support is almost non-existent within our indicators of region.⁹ Based upon these survey data, differences in electoral support by region appear to be attributable more to differential *class* distributions *within* regions.

However, an investigation of party preference by regional differences within the same class would be required to more fairly test Marchak's thesis that "the workers of the hinterland cannot depend on the workers of the metropolis to join them in class action when the benefits are not equally distributed."¹⁰ Some data permitting a partial examination of this question are presented in Table 2.

Although NDP support is generally uniform, some support is found for Marchak's hypothesis, since NDP support peaks among the lowest income category in the hinterland and the middle-income category in the metropolis. On the other hand, Social Credit support consistently increases as income increases within both the metropolis and within the hinterland.

⁹ This is not to deny the obvious. There is, of course, a variation in electoral strength from one riding to another, but this variation appears to be attributable to localized subcultures more than to a metropolis-hinterland effect. A review of much research on political differences geographically and institutionally, and a non-economic interpretation of those differences, can be found in Daniel J. Koenig and J. C. van Es, "Political Extremism and Situs" (A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association, Portland, 1972).

¹⁰ Marchak, *Ibid.*, pp. 47-49.

TABLE 1
AVERAGE PARTY SUPPORT BY INDICATORS OF CLASS,
REGION AND INSTITUTIONAL SECTOR¹

	NDP	Lib/PC	SC	Average Nz	Data Set(s) ³
<i>Class</i>					
Self-Identified				172	1
Upper/Middle	35.8%	40.0%	24.2%		
Working/Lower	62.3	22.1	15.6		
Household Income				652	1, 2, 3, 4
Under \$10,000	43.9	29.7	26.5		
\$10,000-14,999	41.5	30.5	28.0		
\$15,000 or more	29.9	32.6	37.6		
Labour Union				520	1, 2, 3
Union	49.4	22.7	27.9		
Non-union	35.8	33.3	32.2		
Objective Occupational Grouping				494	1, 2
Managerial	37.5	35.4	27.2		
Working	59.2	17.5	23.3		
Marginally employed	51.2	22.3	26.6		
Subjective Occupational Grouping				408	1, 2, 3
Managerial	33.9	32.7	33.5		
Working	49.6	17.6	32.8		
Marginally employed	46.4	27.2	26.4		
<i>Regional</i>					
Region				781	1, 4
Hinterland	44.1	26.8	29.2		
Metropolis	41.6	32.7	25.7		
Residence				600	2, 3
Lower Mainland	32.3	29.7	38.1		
Community, 40,000 +	35.4	31.6	33.1		
Community, less than 40,000	36.1	27.8	36.3		
<i>Institutional Sector</i>					
Situs				420	1, 2, 3
Legal authority	34.6	24.3	41.2		
Manufacturing	37.8	25.2	37.0		
Commerce	30.8	35.5	33.6		
Education	47.5	31.0	21.5		
Extraction	43.0	24.0	33.0		

TABLE 2
 REGIONAL DIFFERENCES IN PARTY SUPPORT WITHIN CLASSES
 (MARCH 1975)¹

	<i>Less than \$10,000</i>		<i>\$10,000 - \$14,999</i>		<i>\$15,000 or more</i>	
	<i>Metropolis</i>	<i>Hinterland</i>	<i>Metropolis</i>	<i>Hinterland</i>	<i>Metropolis</i>	<i>Hinterland</i>
NDP	35.8%	45.8%	61.4%	33.6%	33.1%	33.3%
Lib/PC	39.8	28.9	34.1	30.5	29.4	25.3
SC	24.4	25.3	26.8	35.9	37.5	41.3
(N)	201	166	179	131	272	150
Chi square	5.36		2.95		0.94	
P	.0687		.2293		.6242	

¹ Cases were excluded from each subtable if data were not complete for all three variables.

In fact, Social Credit preference is the highest of any party at incomes over \$10,000 in the hinterland and over \$15,000 in the metropolis, while it is the lowest in each of the other three categories! Nevertheless, doubt is cast upon Marchak's thesis by the unexpected finding that Lib/PC support decreases uniformly as income increases within the metropolis.

Such findings suggest that there does tend to be an interaction effect of region and class upon party preference, but not of the nature suspected by Marchak. Analysis of party preference by metropolis-hinterland sharpens the relationship for an affinity to Social Credit among high income households, but within the metropolis the relationships between income and Lib/PC support is opposite from what one might predict if her speculation were correct.

Finally, although Marchak was unaware of our unpublished data on party preference and industry of employment, those data are presented in Table 3 for the purpose of examining her suspicion that there will be

FOOTNOTES TO TABLE I

- ¹ The measurement of all variables has been described earlier in the text. Mean party support refers to the unweighted average of percentage of support in each survey rather than to a cumulative average based upon the total number of respondents in all relevant surveys. This has been done to obtain a truer overall average that is not disproportionately influenced by the larger data sets.
- ² Unlike the average percentage of party support, the average N refers to the weighted average number of respondents for whom usable data were available for the variables in question. Missing data were deleted pairwise.
- ³ 1 refers to the 1972-73 data set; 2 refers to the 1974 data set; 3 refers to the January 1975 data set; and 4 refers to the March 1975 data set.

TABLE 3
 INSTITUTIONAL DIFFERENCES IN PARTY SUPPORT WITHIN CLASSES
 (MARCH 1974)¹

	<i>Legal Authority</i>				<i>Manufacturing</i>				<i>Commerce</i>			
	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Lib/PC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Lib/PC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Lib/PC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>N</i>
Non-union	30.4%	35.7%	33.9%	56	31.4%	33.1%	35.6%	118	29.3%	31.1%	39.6%	164
Union	50.0	37.5	12.5	16	48.7	21.8	29.5	78	33.3	40.5	26.2	42
Chi square		3.35				6.31				2.71		
p		.1870				.0426				.2576		
Less than \$10,000	30.0	45.0	25.0	20	44.0	32.0	24.0	75	33.8	31.0	35.2	71
\$10,000 - \$14,000	41.4	27.6	31.0	29	40.8	26.8	32.4	71	37.3	29.9	32.8	67
\$15,000 or more	28.6	38.1	33.3	21	23.3	27.9	48.8	43	17.5	38.1	44.4	63
Chi square		2.04				8.83				6.95		
p		.7284				.0655				.1385		
	<i>Education</i>				<i>Extraction</i>							
	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Lib/PC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>NDP</i>	<i>Lib/PC</i>	<i>SC</i>	<i>N</i>				
Non-union	35.5%	38.2%	26.3%	152	33.3%	35.1%	31.6%	57				
Union	41.7	30.6	27.8	36	37.0	11.1	51.9	27				
Chi square		0.78				5.90						
p		.6768				.0524						
Less than \$10,000	39.7	35.3	25.0	68	39.4	24.2	36.4	33				
\$10,000 - \$14,000	30.2	35.8	34.0	53	30.8	30.8	38.5	26				
\$15,000 or more	39.7	36.2	24.1	58	35.3	29.4	35.3	17				
Chi square		2.12				0.59						
p		.7134				.9646						

¹ Cases were excluded from each subtable if data were not complete for all three variables.

a difference in party support by industry of employment. No specific hypothesis will be investigated since our "industrial classification"¹¹ differs considerably from hers, and it is difficult to locate a specific hypothesis by Marchak which could be tested by our data.

Nevertheless, as can be seen in Table 3, within each category NDP support is higher among union members than non-members. The opposite is true for Social Credit, except for a minor difference in education and a major difference in extraction. Lib/PC support is generally higher among non-union members than members, except for commerce (and a minor deviation in the case of legal authority).

With respect to income, Social Credit support generally increases with income except for relatively balanced support in extractive industries and a decline among the highest income class within education. Lib/PC support is reasonably consistent by income within each institutional sector, but NDP support declines substantially among the highest income category within both the manufacturing and commerce sectors.

What can one conclude from these data on variations in party support within institutional sectors? First, as has previously been pointed out by others, there are variations in socio-political attitudes by industrial groupings.¹² This is particularly true in the large employment groupings of manufacturing and commerce, where NDP support is particularly low and Social Credit support is particularly high among the highest income category. Similarly, NDP support is generally higher and Social Credit support lower among union members than among non-union members.

A notable exception to this generalization occurs in the extractive industries, possibly as the consequence of Social Credit's traditional encouragement of primary resource exploitation. Such an outcome is consistent with the conclusion of Koenig et al. that population subcategories which lack influence and respectability in the eyes of the established power structure will turn to a non-establishment political party.¹³ To the extent that those employed in primary extractive industries *perceived* relative (NDP) government neglect after long-standing Social Credit encouragement, the conclusion of Koenig et al. implies a prediction that

¹¹ Our classification is based upon a minor adaptation of the scheme set forth by R. Morris and R. Murphy, "The Situs Dimension in Occupational Literature," *American Sociological Review*, 24 (1959): pp. 231-239.

¹² For example, Koenig and van Es, *Op cit.* and R. Murphy and R. Morris, "Occupational Situs, Subjective Class Identification, and Political Affiliation," *American Sociological Review*, 26 (1961): pp. 383-392.

¹³ Daniel J. Koenig et al., "The Year That British Columbia Went NDP: NDP Voter Support Pre- and Post-1972," *BC Studies*, no. 24 (Winter 1974-75), p. 74.

they would move toward a party not in power, union membership notwithstanding.¹⁴

More generally, the data presented in this paper suggest that the best individual predictors of party support remain various indicators of class. Introduction of a metropolis-hinterland variable sharpens rather than confounds this relationship for the NDP and Social Credit. However, it also reveals an unexpected finding within the metropolis of increasing support for the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties as income decreases. Finally, the data are consistent with previous research elsewhere and with Marchak's suspicion that party support within British Columbia will also vary by institutional sector within a class.

¹⁴ It should be emphasized that this measure of primary extractive industries not only includes diverse enterprises (such as mining, logging, fishing and farming), but also includes all occupational categories (such as clerk, truck-driver, nurse, manager, logger, chemist, etc.) within these enterprises. There were too few respondents to permit separate analyses of specific occupational categories, such as logger, within this institutional sector.