AN ANALYSIS OF THE LINKS BETWEEN THE ALBERTA NEW DEMOCRATS AND ORGANIZED LABOUR

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Abstract

Like its counterparts in other provinces, the Alberta New Democratic Party has a formal relationship with organized labour. This thesis will examine the logic of the underlying relationship that persists between the two parties despite the difficult political and economic environment in Alberta. This thesis will discuss the complex and changing relationship between labour and the NDP in Alberta, making use of data from a variety of sources, but will rely heavily on data gathered from a series of interviews conducted with union and party officials in 2008. The thesis will deal particularly with the increasing fragmentation of the union movement in Alberta and the increasing independence of labour union campaigns during elections as challenges for the Alberta NDP in the future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The relationship between organized labour and the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) faces an uncertain future. The purpose of this thesis will be to examine the logic of the continued co-operation between the NDP and organized labour in what may be the most challenging environment for such relationships, Alberta.

The Alberta New Democrats face the same challenges that other left-of-center parties in advanced industrial economies struggle with. The recent popularity of neo-liberal economic thought has placed considerable strains on historic union-party relationships and eroded traditional support bases. Notwithstanding the economic downturn in 2008 and 2009, the Keynesian economic assumptions that supported the rationale for welfare state politics have given way to balanced budgets and fiscal prudence. The era that produced "the golden age" for social democracy seems to be firmly in the rearview mirror.

In Canada, recent federal and provincial elections have seen the NDP distance itself from its traditional public links with organized labour and shift its policy platform to the center, in an attempt to broaden its voter appeal (Piazza, 2001: 414). Now, in place of traditional social democratic promises and union friendly politics, the party seeks to champion the "economic security of working families" and "close the prosperity gap" between the average Canadian and the corporate elite (Layton, 2007). Recently the performance of the party has been mixed. The NDP surrendered the long term provincial stronghold of Saskatchewan and failed to capitalize on an electoral

opening in British Columbia, but has held Manitoba and most recently made a major breakthrough in the Maritimes, forming the government in Nova Scotia.

For the party, Alberta continues to present the most difficult of environments. Unlike its counterparts in the other Prairie Provinces, the NDP in Alberta has failed to achieve long term electoral success. The NDP has never formed a government and has attained the status of official opposition twice since Confederation (1986 and 1993). Alberta's conservative political culture, surging economy and strong identification with business friendly politics have been a long standing foil for the Alberta New Democrats (Tupper, 1986: 92). In addition, Alberta's labour movement is among the weakest in number and visibility in Canada (Reshef and Rastin, 2003: 15). The movement today battles for some of the most basic legislation that unions in other provinces enjoy, including first contract negotiation and anti-scab legislation. Recent public opinion surveys indicate that the majority of Albertans view political activity by organized labour in a negative light (Marshall, 2008: 3).

Despite these structural difficulties, some unions and the NDP continue to co-operate in much the same fashion as the rest of Canada, but without any of the tangible rewards. The question this thesis proposes to answer is this: why do labour unions and the Alberta NDP continue to work together in spite of the general weakness of the labour movement and the NDP's inability to exert policy influence in a consistent way? Logic would seem to dictate that the forces that have pushed political parties away from

traditional associations with organized labour in other contexts should have an exaggerated effect in politically conservative Alberta.

Based on interviews with a variety of labour and party officials and volunteers, as well as a statistical analysis of current financial and membership data, I will argue that the relationship between the Alberta NDP and labour is in an important transitional phase. On one hand, the party can claim modest growth in affiliated union locals, a slight increase in monetary donations during the most recent provincial election and a significant percentage of union affiliated candidates contesting seats for the Alberta New Democrats in the 2008 election. On the other hand, the 2008 election cycle also saw a pronounced effort on behalf of the labour movement to further political ambitions without co-operation with the party. The labour movement in Alberta spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on independent parallel advertising campaigns without any consultation with the party. At the 2008 NDP convention, the provinces most important labour organization introduced a motion calling for the dissolution of the party to establish a new united left, comprised of elements from the provincial Liberal and Green party. In addition, the leadership of the NDP party and the leadership of the provincial labour federation are in the middle of a public feud over campaign finance laws.

Research conducted for this project will demonstrate that for some unions rational approaches to the relationship are an important component of political calculations, but not the only consideration. For these unions, the logic for continued co-operation with the party is buttressed by a shared world view and a historical sense

of ideological affinity. However, for a growing portion of the labour movement in Alberta, the strains of a difficult political environment and a weak party are pushing labour's political strategy towards a more non-partisan and opportunistic style of political interaction. The promotion of the policy preferences of the union membership is increasingly taking precedence over support for the NDP.

To examine these complicated developments in the relationship between the Alberta New Democrats and the province's unions and representative bodies, this thesis will be divided into four parts. In the first section, the thesis will examine theoretical accounts of union and political party co-operation and present a review of party theory literature. Jansen and Young (2009) examined the effects of federal campaign finance changes and their effects on party and union relationships. In their study, Jansen and Young break down the theoretical literature on union-party co-operation into comparative literature, political economy reasoning and a third set of literature that focuses on ideological similarities. I will examine the Alberta context within this framework, highlighting the importance of the rational calculations unions consider when formulating their political strategy.

The second part of the project is a survey of the history of organized labour and political parties in Alberta. The history of labour and party interaction traces back to radical labour unrest at the turn of the century. After a series of attempts by labour and socialist parties to unify labour support behind a single party, the movement developed lasting ties with the CCF through formal affiliation between union locals and the party. Finally, 1961 marked the establishment of English speaking Canada's first national

labour-endorsed political party, when the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) partnered with the CCF to create the NDP.

From the history of the party and the province's labour movement, the third section of the thesis will examine the current political, economic and cultural climate and discuss its effects on the dynamics and viability of union and party interaction. The politics of Alberta and the tendency towards single party dominance have been the focus of numerous studies. The classic explanation marshaled by C.B. Macpherson, built on the assumption of Alberta as a primary resource center for the east coupled with the dominance of the provinces electorate by a capital owning *petit bourgeoisie* class, has been challenged and revised numerous times. Today, leadership and boom cycles in the Alberta economy appear to play the most substantial role in electoral outcome. This thesis will present Alberta's political culture as predominantly conservative and fairly unsupportive of traditional left-of center politics, be they union or party supported.

The final portion of the thesis will present the primary field research component. To measure the relationship between the two parties, I conducted over 30 interviews with a wide array of individuals in leadership and volunteer positions with unions, the party and other relevant bodies, including the Alberta Federation of Labour. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured fashion based on a set of questions formulated specifically for the organization each individual represented. (See Appendix 1 for interview question samples.) At the end of each interview, the interviewee was allowed a portion of time for open comments on relevant issues related to the study. The field research also included attendance at relevant meetings and functions, including the

annual party convention after the 2008 election. The primary research component of the project also examines monetary and membership data provided during visits to the party head quarters in Edmonton, as well as information provided by the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL) during similar visits.

Chapter 2: The Theoretical Context for Union and Party Relations

Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis will provide the theoretical background for the discussion of the relationship between the Alberta New Democrats and organized labour. The chapter will address several things. First, the nature of the mass party itself will be examined against the evolution of party types in Europe and other advanced industrial democracies. The ramifications for our study of the Alberta context are related to the difficulties the mass party type has had in Canada and, more particularly, in Alberta. The chapter will move to a discussion of the different types of unions found in the comparative literature and draw the discussion into the Alberta context. Next, the chapter will examine how the New Democratic Party can be understood comparatively within the Canadian party system. Finally, the chapter will examine the logic for party and union co-operation. To this end, the project will briefly review accounts from the comparative and political economy literature in order to build a theoretical backdrop for subsequent discussion of the Alberta example.

Theoretical Discussion of Modern Party Types

Understanding and developing a taxonomy of political parties in democratic systems is an ongoing and contested project. Comparative literature dating from the 1950s has been revised and amended based on the evolution of party systems in various countries. As parties have evolved in democratic systems, their relationships with their voting bases have evolved as well. The social and economic frameworks that provide

the rationale for the mass party have shifted in Europe, leading to the evolution of social democratic parties with ties to organized labour. The emergence of new strategies for mass parties, most notably the "New Labour" movement in Britain provides a framework for analysis for the intra-party dialogue in Alberta that will be discussed at length in Chapter 5. To that end, the first portion of this chapter will review the theoretical literature on political parties, with particular attention to changes in party types over time, and attempt to place the NDP within a proper theoretical setting. The chapter will argue that the NDP is best understood in the family of policy seeking mass parties developed by among others (Wolinetz, 2000; Pomper, 1980).

The current pluralism of party types owes its collective roots to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, when early political parties were developed in a context of limited voting rights and elite-driven politics. Edmund Burke conceptualized the parties of this era as "a body of men united for promoting their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed" (1981: 317). Katz and Mair refer to this initial phase of party development as the "*regime censitaire*" (1995: 9). Party activity and organization was driven by a need to represent and protect the limited interest of wealthy enfranchised voters on the national stage. Parties were loosely organized and had little relevance beyond elections (Katz and Mair, 1995: 11). Elections were contests between competing elite visions for the nation. This era was marked by an interpenetration of politically relevant elements of civil society and those who occupied power. This party type has been discussed in the literature in different

forms; Duverger's cadre party (1961) and Neuman's party of individual representation (1956) are the classic forms that are referenced today.

The first evolutionary step in party literature analyzed the growth of parties that arose as a direct result of the enfranchisement of the general population in various democracies. The newly empowered electorate saw little utility in the elite centered, closed parties of the past and began to mobilize according to defined commonalities in class and social structure. Duverger's conception of a mass party emerged as a functional intermediary between the growing political aspirations of civil society and the state (1961: 89). The mass party type is defined in the literature as having an open, organized power structure, a large membership centered in the electorate and a bottom up policy development. Mass parties in this model had a distinctly left leaning ideology and were often patterned organizationally after unions. This was due in part to strong ties to the working class (Duverger, 1961: 107). As a result of the emergence of the mass party, the primary responsibly of the party shifted from promoting a particular elite-driven understanding of the best course for the state to representing the particular policy interests of a set segment of the population.

The success of a single party type often influences party systems; the success of the mass party resulted in an evolutionary move by the political right in many democratic party systems (Wolinetz, 2000: 139). Katz and Mair argue that the mass party model was so successful at enacting policy gains for the working class, most notably the European welfare state, that the older elitist cadre parties were forced to adopt some the organizational characteristics that defined the mass party (1995: 11).

Cadre parties began to adopt regular membership branches, a party congress, and a party press. Cadre parties continued to differentiate themselves from mass parties by rejecting the notion of policy development from within and by continuing to raise funds from wealthy middle and upper class supporters. Duverger defined this influence of the political left mass party on party systems as a contagion from the left (1961: 176).

The evolutionary steps taken by the cadre parties spawned the second major shift in party development, according to Katz and Mair (1995: 12). As the great social projects of the left-of-center mass parties were completed, the need for class solidarity began to erode. This left the traditional mass party model vulnerable to populist challenges. The cadre parties, in adopting mass membership but not advocating representation of a single social demographic, found utility in building large support bases that appealed to a variety of voters from all social classes. Here the Downsian notion that parties should form policy to win elections, as opposed to win elections to form policy, is demonstrated (Downs, 1957: 27). The growing affluence of industrial democracies resulted in a blurring of class lines that eroded the traditional foundation of the mass party. In order to maintain parliamentary presence, European parties became more accepting of a broader policy range. The result of these system changes was the emergence of the catch-all party model (Katz and Mair 1995: 15).

Kirchheimer and Epstein both developed a theoretical model for the catch all party built on elite-driven party politics and flexible membership. For Kirchheimer the shift from the mass party model resulted in a more professionalized and capital intensive campaign strategy (1966: 181). This shift came at the expense of the rank and

file party member's ability to shape party policy, as was common in the older mass party model. The marketing of party leadership via mass media and policy flexibility replaced the rigid policy agenda set by party membership. This resulted in the diminution of the party as a transmission belt between civil society and the state. During this phase of evolution, the political party moved from a representational role for likeminded social groups to agent suppliers to consumerist voters (Kirchheimer, 1966: 185).

For Epstein, this shift away from accountability to individual membership represented a positive evolution. The policy preferences of limited cohorts of society stood in the way of the rational formation of policy and acted as a barrier to the free market exchange of ideas and competition between political parties (1967: 257). Epstein labeled the shift to a more market based conception of political party behavior the contagion of the right, and he also argued that the declining influence of left-inspired party behavior was a positive system change (1967: 265).

The catch all party became the dominant political party type in most modern party systems (Wolinetz, 2000: 144). In general terms, the modern catch all parties are defined by large mass memberships, flexible policies, an ideology geared for winning elections, and a reliance on mass media and electoral specialists. Katz and Mair explain the catch all strategy in the following terms: "Instead of emphasizing social homogeneity, the party accepts members wherever it finds them, and moreover recruits members on the basis of policy agreement rather than social identity" (1995: 10). In this changing environment parties become more and more alike; ideology and policy distinctness are traded at election time for direct appeals to voters via mass

media and the increased importance of marketability of the party leader (Koole, 508: 1996).

The catch all party has settled as the starting point for modern theoretical explanation for the political party in most democracies. A series of alternate explanations has emerged in the literature in response to the overly general nature of the catch all model. Katz and Mair argue for a change in focus from the interaction of civil society and party to that between party and state. They find that party and state are increasingly fused, and that the reliance on public funding in many democracies has fundamentally altered the way parties, state and civil society interact (Katz and Mair, 1995:16). With this change in the way parties finance elections, the spoils of electoral wins are less significant than in the past. Nearly all major parties have access to power in some regard; even long periods of opposition or minority status do not eliminate access to patronage appointments or the ability to shape policy. Moreover, the most important means of communication with the public, mass media attention, is scarcely affected by seat count or popular vote (Katz and Mair, 1995: 17).

The results of these system changes, an increased reliance on state funding, and a reduced reward matrix once elections are won, have resulted in the emergence of cartel-like behavior among parties. Acting out of rational self interest, cartel parties collude to keep challengers to the cartel at bay in order to maintain a monopoly on power (Katz and Mair, 1995: 18). Challenges to the cartel model have come from a variety of angles (Young, 1998; Scarrow, 2005: 621; Detterbeck, 2005: 174; Koole, 1996: 508). In general, the theory seems to have merit in several Western European examples

but is not applicable to all situations where state subsidies make up the bulk of political party finances.

Other recent contributions to party theory include Panebianco's electoral professional model as well as Poguntke's new politics party. Panebianco's work highlights the evolution of political parties from mass populist entities to professionally run organizations. In place of representation of social classes and/or civil society interest, Panebianco argues competition between parties as the defining characteristics of emergent party systems. The electoral professional party therefore is marked by the increasing importance of a cadre of communication, polling, advertising and public relations experts. These parties are headed by elite, educated professionals designed to beat other competing parties at election time (Panebianco, 1990: 62).

Poguntke added the "new politics party" to the body of literature on party types (1988: 12). This party type arose in response to the rise of new ideological (both right and left) and single issue based parties in many Western European countries. These new politics parties emerged from the vacuum created from the gradual decline in number and strength of older European mass parties. The emergence of the new politics party is therefore a result of the decline of European political parties and not systemic change inherent in other evolutionary accounts of political parties (Ignazi, 1996: 554). Poguntke defined new party politics in terms of a more post materialistic emphasis expressed in practical terms by Green, New Left and New Right parties and contrasted their electoral behavior with more traditional European party families including the conservative, Christian, agrarian, liberal, social-democratic, and

communist parties (Poguntke, 1987: 76). The new politics party seeks to advocate policy-based platforms to the wider public with the hopes of gaining policy movement.

Party Classification Systems

The proliferation of party concepts has in many cases acted to muddy the theoretical waters for the simple labeling of particular parties. The large number of party theories has demonstrated if nothing else that the method of studying party systems is as important as the outcome. Differing approaches in the literature have attacked the problem of party labeling from a variety of angles. Parties are studied in the context of their relationship with civil society, the state, each other, organizational structure, principal organizational objective, and social basis of representation, as well as in reaction to existing and newly suggested theoretical models. Gunther and Diamond point out that the application of models based on European social and economic contexts to situations outside the European tradition often makes for complicated analytical frameworks (2003: 169-171).

A branch of theoretical literature has emerged in response this proliferation of approaches and argues that parties in democratic systems are best understood in terms of a variety of specialized party types, and that the search for one new dominant typology may be misplaced (Gunther and Diamond, 2003; Koole, 1996; Pomper 1990; and Wolinetz, 2000). This challenges the assumption that the success of one party type in a system will result in the evolution of competing parties along similar lines. For example, Gunther and Diamond propose the adoption of a "taxonomy of parties" borrowing the genus and species hierarchy from biology. The system utilizes three

criteria: the nature of subject party's formal organization on a thick to thin horizon, the programmatic commitments, and typical strategy and behavioral norms. The taxonomy produces a flow chart organized vertically by time and horizontally by evolutionary party type. Five genera emerge: the elite base, the mass base, the electoralist, the movement base and the ethnic base. From each of these genera a variety of evolutionary forms branch down.

The Gunther and Diamond approach does well to represent the variety of evolutionary leftist party types internationally. A close examination reveals a strong synthesis of a multitude of party theory types from Duverger (the distinction between mass and elite parties) on to the work of more modern theorists including Poguntke (movement based). However, the system is bound to large conceptual divisions between the differing genera. Of particular concern is the placement of ideological parties that compete in catch all environments.

Wolinetz proposes an alternative to the party species approach with his party schema. The Wolinetz schema is based on the most prominent (however not the single) functional role of a party. The characteristics of the party types are drawn out by examining six primary behavioral characteristics. The system allows considerable flexibility and partial transition between schema classifications. The schema allows for the analysis of parties from a variety of angles, including the level of involvement by rank and file membership, policy formation and electoral strategy. This variety of indicators allows the Wolinetz approach to encompass a variety of existent party types,

while also allowing for hybrid types. Figure 2.1 illustrates the three party types in the Wolinetz schema.

Figure 2.1 Wolinetz Schema

Possible Indicators	**Parties**		
	Policy -Seeking	*Vote- Seeking*	*Office -Seeking*
Internal Policy Debate			
Time spent on at party meetings	High	Low	Low
Character of debate	Intense, issue focused	Pro Foma, diffuse, unfocused	Pro Foma, diffuse, unfocused
Extent and level of involvement	Extensive	Confined to leadership or policy committee	Confined to leadership or policy committee
Consistency of Policy Positions			
Internal policy accepted by party leadership	High	Med to low prone to change depending on leader direction and electoral opportunity	Med to low
Election Campaigns			
Prominence of Policy	High	Varies	Low
Determination of Strategy	Follows from policy	Policy developed to maximize votes	Preference for low risk strategies
Use of new electoral techniques	Low to medium	High	Low to Medium
Infrastructure to Support Policies			
Active research bureau, think tanks, affiliated organizations	Present	Minimal	Minimal

Source: Adapted from Wolintez, 2002: 155.

The NDP within the Canadian Party System

Identifying party types within the Canadian system context presents a challenge. The Canadian party system has not evolved along the same lines as its Western European counterparts; this renders analytic frameworks developed from the study of European parties less applicable. In general, the Canadian party system evolved in three phases (Carty, 1993: 567) with the emergence of a fourth phase taking shape since the

1993 election (Patten, 2007: 56). Unlike European examples, the two major Canadian political parties (the federal Liberal and Conservative) abandoned specific class, religious or ethnic bases early on. These bases common to European parties were left in favor of brokerage style politics that revolved around consensus on weak Keynesian assumptions until the 1980s, and have since evolved along a neo-liberal market consensus (Brodie and Jenson, 2007: 41). Canada's two major parties have mass memberships and rely on funding from both large corporations and smaller individual donations. Policy formation has traditionally been the domain of elites within the party machinery, much to the frustration of individual members and party activists (Cross, 2004: 33).

The two-party dynamic has enjoyed stability in Canadian party politics; however, the system has been home to a long standing tradition of third parties. Pinard offers an explanation for the rise of third parties in Canada. Using the performance of Social Credit in the 1962 federal election in Quebec as a case study, Pinard argues that the presence of a strong single party in a party system, structural economic woes, and distortional electoral results rendered by single member plurality (SMP) systems acted as catalysts for third party growth (Pinard, 1967: 369). Hiller expands on Pinard's theory, isolating the idea of protest against an outside threat, and focuses attention on the specific case of Alberta. By analyzing the Social Credit era in Alberta, Hiller argues that the rise of third parties can be understood as an internally developed solution to deal with critical problems that threaten a region. The internal nature of the protest party in Western Canada can be used to understand the failure of these parties to succeed outside their regions, along with the diversity among parties with the same

name in different provinces (Hiller, 1977: 56). More recently, the importance of brokerage politics, as well as a perceived sense of grievance, has been reaffirmed in the formation of third parties in Canada. Studies examining the rise of the Reform party in Western Canada and the Bloc in Québec during the 1990s have reaffirmed the foundation of Pinard's theory (Belanger, 2007: 88).

The New Democratic Party of Canada and its provincial counterparts are the perennial example of protest movement parties that developed as a reaction to brokerage politics and dominant party tendencies. The party owes its roots to Western Canadian dissatisfaction with the party system during the Great Depression. However, unlike many other third parties in Canadian history, the CCF/NDP have managed to break out of a regional mold. Whitehorn argues that the formation of the NDP from the CCF represented a concerted attempt at creating a Duvergian mass party in Canada, transcending regional grievances (2007: 139).

However, as the discussion in the previous portion of this chapter suggested, the success of a single party type and the evolution of structural economic factors can pressure political parties to evolve from their historical models. Since 1961, the NDP has enjoyed success at the provincial level, forming governments in Ontario, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and most recently Nova Scotia. However, a combination of unstable partisan identification (Cross, 2004: 16), regional politics, and ideological and policy flexibility by the federal Conservative and Liberal parties (Brodie and Jenson, 2007: 39) have kept the NDP from ever moving outside of the third party role in national politics. The party has also been hesitant to make any major changes in

response to the party system changes that have emerged since 1993. Lawson and Poguntke argue that the party must decide between two competing camps within the party leadership. The first option is to sever ties with some founding organizations, including organized labour, and pattern the party after the "New Labour" initiative from England in the 1990s. The second option is to steer the party sharply to the left and align party policy with European "new politics" parties that focus on environmental and anti-globalization platforms (Lawson and Poguntke 2004: 169). Despite efforts from within, most notably the New Party Initiative in the early 2000s that argued for the new politics approach, the party has been hesitant to make any major moves. At the provincial level a variety of strategies has emerged; the discussion of the Alberta party branch and its relationship with organized labour in the following chapters fits into this ongoing dialogue within the party.

Classifying the New Democratic Party

The NDP differentiates itself from the other brokerage style parties in Canada in several important ways. Historically the party assumed the mass party model, built on the concept of a broad membership with organizational ties to other progressive organizations. These mass party roots have had broad ranging implication for the party over the last forty years. Unlike the other major Canadian parties, the NDP has relied on small financial donations from a large membership pool as opposed to relying on funds from large corporations or wealthy individuals (Jansen and Young, 2009: 674). Mass party type democratic traditions have dictated the policy direction of the party,. Historically, many of the major NDP policies were developed in consultation with mass

party membership at convention (Horowitz, 1968). Most policy positions leading up to elections are subject to the approval of the membership at convention, and representation from partner organizations by committee (Cross, 2004: 33). Mass party tendencies are visible in the leadership selection process as well; the NDP has a long tradition of weighted voting among membership and affiliated organizations for leadership selection (Cross, 2004: 76). The provincial wings of the party function in a similar way. As the two levels are fused by the same organizational constitution, policy formation and leadership selection are identical. Provincial parties form regionally specific policy in consultation with both membership and the federal party. Figure 2.2 presents the Wolinetz classification system with the NDP included. The chart shows that the party can be understood as a policy seeking party with mass party roots within the Canadian party system.

Figure 2.2 Wolinetz Schema applied to the NDP

Possible Indicators	Parties			
	Policy –Seeking	*Vote- Seeking*	*Office - Seeking*	*Alberta NDP*
Internal Policy Debate				
Time spent on at party meetings	High	Low	Low	High
Character of debate	Intense, issue focused	Pro Foma, diffuse, unfocused	Pro Foma, diffuse, unfocused	Intense, Issue Focused, Policy Focus
Extent and level of involvement	Extensive	Confined to leadership or policy committee	Confined to leadership or policy committee	Extensive
Consistency of Policy Positions				
Internal policy accepted by party leadership	High	Med to low prone to change depending on leader direction and electoral opportunity	Med to low	High
Election Campaigns				
Prominence of Policy	High	Varies	Low	High
Determination of Strategy	Follows from policy	Policy developed to maximize votes	Preference for low risk strategies	Follows from Policy, as well as strategy from Fed
Use of new electoral techniques	Low to medium	High	Low to Medium	Medium[1]
Infrastructure to Support Policies				
Active research bureau, think tanks, affiliated organizations	Present	Minimal	Minimal	Present[2]

Source: Adapted from Wolinetz, 2002:155

The policy seeking categorization highlights among other items the importance of both bottom up policy development and the role of affiliated organizations. We find in this context the importance of labour unions for the NDP in Alberta. For policy seeking mass party types like the NDP to be successful, the party must maintain strong

[1] See for example the discussion of the use of Facebook by the NDP in Federal Elections in a forthcoming thesis by Noorin Chatour.

[2] This is present via consultation with formally affiliated organization like the CLC and by informal links with progressive organizations like the Howe Institute, Parkland Institute, etc.

links with the organizations and individuals that make up its core membership. Supportive labour unions and organizations have in the past provided the backbone to many successful left of center political parties that fit the Wolinetz schema. However, strains on the links between parties and unions have had lasting effects on party systems in several advanced industrial economies including Britain and Sweden (Haugsgjerd 2007),(Quinn 2002). The remainder of this chapter will examine the theoretical context for union-party relationships; first a discussion of union interaction in political economy context from the theoretical perspective will be presented. This section will be followed by a review of three explanations for the relationships that exists between left-of-center parties and labour movements.

Union Objectives in and Political Interaction from a Theoretical Perspective

The following section will discuss the role that unions play from a theoretical perspective, place the Canadian labour movement within a theoretical context, and present a brief discussion of the impact of globalization on the Canadian and Alberta context. This section will argue that the Alberta labour movement as part of the Canadian movement exhibits characteristics of the Anglo/American style of conflict-driven union behavior as part of the Canadian pluralist labour relations tradition.

Theoretical Role of Unions

Unions occupy an interesting role in civil society, acting as both agents in and products of the democratic process (Wood, 2004: 4). The traditional explanation of the role of unions in the democratic process has revolved around this dual role. First, unions occupy an important role in civil society as a major representative body for

workers' interests in industrial economies. Within this role unions act as a counterbalance to business interests and further the agenda of their membership through collective bargaining (Campbell, 1992: 4). This process historically resulted in the establishment of a standardized work day and week and minimum age and safety requirements in the work place. In its contemporary setting, collective bargaining works out agreements on compensation structures, benefits and pension details. Unions rely on strikes and the threat of work stoppages at the bargaining table with employers. Alternately, in domestic economies where more cooperative traditions have evolved, unions make up an important part of the tripartite negotiation model with business and government (Hanann, 2004: 126).

Unions occupy a secondary position in democratic systems, acting as agents for social movements driven by membership, and leadership or elite concerns. These social justice aims are often conducted in concert with other civil society actors. Unions behave in a quasi lobbyist role in this capacity, interacting with governments and in some cases via international bodies (Ficher and Greer, 2004: 79). The agenda of unions acting in this capacity tends to focus on perceptions of social and material inequality, placing unions as natural partners with other social actors concerned with the politics of social identity, the environment and globalization (Ferge et al., 2004: 138).

Corporatist and Pluralist Systems

The bulk of theoretical literature analyzes the nature and objective of unions in their domestic settings in terms of their history and behavior within the national political economy, and actions in response to set system wide factors (Hayward, 2004:

3). This approach produces a continuum. On one side are the corporatist political economies. Industrial and labour relations in these countries exhibit cooperative tendencies. Government policy that directly affects unions and business is designed in consultation with major stakeholders. This style of corporatist behavior tends to occur in national economies with a specific set of structural factors. These include the strong presents of labour friendly social democratic traditions occurring in advanced industrial economies, a large and homogeneous union population with relatively few unions, a significant degree of centralization in the business community, and a centralized powerful, interventionist state (Siaroff, 1999: 178).

Austria, Norway and Sweden are generally agreed to demonstrate the strongest examples of corporatist behavior (Siaroff, 1999: 180). In large part these traditions developed out of a specific pattern of historical interaction. Sweden, for example, has seen formal co-operation between the Social Democratic Party (SPA) and the National Labour Federation (LO) as far back as 1932 (Amark, 1992: 431). Both organizations worked from a shared sense of solidarity; the SPA spend the post-Second World War period consolidating the Swedish labour movement, while the SPA until the late 1980s provided favorable social democratic policy and constructive negotiations with business interests on major issues. The two organizations share considerable interpenetration of leadership, with membership from SPA making up the bulk of political representation on the LO congress (Amark, 1992: 440). The Swedish political economy also benefits from a lack of factionalism (ethnic, language, religious) that has negatively affected the cohesiveness of other European labour movements (Campbell, 1992: 5).

The other side of the continuum is the Anglo/American style of labour relations where the cooperative tendencies in the corporatist systems have not developed. Systems that have evolved without the shared sense of solidarity found in Scandinavia and Austria are generally referred to as pluralist systems. Canada, the UK and the USA are the most commonly agreed upon examples of pluralistic industrial relations systems, as these countries have weaker social democratic traditions, small and divided union populations, and decentralized negotiations between government, labour and business (Siaroff, 1999: 182).

Like the Swedish example, the pluralist reality in many countries owes its current state to the particular history of labour relations in the country. Britain, for example, has a history of bitter relationships between labour, business, and government. The British labour movement traces its roots to the transition from pastoral to industrial economy. Early English unions fought a difficult battle for basic rights during the industrial revolution with little co-operation from government (Campbell, 1992: 4). Despite being home to a political party with strong ties to organized labour (until the 1980s), the British labour movement has had a long, difficult relationship with government and business (Bamber and Snape, 1993: 28). British unions have relied on bitter strikes in key industries in attempts to pry concessions from employers (Taylor, 1991: 177). The economic shocks in the 1970s and the resulting combination of inflation and unemployment placed considerable strains on the English Keynesian system. The subsequent strong-arm tactics by both the Labour and Conservative governments, including attempts at wage control and price fixing, produced decades of

difficult industrial relations. The process culminated in a series of long and unpopular strikes in several major industries during "the winter of discontent"(Delling, 1991: 123).

The Canadian political economy represents perhaps an even more difficult situation for organized labour, demonstrating strong pluralist tendencies (Siaroff, 1999: 181). Canada inherited its industrial relations from Britain and has also been heavily influenced by the US. Unlike its counterpart in the UK, the Canadian NDP has never occupied power, and labour has never enjoyed a stable access to government at the federal level. The Canadian economy is marked by confrontational relationships between unions and employers, a lack of cohesiveness in the labour movement (particularly between public and private, as well as French and English unions), a long history of government hostility towards labour, and the frequent use of strikes by organized labour (Cox, 1974: 804).

Globalization and Changes to Labour, Business and Government Relationships

A large body of literature examines the effects of the globalized economy on traditional union politics, and its effects on the structural factors that shape union behavior. In general, the globalization of the world economy has placed considerable strains on the unions in advanced industrial economies, marking the most important developments in tripartite relationships in recent history. Since the 1970s the combined forces of "increased international competition, new technologies, capital mobility, harsh labour market conditions and the spread of neo liberal ideologies" have eroded the traditional union position in many democratic economies (Goddard, 2004: 159). The net effect of globalization on unions in most industrial economies has been a steady decline

of density in unionized sectors of the work force. The outsourcing of manufacturing and other blue collar industries to cheaper labour markets has resulted in a loss of the previous political power organized labour wielded. This has resulted in the gradual erosion of traditional relationships between political parties and unions as well; New Labour in Britain and the gradual divorce of the LO and SPA are clear examples (Howell, 2001; Pontusson, 1995).

The focus of theoretical work based on the globalized economy and its effects on organized labour has been directed to the strategies employed by unions to revitalize membership and rebuild to traditional levels of influence. Goddard notes that the intensity of the effects of globalization tend to be felt in economies with weaker overall union positions, or economies previously labeled more pluralistic (2004:160). Generally, unions have developed two different coping strategies in response to pressure that has come as a result of the globalizing economy. Unions focus on attempts at cross organizational mobilization, or concentrate efforts on institutional bargaining and position (Ferge et al., 2004: 7). The mobilization strategy sees unions focusing on their role as players in social movements. Turner notes this strategy has been popular in both the UK and the USA where unions face strong neo-liberal political pressure. The involvement of American unions and the AFL-CIO in the "Battle in Seattle," anti-sweatshop campaigns and the "justice for janitors" campaign, along with the British TUC's co-operation with anti globalization movements, are cited examples of the dovetailing of union revitalization attempts into other social justice causes (Turner, 2004: 9).

The opposite of this approach has been the tendency of some unions to attempt to re-establish their traditional position and rebuild their position in the economy by lobbying formally for government policy and working within traditional institutional channels. German unions, for example, have worked within long established corporatist channels in response to globalization pressure to oppose unfriendly policy towards unions. The German labour movement has also seen consolidation, with the country's largest union Ver.di absorbing several smaller unions to help defend public sector jobs (Turner, 2004: 11).

Canadian Labour Relations and the Global Economy

Shifting focus to an analysis of Canadian unions during this change in the global economy and politics produces some important developments for our analysis of Alberta. The health and potential future of the Canadian labour movement is subject to debate within the theoretical literature. Working from the globalization thesis, with a strong focus on private sector unions, Godard places the Canadian labour movement in a state of gradual decline, with the important caveat that the movement has fared better than its counterparts in the US (Goddard, 2004: 170). This stability compared to the American labour movement will be lessened in time, according to Goddard, as the Canadian economy continues to integrate into the new global paradigm and lower union density service industry jobs replace blue collar unionized jobs (2004, 168). Goddard's study also claims that there are differences in the state approach to unions, arguing that some of the stability in the Canadian case can be attributed to more favorable governance from both federal provincial legislative bodies than in the USA.

Again, the argument is made that this will not be sufficient to protect the Canadian labour market from global pressure (Goddard, 2004: 171). The tradition of confrontational negotiations between union and business and the inability of Canadian unions to change this paradigm will act to drag union influence and density down in the long term.

In contrast, Murray argues that the relative stability of Canadian union density over the 1990s and early 2000s indicates an important strength and vitality for the movement[3] (2002: 93). Murray looks to the growth in white collar and in particular public unions as an important trend in Canadian labour relations that should protect the movement from some of the effects felt in the US. In terms of union specific coping strategies, Murray notes the importance of partisan flexibility of white collar unions as a significant trend in Canada; he also argues that rigid support for the NDP by many blue collar unions is a potentially harmful strategy (Murray 2002, 96).

A full discussion of Alberta's labour movement will follow in Chapters 2 to 5 of this thesis. This review of some of the theoretical literature on unions has important ramifications for the Alberta context. The disunity between progressive social movements and in particular the environmental lobby and organized labour will be explored later in this thesis. Unions and progressive social bodies have worked successfully in other contexts; the posture taken by some of the leadership in Alberta's labour movement is significant. Chapters 4 and 5 will also detail the inability of Alberta's labour movement and government to work co-operatively, and will argue that

[3] Union density in Canada has remained somewhat consistent since the early 1990s, a more complete analysis of Canadian and Alberta union density will be presented in Chapter 5

the relationship has declined overtime. The discussion will show that this pluralistic tendency is detrimental to vitality of the labour movement in Alberta. Finally the public/private dichotomy will be demonstrated as a rift in the Alberta context; the non partisan tendency of the larger public unions will be contrasted with the support for the NDP among some larger national private sector unions.

Examining the Logic for Union and Party Co-Operation

The NDP has important links to many progressive organizations. Organized labour in particular occupies an important position within the party machinery and was one of the driving forces for the party's metamorphosis in 1961. However, the realities of the internal party structure and political economy of Canada create a unique environment for the interaction of labour and politics. In order to understand why the two groups continue to co-operate, particularly in the difficult conditions in Alberta, a summary of literature on the logic for union political party co-operation will be presented.

Discussion in the literature on the relationship between organized labour and political parties is sourced for the most part from three different approaches in political science. Jansen and Young divide these explanations into three groups: rational choice explanations, political economy reasoning and a set of literature that focuses on ideological similarities and a common set of goals (2009: 659). Research on the Alberta relationship between party and unions has suggested a fourth theoretical approach that is premised on the relationship between elites within the exchange.

The Rational Choice Account

The rational choice perspective seeks answers for social and political phenomena by the application of economic principles and market assumptions (Cohn, 1999: 26). In its application to union party relations a series of assumptions are made. Both unions and parties are assumed to act based on what decisions and associations will produce the greatest utility for their individual situations. The rules of market behavior are assumed to dictate the interaction between the two organizations, with party leaders and unions making all strategic decisions. Unions enter the market as policy seekers, with labour and capital as a commodity for exchange. In theory, union leaders may consider a variety of market options including entering political competition directly, working via interest groups or supporting any number of parties. However, the cost to benefit ratio dictates that union interests are best served by support of a political party and not direct action (Ware, 1992: 73). Political parties are viewed as both vote and resource seeking with policy concessions as a commodity for exchange. The rational choice approach also indicates that a breakdown in the exchange between the two actors would have a negative effect in terms of the commodities utilized in the relationship, namely electoral support, financial support, and policy preference (Quinn, 2002: 210).

Strom and Muller demonstrate that the exchange logic is built into many left-of-center parties via organizational constitutions (2002: 210). This formalization of exchange rules in the relationship is necessary to protect the interests of both parties. The relationship between unions and the party in the rational model is based on a non-simultaneous logic of exchange. Unions provide money, resources and votes with the

anticipation of preferential policy treatment once the party reaches power or a favorable position within a coalition (Strom and Muller, 1999: 13). Without a means to withdraw spent money and labour hours, unions are left with no guarantee that their investment not be wasted. This risk is mitigated by the party constitution; unions are allotted a preferred position on many internal party committees and/or a predetermined amount of delegates at party conventions to reflect the strong levels of support for the party. This provides organized labour with a strong influence on internal party dynamics, policy formation and leadership selection.

Quinn argues for a secondary set of benefits for unions within the exchange relationship. The policy preference and activities of many unions places them outside the mainstream of politics. By adding financial support within an institutionalized arrangement between party and union, unions are able to buy a mainstream audience for their more radical policy preferences, as well as a mechanisms for their own members to lobby for policy without appearing too politically extreme (Quinn, 2002: 209).

The rational exchange model is illustrated by the relationship the British Labour Party and the Trades and Union Congress (TUC) from the 1950s on until the advent of "new labour" policies in the late 1980s (Quinn, 2002: 207). During this golden age for social democracy, the Labour Party relied on affiliated union members for an electoral base, financial support during elections, and grass roots activist activity (Delling, 1991: 23). By capitalizing on the exchange model the Labour party was able to replace the British Liberal party position in the British two party system (Hamilton, 1989: 64). The

Labour party occupied power following the Second World War, and again from 1964 to 1970 as well from 1974 till 1979. Labour benefited during this era. Fielding explains the benefits to organized labour as “Labourism, characterized by many as a myopic preoccupation with the defense of male industrial workers' material interests” (2001: 241). Labour governments benefited from a stable voting platform, at times as high as 70 per cent of unionized voters as well as a significant and stable financial foundation (Pontusson, 2001: 512).

The exchange between both parties in the British example was far from stable. Hanham points to the break down in exchange between the party and the TUC as the key element to the Labour’s decisive loss in the 1951 general election (1956: 377). Hanham argues that the support and grass roots activity by unions that was crucial for the Labour party success had waned as British unions became content to “relax in the sun of full employment” (Hanham 1956: 380). The exchange relationship broke down again during the Labour government of the 1970s. As inflation and unemployment gripped the country, the government was forced to adopt policies unpopular among its union support base. The resulting wave of strikes by unions, the “Winter of Discontent,” resulted in electoral loss to the Conservatives and opposition status in the House of Commons until 1997 (Taylor, 1991: 175).

The British example illustrates the contours of the rational choice explanation for party union co-operation as well as its limitations. The party enjoyed success when finances, votes, and material consideration were exchanged for policy preference and access to power structure. However, when the exchange broke down in 1951 due to

union apathy and in 1979 due to unfavorable policy changes, the exchange declined and both parties suffered.

Political Economy Account

A second explanation for the logic of union and party co-operation is grounded in political economy literature. The political economy logic argues that unions and political parties work together based on the dynamics of social and economic structural factors. Accordingly, a bargain exists where parties provide wage restraint and stability in the economic sphere and a stable electoral base in the social sphere. Parties in return benefit electorally from a stable vote base and are able to promote the material interests of this segment, while also benefiting from a co-operative labour movement that allows for an efficient state level market organization and beneficial dialogue with other industrial actors (Howell, 2002: 23). The basic approach employed by political economists is to seek out explanations that highlight structural economic commonalities between different national examples (Howell, 2001: 12). Some political economists argue that the overlap in material interests that precipitated the great union-party era of the 1950s and 1960s was a direct result of the unique economic and social conditions that existed during that period. With the importance of structural economic factors established, the political economy logic looks to cross cutting changes during the 1950s and 1960s that could be responsible for the decline of the union- party relationship. Rational choice theorists and political economists both highlight an exchange or bargain; the primary difference between the two schools is the nature of the bargain/exchange. Political economists argue that the bargain is dependent on the existing structural

economic, social and political factors while rational choice theorists attribute the exchange to the rational realization of individual and organizational utility.

Drawing on the Western European tradition, political economists point to the decline of Keynesian economic assumptions and Fordist manufacturing paradigms for the gradual erosion of union/party relations. The golden age for social democracy was based on manufacturing and heavy industry for export where the political leanings of semi-skilled production workers represented a stable foundation for electoral success. Howell explains the predominant economics of the era as an intensive universalized growth cycle (2001: 14). "Fordist economic models were built on the assumption of productivity gains, that resulted in higher real wages, feeding an expanding mass demand, permitting increased profits and investment, which in turn resulted in higher productivity" (Howell, 2001:15). The role of the state was to regulate the economy through Keynesian economics and full employment to allow the circle to close and repeat.

Unions represented a critical conduit in this economic calculus. Unions held control over a major cost component in the manufacturing loop, the cost of labour. If unions increased the cost of labour prematurely and productivity was not able to offset the increase, the cycle would slow and thus be unable push economic growth. The importance of the labour movement in the political economy explanation is tied to the ability of unions to control a large portion of the most important national industries and to act as the sole source of labour in those situations. This vulnerability was exposed after the mid 1970s when advanced industrial economies experienced "a double shift in

power away from the nation state and outward to the international economy and downward to the firm" (Quinn, 2001: 15). These dual shifts exposed the union position in the Fordist paradigm to pressure from more cost effective labour pools in developing economies, pronounced volatility in the price of raw goods and increased international competition. Piazza argues this economic change is a direct result of the international economic effects of globalization and that the changes inherent to the globalized economy have contrubited to the de-linking of unions and social democratic parties (2001: 214). The changes that came with globalization have eroded the position of unions in national economies to the point where it is no longer political beneficial for parties to participate in the social economic bargain of the 1960s and 1970s

While this set of economic structural shifts challenged the union party dynamic, a series of simultaneous social shifts were set in motion. Advanced industrial economies began an evolution away from blue collar semi-skilled orientated industries towards service industries and public employment (Pontusson, 1995: 499). As this trend continued a polarization between the material interests of the more highly skilled middle class and the declining semi skilled blue collar laborer class emerged. A new electoral base surfaced in policy leanings of the new and growing middle class that came at the expense of the political capital of the older blue collar segment. Unions in general have had more difficulty organizing non public service industries, as well as women and white collar employees. Along with the slow decline in manufacturing and heavy industry, the net result for unions has been a decline in membership and

affiliation rates in some countries (with the exception of Northern Europe) (Scuggs and Lang, 2002: 134), with a proportional decline in political influence (Quinn, 2002: 18).

The decline in the relationship between the Swedish unions represented by the LO and the Social Democratic party illustrates the political economy logic. During the post war boom years (1950s-1960s) a particular set of economic and social conditions facilitated a beneficial relationship between the highly centralized LO unions and the Social Democrats. Howell calls the relationship a "solidarisitc wage bargain" (2002: 23). The LO was able to contain competitive behavior within the unions and provided stable and realistic wage demands. Because of its electoral dominance, the Social Democratic party invested in a comprehensive welfare state, favorable industrial regulations, managed inflation and employment levels, and acted as a major employer. During this era the Social Democrats enjoyed considerable electoral support from manual labour segments of the population that were mobilized by the politically active LO who were de facto members of the party in most cases (Howell, 2002: 21).

By the end of the 1970s the political and economic bargain in Sweden began to collapse. This collapse was precipitated by a series of economic and political structural changes. The unions remained strong in number, with overall all union number and density rates steadily increasing and then peaking in the 1980s (Scuggs and Lang, 2002: 133). However, this increase in union number and density came as a result of the absorption of many skilled white collar and public employee unions. The increase in diversity and number came at the expense of the LO to formulate union policy preference into a single voice. During the 1950s the LO represented 80 percent of

organized workers, but by 1989 this figure had shrunk to under 60 percent with several rival labour organizations emerging to represent non industrial workers (Howell, 2002: 26).

The Social Democratic party faced newfound difficulties as a result in the gradual shift in the Swedish work force from blue collar to white. Previous corporatist models allowed the party when in power to act as an arbitrator in disputes between unions and firms. As the state expanded its role as an employer, the party found itself as the protagonist in many industrial relations disputes. The LO no longer held a monopoly on the representation of unionized workers, especially in the white collar and public sector. An indicator of the change in the Swedish system is present in the 1990 decision to attempt to eliminate the right of certain elements of the public work force to strike to protect wage and price control attempts by the party (Haugsgjerd et al., 2007: 611). Neither the party nor the LO were able to rely on traditional industrial relations, and the decision resulted in a major rift between the party and both blue and white collar unions.

The decline in the social bargain between the Social Democrats and the Swedish unions is also explained by the decision of the party congress to change the local affiliation rules and loosen party membership requirement for union members. The LO pushed for the end of wholesale membership support as it found the party less able to guarantee favorable economic arrangements in the changing economic situation; the party favored the move towards a more catch all style of political interaction and saw

close association with social segment of the population as insufficient for political success (Aylott, 2003: 371).

Aylott refers the change in relationship between the party and union in Sweden post 1990 as a divorce (2003: 375). The previous foundation for the relationship was an economic and political bargain dependent on specific economic and social structural factors, as the dynamics of the Swedish economy and industrial relations system evolved, the foundation of the bargain eroded and eventually gave way.

Ideological Exchange Model

A third account for party-union co-operation speaks directly to situations where the bargain of political economy logic or the exchange of rational choice accounts is insufficient to explain the relationship between party and union. The ideological exchange account is focused on a shared sense of pragmatic purpose. Jansen and Young characterize this arrangement as a situation where "Labour unions support social democratic political parties not in the hope of improving the fate of the unions themselves or their workers, but rather as a way of furthering the objectives of social democracy – objectives to which trade unionist leaders are generally personally committed" (2009:660).

This logic serves to explain the stubborn tendency of unions to remain loyal to left of center parties after election losses or in political situations where social democratic parties fail to win elections. This account understands that both players in the exchange are ideologically driven and not motivated in whole or part by concern for material benefit (Jansen and Young 2009:660). Taylor has noted that often a

foundational element to union party co-operation is the desire for system wide change. Unions and parties engage in pragmatic attempts to build electoral coalitions to bring about sweeping system change. The overlapping policy preferences between the two actors override differences and allow both partners in the relationship to focus on an ideological vision in the long term (Taylor, 1993: 215). This ideological vision explains why in many social democratic party systems unions tolerate and support post materialist agendas, including environmental or gender equality focus when there seems to be little benefit for organized labour. The importance of reinforcing a social democratic agenda outweighs any potential negative association (Taylor, 1993, 217).

Writing about the uphill experience of the Federal NDP, Bernard argues that the reason for co-operation between the NDP, federal and provincial unions and other "progressive" Canadians was never rooted in the belief that the party could win power federally. Instead, the diverse groups that support the party do so to provide an alternative for working people that counterbalances the dominant "neo liberal program of free trade, privatization and deregulation" (Bernard, 1995:8). Bernard argues as well that the NDP has allowed labour in Canada to expand beyond the limited policy preferences of its core membership. Today because of the relationship with the party, Canadian labour embraces the need to "reassert the social values that should influence economic decision making" (Bernard, 1995: 9). For Bernard the logic for party and labour co-operation lies in the mutual realization of a weak position.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to review theoretical literature pertinent to the central question of this project. The first section presented a brief summary of the development of theoretical accounts of left of center mass parties. By tracing evolutionary accounts starting with Duverger on through the literature, a case was made for placing the Alberta New Democrats in the Wolinetz derived family of policy seeking parties. We can understand the NDP within the context of a classic mass party, which constantly faces the challenges of the Canadian party system that places a premium on regional politics and brokerage style parties. This chapter also presented a brief review of the Alberta political economy from a theoretical perspective, placing the industrial relations system into the Anglo/American tradition. The second aim of the chapter was to examine the various explanations for union party co-operation. The chapter presented three separate accounts by examining literature based on Western and Northern European examples. With this theoretical backdrop established, the project will now turn to an analysis of the history of political parties and unions in Canada and more specifically Alberta.

Chapter 3: The Historical Interaction of Labour and Political Parties in Alberta 1901-1971

Introduction

Labour unions and political parties in Alberta have a long and colorful history. Since Confederation the labour movement in Alberta has worked in the political sphere via co-operation with a variety of political parties. Chapter three will focus on the historical links between labour unions and left-of-center political parties in Alberta, and then explore the relevance of this historical interaction on the current relationship that exists between labour and the NDP in Alberta. For the purpose of analysis, the chapter will break the history of parties and unions into three distinct eras: a formative period lasting from 1901-1935; the CCF dominated era taking place from 1935-1960; and finally the NDP dominated era that began in 1961 and is still ongoing. This chapter will focus primarily on developments between 1901 and 1971 in order to provide a context for a discussion of labour-party relations in the contemporary era.

The First Era in Party and Union Interaction in Alberta (1900-1935)

In order to understand the historical foundation to labour and party relationships in Alberta it is important to begin with Alberta's pre-Confederation political economy. During the 1900s, the first labour unions in the province were organized in the coal and railway sectors of the economy. This group of unions was composed of a radical, anti-eastern, and at times anarchical group of unskilled workers. The group's support base was centered in southern Alberta, particularly in the Lethbridge and Crowsnest Pass regions (Plawiuk, 1994: 2). The earliest major union

presence in the coal industry in southern Alberta was the American Western Federation of Miners (WFM). By 1905 the WFM was joined by another American union, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), as well as an international body, the International Workers of the World (IWW). Collectively the three unions represented the coal industry and organized the province's unskilled workers along a militant and radical paradigm (Masson and Blaikie, 1979: 272). Union membership swelled during the first decade of the 20th century and reached over 10 000 members in British Columbia and Alberta by 1911 (Masson and Blaikie 1979: 272). The unions relied on pent up hostility towards eastern Canadian economic policy, as well as disputes with local ownership to keep members motivated for the more radical political position of the labour movement.

This early era in labour politics was marked by industrial conflict in the coal and mining sectors. Early on in the Lethbridge area, the coal miners' unions were challenged by ownership when the worker chosen WFM local was disbanded and replaced with a dummy local operated by the company itself. In an ensuing court challenge, following several disruptive strikes, the province pressured the local miners out of strike activity and into a third "less international" choice of labour union, effectively replacing the radical WFM local (Masson and Blakie, 1979: 275). The radical nature of the early non-skilled workers segment was highlighted again in the 1919 when the One Big Union (OBU) successfully re-organized existing UMWA local 181 and pushed the coal industry into a potentially disruptive position during the First World War. The posturing of the coal industry was of concern for the provincial and federal governments. In order to

maintain domestic production and price levels during the war effort, a provincial secretary was appointed to prevent stoppages in work and quell labour unrest (Plawiuk, 1994: 6). Southern Alberta remained near the top of the country in number of man hours lost due to strike activity at several points during the war years while active unions collided with the interest

A second branch of organized labour in Alberta emerged during the early 20th century, but had a more moderate political stance and followed a non partisan perspective. This branch of organized labour was heavily influenced by Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labour in the U.S. This group of unions and labour organizations restricted political activity to bargaining for local membership, avoiding the revolutionary tone of their counterparts in the coal industry. These unions had organizational differences with the unions to the south and followed the American style of organization by job and skill type called craft unionism as opposed to the mass style organization of IWW. The group of unions and labour organizations was centered in Edmonton and Calgary and was mostly composed of skilled workers (Plawiuk, 1994: 1).

Both the moderate and more radical branches of Alberta labour movement during this initial era pursued political power. The moderate skilled unions continued to pursue a limited level of political action, focusing on the well being of their individual membership. These skilled unions were committed to working within existing political channels. At times, these more moderate unions sponsored a variety of "labour friendly" candidates for election to the provincial Legislature. By 1917, the more

moderate international unions had successfully elected a candidate in Edmonton, Alfred Farmilo, as well as a candidate in Calgary, Alex Ross (Plawiuk, 1994: 2). The political aims of these labour politicians were to bargain for basic recognition of union rights in the province. By 1919 most moderate unions had fallen into the leadership fold of the newly formed Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL). The AFL acted as a moderate voice for labour interests in the province and lobbied the municipal and provincial governments on a variety of labour issues (AFL interview, May 23, 2008).

The more radical industrial unions in the south of the province attempted political organization in different ways. The issue of whether to work within the national and provincial democratic framework was debated and rejected in favor of more drastic revolutionary tactics. This more radical approach is reflected in the formation of the One Big Union (OBU) in Calgary in 1919. OBU policy was critical of central Canadian control of the major national trades and unions council, and played to the anti-eastern radical tendencies present in the industrial unions during this period. The union was more of a political movement and was designed, sponsored and staffed by unions representing the coal, forestry and railway industries in Southern Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba (Milne, 1973: 7).

Alberta's moderate unions with their ties to the American Federation of Labour were viewed with suspicion by the OBU supporters who advocated a strong Canadian labour federation guided by domestic industrial unions rather than craft unions. Supporters of the more radical unions tended to view drastic action as the only means to achieve political change, and were unwilling to wait for democratic action to bear

fruit. At the formation of OBU in Calgary, union representatives agreed on a set of wide ranging policy goals. These included a sixty hour, six day work week, equal pay as well as the right to vote for women, free public education, health and safety legislation, the nationalization of major industries especially railroads and utilities, and finally the termination of draconian work regulations drafted during the World War I era. To accomplish these ambitious policy aims, the general strike was chosen as the primary weapon (Plawiuk, 1994: 8).

The unexpected Winnipeg general strike of 1919 provided an opportunity and united the radical side of Alberta labour into the definitive action of the era. The Gomperist influenced trade and union councils in Calgary and Edmonton saw the radical OBU as a direct threat to their leadership in the Alberta labour community. The debate over whether to support the Winnipeg unions became a contested issue that divided Alberta labour along radical and moderate lines. When the issue was put to a general vote of Alberta's union members via the AFL, four to one voted in favor of a general strike. Several important civic unions chose to remain at work, and as a result core functions in Calgary and Edmonton remained somewhat operational. The general strikes in Western Canada were quickly labeled as communist plots and the OBU was branded a communist puppet in many media outlets by both the provincial and federal government. While the strikes brought national attention to many important issues, they failed to result in the system wide change that the radical elements in the Alberta labour movement had hoped for. The public perception of OBU became set in stone

during this era and the organization never realized its ambitious goals, becoming politically insignificant by the mid 1920s (Morton, 1998: 56).

The wave of general strikes in 1919 highlighted the dichotomy between moderately skilled trade specific craft unions and unskilled mass-organized industrial unions in Canada and in Alberta. The politically conservative national Trades and Labour Congress (TLC) with its affiliated links to AFL had worked against OBU to preserve their own hold on power in the province. The political infighting within the labour community highlighted the emerging importance of the macro-organizational body for the labour community. The OBU lost a decisive battle with both business and government interests and failed to retain control of the labour movement in western Canada. The competition between craft and industrial union organizations would have important ramifications for labour politics in Alberta. After the radicalism of the early 1900s, both craft and industrial unions became more dependent on larger organizations for political direction.

Following the failure of OBU to unite Western Canadian labour in a common front, calls for a national level labour party gained momentum (Milne, 1973: 4). More radical elements in Alberta supported a variety of socialist, labour and communist candidates with limited electoral success at the civic, provincial and national level. Moderate labour elements in Canada looked to the British Labour party as a template for non revolutionary labour action in the political sphere. The formation in 1919 of the Alberta wing of the Dominion Labour Party (DLP) at the behest of the national DLP movement was a direct expression of this new political movement. The Alberta DLP was

essentially an extension of the existing craft unions and the AFL, designed to consolidate the moderate union voice in the province and attract industrial union support. Leadership from the AFL, as well as Calgary and Edmonton trade and union councils, made up the leadership of the political party. Craft and Industrial unions as well as individuals were welcome to affiliate (Milne, 1973, 7).

The DLP only ran candidates in urban ridings where there was a chance of victory, often in co-operation with the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) who agreed not to run competitive candidates. The Alberta branch also took advantage of the multiple vote system during the 1920s in Calgary, Edmonton and Medicine Hat that allowed minor political parties more of a competitive edge (Loenen, 1997: 155). DLP and later the Canadian Labour Party (CLP) Alberta wing enjoyed moderate political success; in the 1921 election the party won four legislature seats and was granted the public works portfolio from the UFA government. More importantly the DLP/CLP allowed labours in the province a stable and legitimate political voice as the co-operation with UAF provided a political legitimacy that had not been present in the past. The early DLP/CLP leadership would also play an important role in the formation of the CCF, including providing provincial level leadership in the personage of Elmer Romper (Horowitz, 1968: 60).

The first era of party and union politics in Alberta was marked by a clear divide between two branches of the labour movement. A radical element, that grew out of the unskilled workers in the south and Crowsnest Pass region of the province, and a more moderate craft union movement centered in Calgary and Edmonton. The political

leanings of labour were varied in Alberta during this era. Moderate craft unions relied on the existing electoral system and pursued their political agenda by supporting and electing labour candidates and by supporting the DLP/CLP. The more radical elements of Alberta labour movement pushed for improvements in working conditions and labour laws with direct action including participation in the wave of general strikes in Western Canada in 1919. Several labour parties, often extensions of federal and provincial labour affiliations, emerged in this era.

The Second Era of Labour and Party History in Alberta (1935-1960)

The end of this first era in labour party history saw the decline of an overtly radical labour agenda and the gradual merger of labour politics with socialist and progressive political agendas. This evolution saw its final expression in the formalized AFL support of the UFA during the 1930s (Masson, 1979: 275). This co-operation of labour and farmer for political reasons was the first evidence of a trend that would become an important feature of the Alberta political system (Melnyk, 1986: 44).

The next evolutionary step in Alberta politics came during the late 1920s and early 1930s. The depression on the prairies produced two new political parties with competing visions for both the national and provincial course. First, the Social Credit movement, driven by the religiously zealous William Aberhart, reflected a new approach to the economic issues facing the region (Bell, 1990: 521). Second, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) took on a distinctly socialist tone and proposed radical changes to the Canadian economic system to deal with the depression (Carty, 1992:

573)[1]. Both parties were grounded in the prairie protest identity and were products of the perceived failure of eastern Canadian centered institutions and political parties to deal with effects of the depression on the prairies. In the end, the Social Credit movement proved more electorally viable in Alberta, replacing the UFA dynasty and forming government from 1935 until 1971.

Research has demonstrated that much of the labour vote went to Social Credit particularly in the early phase of the party during the power transition from the UFA (Bell, 1990: 521). This electoral shift predated the formation of the CCF. That being said, official support from the AFL and other major provincial unions for Social Credit was short-lived, particularly as the party turned to the right during the Manning years and maintained an adversarial position with all things socialist (Caldarola, 1979: 43). The formation of the CCF represented a potential alternative for the labour vote in Alberta. The purpose of the CCF was to unite a varied group of people behind a common socialist vision, including the labour class of Canada. At the inaugural meetings in Calgary, representatives from farm associations, labour movements, western Canadian socialist parties as well as progressively minded groups, including the Fabian society, laid down the foundation for the party (Melnyk, 48: 1986). The CCF from its inception was never a labour party per se. Both groups and individuals were permitted to join; however, by default, the party was dominated by the constituency association and individual members (Horowitz, 1968: 67). The party constitution was designed in such a way that no single group, be it farmer, union or other, could gain outright control of the party.

[1] Appendix 6 presents a graphical summary of Alberta election results since 1935 by party.

Labour organizations reacted to the formation of the CCF with mixed enthusiasm at the national level. The TLC was still largely influenced by the American Federation of Labour during the 1930s and 1940s. Gompers' legacy had left a firm hesitancy towards both socialist and labour specific political parties. However, the TLC had a vocal but small socialist faction which resulted in neither an outright rejection of the CCF nor an overwhelming endorsement (Horowitz, 1968: 74). The 1933 TLC convention was representative of the national labour federation's attitude towards the CCF. The convention refused to endorse the party formally but the convention did pass several resolutions in favor of a planned economy and co-operative ownership of capital. At the provincial level, the AFL supported a variety of parties swinging from radical socialist to moderate left of center. The AFL formally supported the DLP and later assisted the re-organization into the CLP, then shifted support to the UFA during the 1930s (AFL interview, May 23, 2008). At the formation of the CCF in Calgary, the AFL moved along with the UFA into formal affiliation but chose to continue to support individual non CCF labour candidates as well (AFL interview, 2008).

The relationship between the TLC and the CCF remained strained for other reasons. The rival national organization to the TLC, the All Canadian Congress of Labour (ACCL) moved into formal affiliation with the CCF at the party's inception. The ACCL was formed to produce a Canadian solution (as opposed to the internationally influenced TLC) to labour representation in the country and was anchored by the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees (CBRE). The ACCL's leader A. R. Mosher was present at the inaugural CCF meetings in Calgary and made early attempts to affiliate both the

ACCL and CBRE (Horowitz, 1968: 64). The party constitution only allowed union affiliation at the provincial level and as a result the CBRE never formally affiliated. Despite this, the ACCL continued a close relationship with the party and supported the CCF with funds, leadership and volunteers.

The organizational drama continued as the ACCL disbanded and joined with the Canadian branch of the Congress of International Organizations (CIO), whose leaders and members had recently been expelled from the TLC. With the CIO-ACCL merger into the Canadian Congress of Labour (CCL) the former members of the ACCL dropped their objection to the international labour movement (the entire CIO was international) and focused on building a national labour federation that could present a more politically active position that the TLC (Horowitz, 1968: 66).

Of the three founding cohorts of Canadian society present in the CCF (farmer, laborer and progressive), the labour support base received the least amount of attention during the initial success of the CCF (Horowitz, 1968: 70). However, an ongoing surge in the number of unionized workers during the 1940s and 1950s helped bring the union vote back to the forefront of the CCF agenda. The CCL membership numbers grew from 77 000 workers in 1940 to 220 000 in 1942; by 1951 this total had reached 350 000, with many of these new CCL members forming a solid support base for the party (Morton, 1998: 220). Despite this increase in labour support, it took the unexpected request for affiliation from a small mine workers' union in the Maritimes to make the CCF seriously consider the benefits of union affiliation. The United Mine Workers local 26 in Nova Scotia saw the CCF as the best hope for a political arm for

labour interests in Canada. It agreed to affiliation terms similar to those employed by the British Labour party (Archer, 1990: 15). Union members were not to belong to other political parties and a modest two cent per member fee was assessed to the union. The affiliation agreement was drawn up by the party as no existing mechanism was built into the party constitution (Horowitz, 1968: 72).

The CCF made sure when rebuilding the party constitution to allow for union affiliation to hedge against the controlling block vote that British union enjoyed in the Labour party. The 1940 CCF national conference adopted a constitutional amendment that allowed economic organizations to join national and provincial CCF branches. Union representation in convention at the national level was determined by the size of the union. The national executive suggested one delegate per one hundred affiliated members, with a minimum of one delegate. The program had to be approved by provincial executives in order to pass. The individual provinces reacted in accordance with the success and strength of union affiliation drives within their respective borders. Ontario, for example, benefited the most from union affiliation with twenty three individual unions joining. Accordingly, the Ontario branch of the party adopted the recommendation of the National party setting union representation rates at one delegate per 100 members. The Prairies had less success with the affiliation drive. Smaller labour populations and a hesitancy towards the new party resulted in a total of only fifteen locals joining on the prairies, of which only one came from Alberta. In response, the Alberta CCF changed the recommended one delegate per one hundred

members to one delegate for every twenty five, to allow for a more pronounced voice in party affairs (Horowitz, 1968: 66).

The lukewarm reaction to affiliation drives in Alberta was a result of local political history. According to Melnyk, the provincial NDP suffered from its historical links to the UFA. The labour vote could not wholeheartedly support the CCF (which had absorbed much of the UFA by 1937) because of the way the UFA had handled several labour relations issues while in power. In particular, the party had brutally put down a miners' union strike in the southern Alberta coal fields with the RCMP. This acted to alienate the more radical element in Alberta labour. The more moderate side of Alberta labour during this period was equally appalled at the way the UFA had handled a series of labour supported hunger strikes in 1932, again by relying on brute force tactics and the RCMP (Melnyk, 1986: 43). The UFA was also tarnished by a rather public sex scandal involving the party leader as well as a cabinet minister in the mid 1930s.

Electoral return data from the 1935 election is also revealing. Bell's comprehensive study of class based voting during the 1935 election has demonstrated that the labour class strongly supported the Social Credit movement in all regions of Alberta. In Calgary and Lethbridge, areas with strong union presence during this era, the majority of working class voters supported Social Credit (75% and 59% respectively) (Bell, 1990: 522). Furthermore, by breaking down riding by riding and isolating working class areas in the South East of Calgary Bell has demonstrated a greater concentration of working class dominated constituencies voted for Social Credit (between 75% and 87%) (1990: 526). Social Credit seemed able to consolidate the labour vote in Alberta before

the CCF even began contesting elections. More importantly, this trend was the first evidence in an ongoing problem for the CCF, and its successor the NDP; the labour vote in Alberta seemed to vote on independent consideration rather than as a block, often with the dominant party.

Hunter has noted that the Alberta labour movement and the provincial CCF grew less compatible as time wore on. As the electoral fortunes of the Alberta CCF declined, and it became clear that the party would not be able to challenge Social Credit for control of the Alberta legislature, the core of the party began to devote more effort to abstract philosophical ideas that were out of tune with labour voters, who were less committed to socialist ideals, and more worried about practical daily issues (Hunter, 1986: 58). Hunter describes CCF conventions in the late 1940s and 1950s as somber affairs with defeatist attitudes attended by a tired and graying party faithful. The Alberta party was prone to more abstract policy ideas than its other provincial counter parts. Harsh criticism of NATO, open support for the USSR, and odd social policies including a mandatory wage for housewives never resonated with the majority of unions. Hunter argues that this was key to the low level of support by labour voters for the party (1986:58).

Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 present a summary of the electoral fortunes of the CCF in Alberta, and at the national level for the life of the party. Figure 3.1 demonstrates the decline in popular support for progressive political parties including the CCF and other labour parties from 1940-1959. Figure 3.2 shows the inability of either labour parties of the CCF to gain a stable foothold in the Alberta legislature during the same period.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the performance of the Federal CCF, the party peaked in seat share and popular vote during the WWII election cycle finally losing momentum during the mid to late 1950s

The party enjoyed a spike in popular support in 1944; for the first time the party ran a full slate of candidates in all provincial ridings. As well, the party enjoyed momentum from the recent electoral win by the CCF in the neighboring Saskatchewan election in 1944, as well as some hesitancy on behalf of voters to support the new Social Credit leader Ernest Manning. Unfortunately, the huge upswing in popular vote (11.11% to 24.24%) only resulted in one additional legislature seat. The national and provincial fates are also nearly parallel. The 1945 was a breakout election for the national wing of the party, the CCF won over 15% of the national popular vote and 28 House of Commons seats. The momentum proved difficult to maintain; by the late 1950s labour in Alberta and Canada had ample cause to consider new more electorally viable options as the CCF lost the majority of its wartime electoral presence.

Fig 3.1 Popular vote during the CCF era Alberta[2] (Source: Elections Alberta)

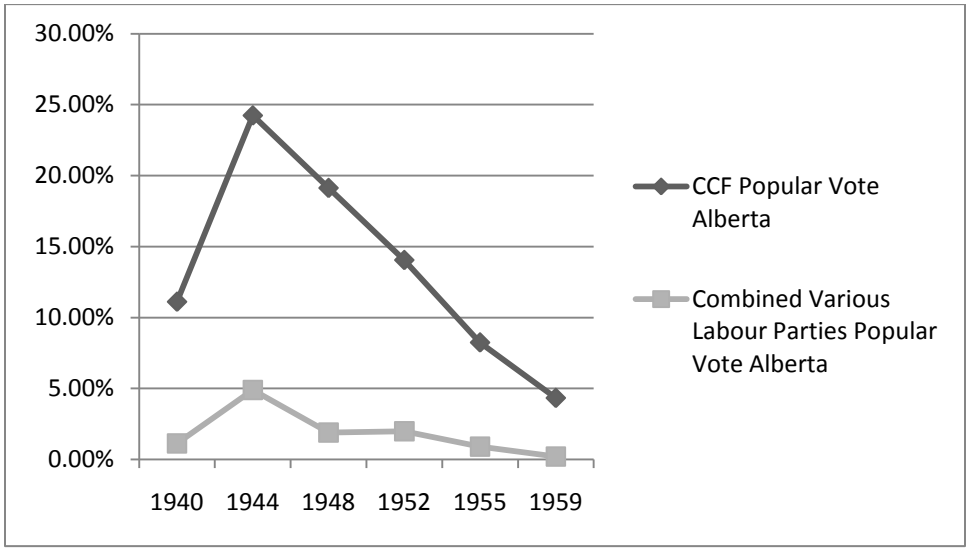
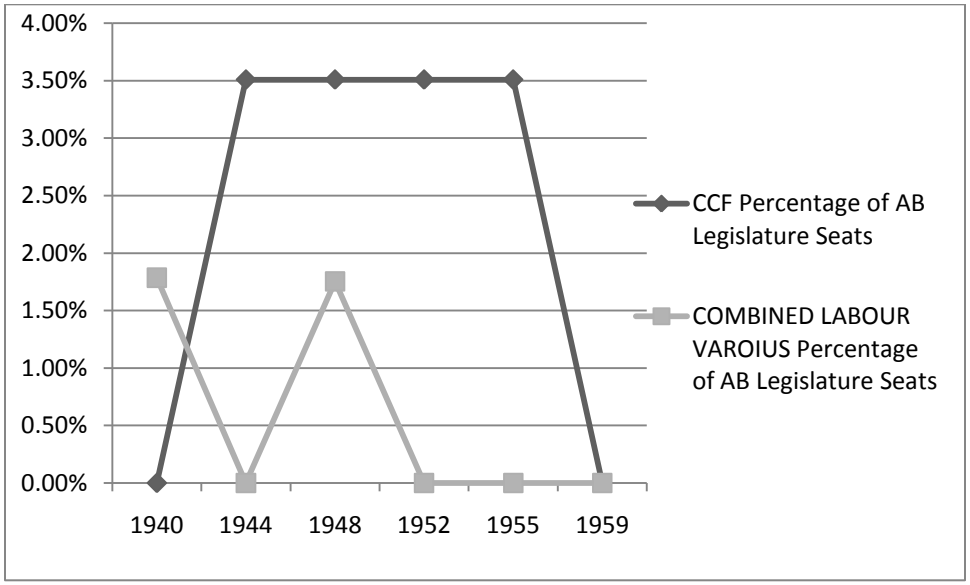
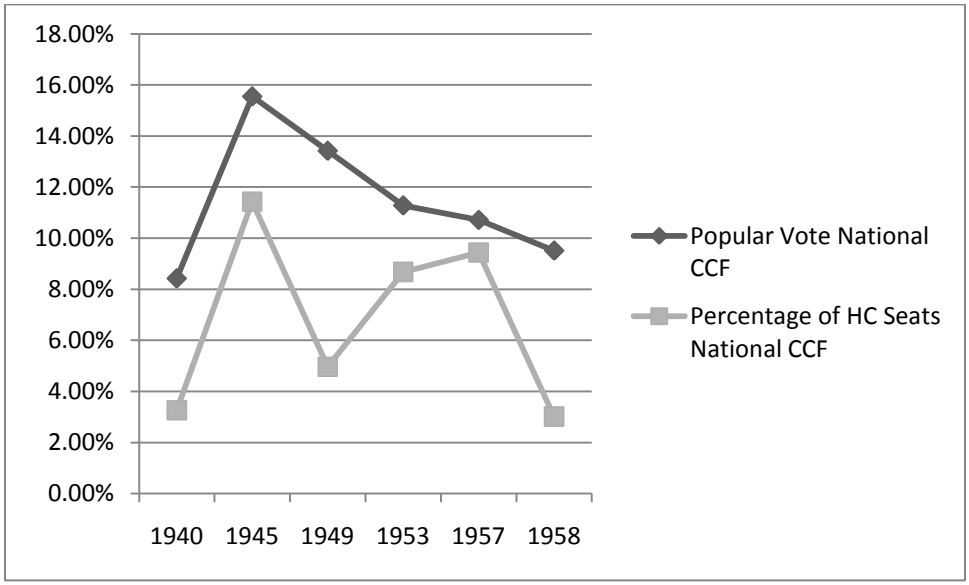


Fig 3.2 Percentage of Legislature Seats CCF era (Source: Elections Alberta)



[2] In 1959 Edmonton and Calgary switched from a Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system to a Single Member Plurality (SMP) system.

Fig 3.3 Performance of Federal CCF (Source: Election Canada)



The second era of labour and party co-operation in Alberta (1935-1960) held some interesting developments with ramifications for the present movement in Alberta. The craft and trade union division along with the international and domestic cleavage institutionalized into supporting national and provincial organizational bodies. Canadian labour became split between competing labour federations with differing outlooks on political action. The link between CCL and CCF was an important forerunner to the NDP Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) relationship that would develop in the following era. Labour's political voice seemed to be divided between the political affiliations of labour elites and the rank and file voter, a trend that persists presently. In the case of Alberta, despite formal affiliation drives by the CCF and the support of the AFL, the CCF failed to

consolidate the labour vote or build a strong base of affiliated unions, a difficulty that currently occupies the provincial NDP. The tension in Alberta politics between a "labour agenda" and the populist leanings of labour voters emerged as well. As Bell's study points out, labour does not always vote for "labour parties." Elements within the CCF culture did recognize the potential for a party with stronger ties to labour that could work with the diverse labour interests. The second era produced the first electorally viable political party with strong labour links; however, the CCF failed to build on its postwar momentum and the movement gradually fizzled out in the 1950s. The transition from the second era of labour and party co-operation to the third was precipitated by the union of the long time bitter labour federation rivals and the consolidation of the Canadian labour behind a single party.

The Third Era in the Development of Party and Union Relationships in Alberta (1961-1971)

The third era of party and union activity is marked by the formation of the NDP in 1961. The impetus for the creation of the new party, as opposed to trying to rebuild the electoral fortunes of the CCF, was generated on several different levels. The first push came externally as a result of the consolidation of competing labour federations at the national level. A secondary driving force came internally, by CCF supporters who had reconciled with the reality that the old party was at the end of its era as a significant force in Canadian politics. Finally, a third element was the development of new party clubs formed by members and non members of the CCF interested in a new outlet of progressive thought in Canadian politics (Whitehorn, 1992: 23). By the 1950s old

rivalries between the TLC and the CCL were beginning to give way to the logic that one united national labour congress could wield considerable political and economic power. In the United States the American Federation of Labour had formally joined with CIO, setting aside the long held divisions between skilled and unskilled representational bodies. This set a new tone for Canadian labour groups (Horowitz, 1968: 170).

These developments in the United States set the stage for similar co-operation between the competing federations in Canada. The CCL and TLC began negotiation aimed at uniting the two organizations in the early 1950s. This co-operation resulted in the formation of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) on April 23, 1956. At the inaugural CLC conference, held to set down the organizational structure of the new organization, the issue of political party affiliation was discussed. On one side of the debate the former TLC leadership, still influenced by its Gomperist perspective, argued for a moderate non-partisan approach. In contrast, the former leadership of the CCL had enjoyed a strong relationship with the CCF and believed strongly in a partisan and politically active labour movement. The CCF supported the merger into the CLC and utilized its existing presence in the old CCL hierarchy to entice the TLC faction in the new organization into a position of formal endorsement (Horowitz, 1968: 171). However, the amalgamation of the labour federations came during the twilight years of the CCF. In 1958 the CCF held only eight seats in the House of Commons. In an effort to bolster the party's sagging fortunes at the provincial level, the CLC offered a formal endorsement on behalf of organized labour in the Ontario provincial election in 1958; however, the party managed to win only two seats.

With the electoral performance from the CCF showing a decidedly negative trend the CLC began to actively campaign for the formation of new party that could absorb the remaining CCF support, while encompassing the new CLC agenda, as well as appealing to middle class and progressive voters (Archer, 1990: 23). Reaction to the idea of a new party in Alberta was mixed. The AFL and its supporting cast of unions had supported the CCF, but were increasingly worried about the party's poor electoral performance (Melnyk, 1986: 51). By 1959 the party had no legislature presence and less than five per cent of the popular vote (see fig 3.2). The Alberta CCF leadership was less than supportive of the new party idea. The majority of CCF support in the 1950s had dwindled to rural voters concerned with the shift to agribusiness in the province and dedicated old guard socialists who believed electoral success was a matter of timing. The provincial CCF core supporters were less than enticed by a shift towards union politics and the accompanying shift to the center of Canadian politics (Hunter, 1986: 59).

The drive for the new party in Alberta was largely championed by the labour movement. The early phases of the formation of the new party were organized by the AFL which made use of information camps and educational sessions in Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Calgary and Edmonton. This process was designed by labour to convince both hesitant old guard CCF membership and new curious potential support of the benefits of a new party (Hunter, 1986: 61). Alberta's new party supporters and old guard CCF members were divided by old tensions in the Alberta party. The remnant of the CCF was for the most part rural and inclined towards socialist philosophical solutions to Alberta economic issues. The new party supporters saw a shift to the right with an

increased appeal to labour and middle class voters as the only way to compete with the Social Credit political dynasty (Hunter, 1986: 66).

By 1960, resistance to labour's efforts in Alberta had calcified into outright rejection of the idea of a new party. The Alberta CCF committee that was overseeing the development efforts of the new party recommended to the provincial party leadership that the new party project be abandoned. The committee charged that the new party neglected the core principles of the CCF, and was not representative of the policy positions of membership. The Alberta CCF reasserted its commitment to a socialist agenda, and maintained the old position that it was in the best interests of unions to join them (Hunter, 1986: 63).

Provincial drives elsewhere in Canada enjoyed more success. These efforts were re-enforced in 1958 when the CLC decided in conference to put old internal debates aside and push forward for the creation of a new party. The years of 1956 to 1961 were marked by an exciting debate among the ranks of labour, the CCF and progressive Canadians about how the new party should take shape. The 1956 CCF conference replaced the Regina Manifesto, famous for labeling the Canadian capitalist system a "cancer on Canadian culture," with the more moderate Winnipeg Manifesto. The concession was a step towards the center of Canadian politics and replaced the traditional CCF position that socialization of the economy was the only solution to Canadian economic and social issues with the admission that a mixed economy could hold the same positive and progressive results (Horowitz, 1968: 191). By 1959, the joint efforts of labour, progressive minded old party membership, "New Party" clubs and

other interested parties had coalesced behind the leadership of Stanley Knowles and his CLC supported National Committee for the New Party (NCNP).

Knowles led the charge to a new party on through until 1961. The new party movement faced resistance internally from party members who feared the loss of control of the party, and a vocal minority who believed the new party's link to labour would result in an influx of American influence (Whitehorn, 1992: 67). During the four day national conference in 1961 held jointly by the CCF, the CLC and the various NCNP branches to form the new party, tension between the old CCF membership and the labour movement in Alberta hit a boiling point. The Alberta delegation at the Ottawa conference was made up for the most part by new party supporters and labour representatives. However, a vocal contingent from the traditional socialist side of the party accompanied the group. The motion to form a provincial branch of the new party passed, with the leader of the labour contingent, Neil Reimer, elected provincial leader.

A large portion of the old guard Alberta CCF delegates voted against the new party motion and held a separate one day convention to determine the fate of the resistance to the new party. The meeting presented the attendees with three options to chose from: disbanding the Alberta branch of the CCF and taking up the cause of socialism up in other forums; seeking formal affiliation with the new party; or forming a study group from the old membership that would seek ways to advance the cause of socialism within the structure of the new party. In the end the study group route was chosen, and the Woodworth-Irvine fellowship was created (Horowitz, 1968: 219). The

series of events highlighted a tension between labour and non labour members of the new party that exists to this day.

With the formation of the NDP in Ottawa in 1961, labour politics took a marked turn. In the past unions and labour organizations had to choose between independent labour candidates and small parties with little chance of electoral victory, or they were forced to work with the socialist agenda of the CCF. For organized labour the NDP represented a party labour could call "their own" (interview with a labour leader, Oct. 29, 2008). That being said, the NDP did not emerge as a clone of the British Labour party as originally intended by the CLC. A series of compromises between the founding members of the party became necessary. These structural limitations on the ability of labour to influence the party were necessitated by the democratic internal nature of the NDP. The NDP maintained the early tradition of the CCF and relied on the convention and bottom up policy development to drive the party position. As well, leadership was chosen by party delegates and was relatively free from the influence of the party elite[3]. The non labour contingent that formed the party feared the ability of labour to dominate intra party politics. Therefore, the degree to which party policy could be shaped by organized labour was structurally limited by design to allow the equal representation of both labour and the individual membership.

The party was designed without the controlling "block vote" British unions enjoyed (Horowitz, 1968: 221). The NDP looked to its organizational predecessor the

[3] The system of leadership selection was by no means perfectly democratic. Until 2003 the party weighted delegate votes and adjusted the labour percentage to make up a quarter of the total voting number. After 2003 the party shifted to a one vote one member system in attempt to curb labour influence in the leadership selection process. For a complete discussion on intra party democracy see William Cross "Political Parties" chapters 3 and 5.

CCF for affiliation rules. At convention federal constituencies' delegates were to be allocated according to a set formula. One delegate was awarded for every 50 members or less up to a total of 200 members, and one delegate for each additional 100 members or fraction thereof. Affiliated organizations were granted one delegate for each 1000 members or fraction thereof with a minimum of one delegate (NDP Constitution, 2008). The NDP, like the CCF, has a unique structure compared to other Canadian parties. The provincial and federal branches are fused with membership at one level defaulting to membership in the other level; as a result unions affiliate by local at the provincial level.

The question of the NDP being a union party or not has been conclusively laid to rest in the literature. Archer argues, in his study of labour the CCF and NDP that "In evaluating the linkages between organized labour and the NDP, it becomes obvious that the party like its predecessor, the CCF, is not a labour party or a party controlled by organized labour. Rather it is a social democratic party with links of varying strength to the union movement, some of which are purposefully weak" (1990:39). This reality has placed the NDP in a constant state of tension. On one side the party has the labour interests and their contributions of money and personnel; on the other side, the party deals with the rank and file members whose changing voting preferences must be accommodated for the party to stay relevant in the Canadian brokerage style party system.

Archer's descriptive work on the links between party and union are important to understanding the current state of the party. *Political Choices* is a strong quantitative study of the early era relationship between the NDP and organized labour at the

national level. Archer lists three ways in which the linkage between the NDP and organized labour are expressed: personnel relations, financial contributions and affiliation numbers (1990:41). Personnel linkages are, according to Archer, amorphous and difficult to measure. Labour is represented at the various levels of party leadership with guaranteed delegate and committee members (1990, 31). While a there is guaranteed presence of organized labour in the leadership and decision making structure of the party, it does not compose a majority position. The legacy of hesitancy towards organized labour that dominated CCF era thought permeates the leadership structure of the NDP to this day.

Like the personnel linkages, the financial contributions to the NDP from organized labour during the early phases of the party are difficult to measure. As the federal and provincial branches of the party are fused, there is a more pronounced sharing of funds than is evident in any other party in Canadian politics. Contributions can come from affiliated locals via a mandatory fee, individual donations, and large donations from union head offices to the party. In general affiliated union dues have never made up more than nine percent of the total federal operational budget for the party. One time lump sum denotations from unions predictably ebb and flow with the election cycle and have varied from a total of less than $250 000 to over two million during the mid 1980s. However the bulk of NDP financing has come from individual donations from the party faithful[4]. Union money has never made up more than 46

[4] A more detailed analysis of the current state of NDP and union financial links at both the federal and provincial level will be provided in the following chapter as part of the discussion of the current context of the relationship.

percent of any total annual operating budget, and at times had dipped in non election years to under 20 percent (Archer 1990, 36).

The final linkage discussed by Archer is the formal affiliation ties between labour and the party. Part of the logic of building a new party was based on the assumption that union locals would be more apt to formally affiliate with the party, capitalizing on an opportunity the CCF had failed to take advantage of. Archer's work does demonstrate an increase in affiliation numbers when compared with the CCF era party labour relations. However, the increase, while dramatic, came in one large, early burst, and then hit an early plateau. A similar pattern emerged in Alberta where several locals from larger national unions (CUPE and the United Steelworkers) affiliated with the party at the behest of their national offices, with few affiliations after the 1970s (Interview with a Party, May 24, 2008). As the overall union population in Canada increased, the overall percentage of affiliated union members decreased. Figures 3.4 and 3.5 summarize Archer's research for selected years and summarize the affiliation trend both in absolute affiliation numbers with the party and the percentage of the total labour population affiliated.

Fig 3.4 Growth in Affiliated Union Locals 1961-1979 (Archer, 1992:43)

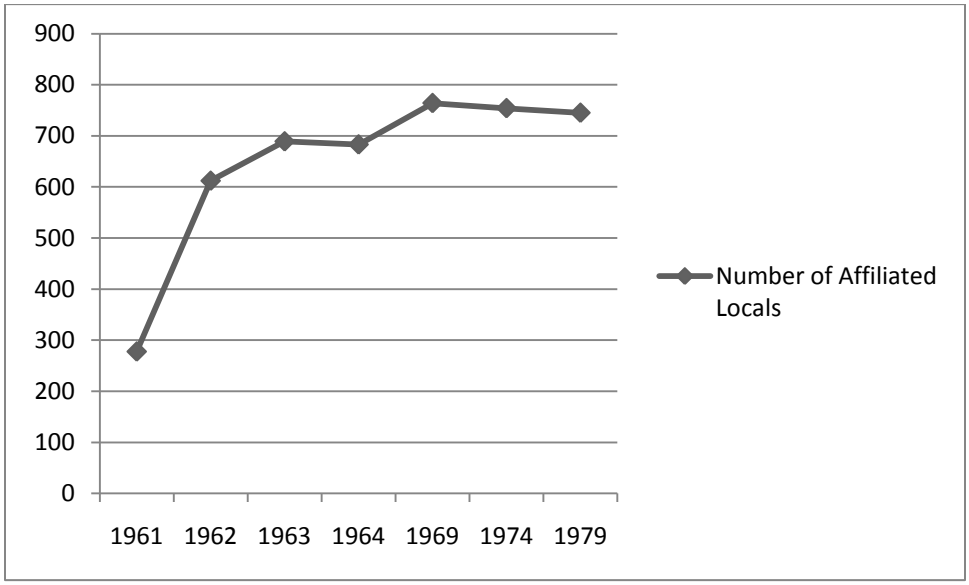
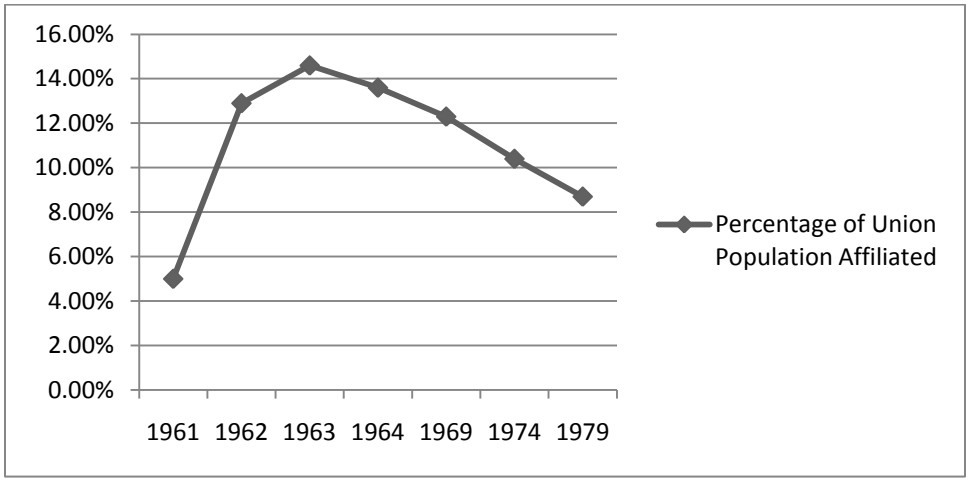


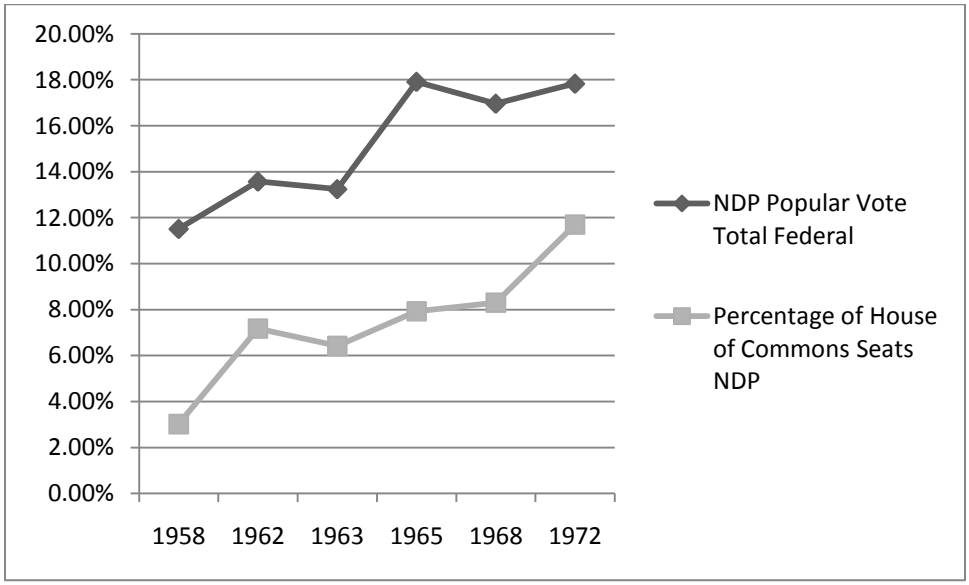
Fig 3.5 Decline in the percentage of total union population affiliated with the party (Archer, 1992:43)



The secondary logic for the new party was the assumption that the united front of labour, progressively minded Canadian and CCF socialist would provide a more

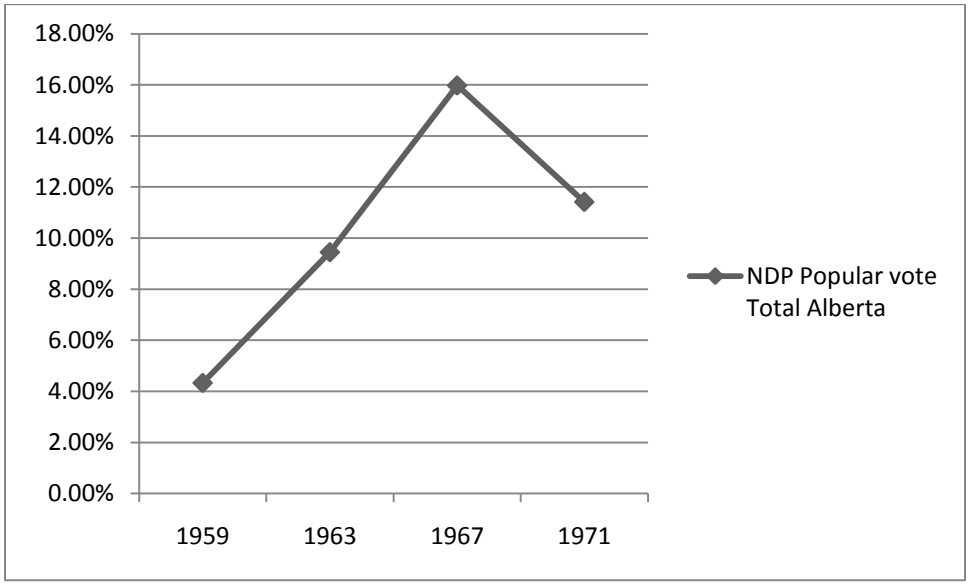
successful electoral platform. The electoral performance of the NDP has been mixed. At the federal level the party maintained a steady level of performance in the frequent elections of the 1960s. The NDP drew seats from B.C, Manitoba and Ontario but failed to produce a breakthrough electoral result in its first four elections[5]. The party maintained the provincial success the CCF had enjoyed in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia into the 1960s, but failed to win a seat in the Alberta legislature until 1971. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 illustrate the performance of the federal party by popular vote and by total percentage of House of Commons seats won, and for the Alberta NDP for popular vote. (The party did not win a seat until 1971).

Fig 3.6 Performance of the Federal NDP (Source: Elections Canada)



[5] This chapter will place an artificial cut-off date for discussion at 1971. The 1971 provincial election in Alberta was marked by a shift in party dynasty to the Progressive Conservatives. The 1970s onwards at the federal and provincial level will be considered and discussed in the next chapter as part of the current context debate.

Fig 3.7 NDP Popular Vote Total in Alberta 1959-1971 (Source: Elections Alberta)



The difficulties the NDP faced in Alberta politics during this early era can be attributed to the one party dynamic in Alberta, the timing of the discovery and development of the province's oil deposits, and the ability of the dominant party, Social Credit, to paint the NDP as simply another rebranding of old tired socialist politics (Caldarola, 1979: 37). While supporters, labour leaders and the party leadership saw the party as a clean departure from the CCF, the actual policy position the NDP took during the 1960s left it vulnerable to the political tactics of Social Credit Leader Ernest Manning (Caldarola, 1979: 44). Manning had built the Social Credit party from a radical protest party of the 1940s to a centrist and stable ruling party in Alberta. The Social Credit strategy was to paint itself as the only viable alternative to the Alberta voters, playing itself off as both the Alberta champion against central Canada and the level

headed alternative to the socialist policy of the NDP. The Social Credit party also absorbed much of the left leaning vote by implementing popular social welfare policies just as the federal Liberals had done. The 1947 incarnation of *Alberta Bill of Rights* guaranteed every Albertan education, medical benefits, social security, disability benefits and access to old age pensions and cut off much of the progressive agenda the NDP/CCF had lobbied for (Caldarola, 1979: 43).

The discovery of oil in the Leduc in 1947 set in motion a cascade of economic events that naturally favored the party in power. American companies rushed into the province to explore and exploit the newly found natural resource. By the 1950s the economic effects were in full swing. Between 1950 and 1968 oil revenues and royalties added over 2.5 billion dollars to the provincial coffers (Johnson, 1980: 65). The sudden increase in material wealth combined with the willingness of the Social Credit party to spend (by 1968 Alberta spent $100 per capita over the national average on public services) made for a difficult environment for labour and progressive politics posited by the provincial NDP. By 1966 the provincial debt was nearly cleared, taxes were reduced and there was a 600 million dollar surplus (Caldarola 1979, 44).

The provincial demographics began to change as well; more and more jobs were created in the mostly non unionized oil and gas sector. Union numbers did increase in the province, but this was mostly driven by growth in public sector white collar unions which were often less apt to vote for the proposals of blue collar unions (Archer, 1990: 61). In addition, the population mix shifted, and for the first time in the 1950s the majority of people lived in the major urban centers. This eroded the traditional rural

support base of the CCF/ NDP and caused an internal tug of war between rural agricultural policy positions and the need to attract new middle class city dwellers within. During the 1930s and 1940s Social Credit and the CCF competed as different forms of protest against a set of economic and structural factors that disadvantaged the province. The 1960s saw for the first time a materially prosperous province. The natural tendency was for interest to drift away from NDP politics, even with the addition of labour support in earnest. The strong economic performance in the province and visible increase in material wealth cemented the Social Credit position of dominance in the province until 1971.

The third era in party and union co-operation in Alberta set the stage for the modern circumstances that shape the relationship between the two entities. On the labour front the competing national representational bodies put aside old cleavages between skilled and unskilled, national and international sides, and united into one cohesive national body. The newly united labour front precipitated a dramatic change in the relationship between political parties and unions. As the CCF electoral numbers continued to decline, the labour movement seized on the opportunity and helped promote the creation of new left party designed around formal links with labour. The formation of the NDP was a historic event for labour and party politics in Canada; however, the party in practice has failed to evolve into a "union" party in the sense of the British labour party in the 1950s. Affiliation rules in the NDP constitution limited the ability of organized labour to control the party, and left the balance of policy formation power with the rank and file membership. Once the party solidified its constitution,

union locals did not affiliate with the party in the numbers that the party designers had hoped. Finally, a study of the monetary contribution foundation of the party shows that the party is dependent on small individual donations and not beholden to the organized labour.

The impact of the formation of the NDP in Alberta provincial politics was minimal. The left in Alberta was torn between progressive Canadians, labour interests and old guard socialists. The formation of the NDP came at a rather inopportune time as the dominant Social Credit party had made a marked shift to the center and was spending the new billions that the oil boom had brought to the province. The NDP was painted by Social Credit, like its predecessor the CCF, as socialist and counter to the material interests of the province. The old radical union presence in the province had faded as the coal and other mining industries gave way to oil and gas and service industries. The one party tendency in Alberta was shored up by strong economic performance, an increase in material well being, and a shift to an upwardly mobile urban middle class population. These structural changes minimized the traction NDP politics could gain and held the party to no legislature seats until 1971.

This chapter has presented a summary of the major events that have shaped the relationship between labour and left of center political parties in Alberta. The evolution of labour interests and political parties during this seventy year period was considerable. The Alberta economy evolved from an agricultural and mining base to the modern service and oil and gas industry we know today. During this evolution much of the militancy in and public support for the Alberta labour movement eroded. By 1971

unions struggled to gain support for their political positions in an economic boom environment. At the party level "labour" politics evolved from single independent candidates to small scale socialist parties, and then capitalized on the sense of western alienation during the great depression to initiate formal organizational ties with organized labour. This project will now turn to the modern era in Alberta politics that began with the Conservative takeover in 1971. With this understanding of the varied history of party and union in the province, the current state and plurality of interests and approaches to politics should seem more in context.

Chapter 4: The Modern Context for Union-Party Relations in Alberta 1971-2008

Introduction

Up to this point this thesis has examined the theoretical explanations for union and party co-operation, grounding its analysis in Western European comparative literature. The thesis has also presented an analysis of the various types of modern political parties and argued that the Alberta New Democrats should be considered primarily a policy seeking party with mass party roots. The third chapter placed the NDP in its historical setting, reviewed the evolution of labour politics in Alberta, and examined the links between party and union that have developed over time. The previous chapter confirmed Archer's conclusion that the NDP can best be understood as an ideologically driven left of center party with strong institutional ties to labour, but not a "union" party in the sense of the British labour. The analysis of Alberta labour and party history concluded at the 1971 election. This marked the transition from the Social Credit dynasty to the current era of Progressive Conservative domination and the modern era in Alberta politics.

This chapter will focus on the performance of the Alberta New Democrats in this modern era of provincial politics. In particular the chapter will argue that the tension that exists between labour and the party can be traced to the electoral performance of the party since 1971. This era was marked by a peak in party performance, when the NDP reached the position of official opposition (1986-1993) in the province. This era was both preceded and followed by marginal electoral results that were compounded by the mechanics of the Alberta electoral system. The peak in

the 1980s still acts to divide the various factions in the labour/party relationship. The party and its loyal affiliated unions point to the period as official opposition as evidence that the long awaited electoral breakthrough was possible in the past and therefore is on the horizon (interview with party official May, 2008). Skeptics and realists among unions argue that the peak of the party's influence is firmly in the rearview mirror, and that the current trend in the party's electoral performance points to the need for a "new approach" (interview with a union leader, Sept., 2008).

1971: The Rise of the Lougheed Conservatives and the Emergence of a Competitive Party System

The most recent party dynasty began in Alberta in 1971 when the incoming Progressive Conservatives replaced the outgoing Social Credit dynasty. The classic explanation for Albertan's electoral behavior prior to the 1971 election was drawn for C.B. Macpherson's analysis of the province's economic foundation. Using a Marxist analysis of the Alberta political economy Macpherson attributed one party dominance in Alberta to two separate characteristics (1953:5). First, the overwhelming dominance of a *petite bourgeoisie* class, anchored in agriculture and small town dynamic of the province. According to Macpherson this large portion of the population voted nearly in unison providing consistent majority results for the dominant party. Macpherson stops short of arguing for a one party system citing small pockets of class resistance to the *petite bourgeoisie*; this fragmented class resistance provided for legislative presences of a variety of small parties, a situation that Macpherson calls a quasi party system (1953:17).

The second component of Macpherson argument is the province's semi colonial relationship with central Canada (1953:21). Alberta's resource and agriculture dependent economy placed the province at the mercy of fluctuations in world pricing, as well as leaving the province vulnerable to imperialistic tendencies from central Canada. These two factors provided a strong incentive for Albertans to support a strong provincial government, resulting in solidarity and uniformity in political behavior (Macpherson, 1953:19).

By 1971, several of the underlying assumptions about the Alberta political economy built into the Macpherson thesis had changed, challenging the economic underpinnings that supported the idea of the *petite bourgeoisie*. The economy had undergone a significant shift from agriculture, mining and railroad dependency at the turn of the century, to a modern service-based industry with oil and gas extraction, transportation and management as the core economic engine. The resulting economic and demographic change in Alberta was striking (Caldarola, 1979: 44). A complete analysis of the change to the Alberta culture and economy is beyond the scope of this chapter. In brief, the results of the changes were a continued shift of rural to urban population balance, an influx of new residents from other provinces and abroad, diversification of the economy to reflect not only the importance of oil and gas and agriculture but also other tertiary and service sector industries, and a dramatic increase in provincial and individual wealth and standard of living (Richards and Pratt, 1979: 148).

These shifts in the social and political make up of Alberta created the need for an updated analysis of Alberta's party system. Flanagan argues that the single dominant

class explanation had been replaced by the 1970s by four distinct geographical, economic regions each with their own competitive political leanings in Alberta (Flanagan, 1975:16). This, combined with the changes to Alberta economy during the 1950s-1970s, redefined the traditional rules for the Alberta party system, setting the foundations for a modern competitive party environment (Elton and Goddard, 1979: 66).

With this shift away from the quasi party thesis in mind the explanations for the Progressive Conservative victory in 1971 has been interpreted different ways. A popular interpretation of the PC takeover is the notion that Alberta began to "outgrow" its rural protest identity during the 1960s. According to this view, the 1971 election represented a tipping point for the influence of a new middle class (Richards and Pratt, 1979: 149). This view places the victory of the PC party in the hands of new urban and middle class voters that saw Social Credit as the party of an older era of agrarian protest in Alberta.

Another variation on this theory focuses on a shifts in the political culture in Alberta. Dacks (1986) argues that the shift in unanimity in the Alberta electorate from one party to another during the history of the province has always been a result of two dominant cultural factors. First, Albertans feel a universal alienation from Central Canada and see an important utility in equipping the provincial government with a strong majority to defend the provincial interests in the national arena. Second, the electorate will always act to protect a dominant commodity interest (Dacks, 1986: 188). This commodity interest has shifted historically from agriculture and mining to its

current form of oil and natural gas. Dacks argues that the shift from Social Credit to Progressive Conservative marks a shift in confidence of the Alberta electorate to a new champion and protector of the dominant commodity, similar to the previous shifts from Liberal to UAF and UAF to Social Credit (1986: 189).

Bell (1993: 458) and Elton and Goddard (1979: 51) argue that the 1971 election was the result of a series of smaller factors that eroded the Social Credit position and not a dramatic shift in class support. Utilizing electoral return data from provincial elections, Bell argues that many sociological arguments about the PC takeover make assumptions about the electorate that are not supported by data. Bell demonstrates that Social Credit outgrew its "rural identity" early on and was never truly bound to a single class in Alberta (1989: 47). He goes on to argue that social class voting patterns are the best lens for the analysis of Alberta politics during, especially at the end of the Social Credit era. Bell shows that rural and farm support was an important component of Social Credit support but was closely matched during both the Aberhart and Manning eras with urban support, primarily from working class and labour union dominated ridings (Bell, 1993: 457). The assertion that Social Credit was the party of an older rural identity is suspect for Bell as he demonstrates a clear amount of support for Social Credit as far back as the mid 1950s from the growing urban middle class.

Elton and Goddard point to the importance of the lowering of the voting age from 19 to 18 along with an influx of first time voters as an important factor in the PC win, citing data from the era that demonstrated a distinct advantage for the PC's in first time voters (Elton and Goddard, 1979: 54). Both Bell and Elton and Goddard argue both

that Social Credit leader Strom was not as well received as his predecessor Manning and that Lougheed's leadership and campaign style may have played a decisive role in gaining support from centrist voters (Bell, 1993: 466; Elton and Goddard, 1979: 54). These elements combined to increase the competitive level of many ridings that were long term strongholds for Social Credit. Both studies point out that the PC take over came from a increase of 3.6 per cent in the popular vote from 1967 to 1971 that translated into a shift of over 30 seats (Elections Alberta).

Viewed in this light the PC victory in 1971 represented a more subtle realignment of the Alberta electorate behind a new party. However, like the Social Credit takeover in 1935, the realignment did not open any new electoral space for the Alberta New Democrats. Bell's work has demonstrated that all three key support groups that the NDP sought to unite (farmers, labour, and the lower middle class) failed to unite behind a single party. Instead the groups split support between both the Social Credit and PC parties, with marginal and geographically dispersed support for the NDP. Elton and Goddard's review of both the 1967 and 1971 elections reach similar conclusions to Bell, demonstrating that the target support group of the NDP transitioned from Social Credit to the Lougheed Conservatives.

The 1971 election represented an opportunity for increased competition in the Alberta party system, the change in leadership in the Social Credit party, and entrance of the Progressive Conservatives created an environment that shook up long standing voting behavior. However, the NDP proved unable to capitalize on the exodus of voters from Social Credit. In particular, the labour movement in the province found difficulty

coalescing behind the Notley era agrarian socialist tone to the party and weak legislature presence. Internally, during the late 1970s and early 1980s the party found itself balancing calls for a stronger socialist approach including the nationalization of key oil companies with the more moderate populist approach of Notley (Tupper, 1986: 91).

By 1975 the Lougheed Conservatives were able to solidify their position in the minds of many voters as the protector of the Provincial interests; after a lengthy conflict with Ottawa over oil price fixing, the Conservatives settled into a dominant position in the province's political system. Despite early success, the Progressive Conservative era has not been absent of periods of electoral instability. The transition in PC leadership from Peter Lougheed to Don Getty (1985) produced an opportunity for opposition parties in Alberta. During the mid 1980s, Alberta found itself in the midst of a major downturn in the oil and gas industry and reliance on provincial budget deficits. With Social Credit unable to recover from its electoral defeat in 1971, the New Democrats were left as the default opposition party (Archer, 1992: 123).

With new unproven leadership in the government facing an uneasy public, concerned about the provincial economy the NDP had its best showing in the party's history. Under the leadership of Ray Martin, after the tragic death of Grant Notley the Alberta New Democrats won 16 seats, with 11 seats in the Edmonton area and 2 in Calgary, making an important breakthrough into the growing urban population in Alberta (up until this point the party was limited to a base position in Notley's riding of Spirit River-Fairview, and Edmonton-Norwood in 1982). Under Martin the party repeated its electoral results in the 1989 election winning the same number of seats,

with only a slight dip in popular vote (see table 4.1). The seven year period in opposition marked a high point in union-party relations, according to many union leaders, as organized labour and the party coalesced around the party's new found prominence (interview with union leader Oct. 29, 2008).

The 1993 election resulted in another realignment in Alberta politics. The NDP lost 11 per cent of its 1989 popular vote total and all of its legislature seats. The new Progressive Conservative leader, Ralph Klein, managed to hold power despite surrendering eight seats from the party's 1989 total. Klein campaigned on an end to the strong state/interventionist style of the Getty Conservatives (Archer, 1992: 114). Building on the results of the breakthrough 1998 election, the provincial Liberal party overtook the NDP position of natural opposition. The 1993 election results have settled into the norm for Alberta politics despite leadership and policy changes in all three major parties.

One Party Dominance Reconsidered

The post 1971 party system has shown the potential for increased competition (Tupper, 1986: 204); however, the reality has been the opposite. After the Klein to Stelmach leadership transition, even after a leadership change the PC party holds over 80 per cent of the Legislature seats and continues to hold an uninterrupted majority position. In an attempt to explain the phenomenon of continued single party dominance in Alberta, McCormick compared Alberta to other provincial electoral results and found that Alberta's electoral pattern of single party dominance was not unique (1980: 84). McCormick's research advanced a set of four propositions on the Alberta

electoral situation. First, the tendency toward one party dominance in provincial elections was not unique to Alberta. Secondly, the vote share of the winning party in Alberta was comparable to several other provinces. Thirdly, when examining the seat share rendered by the single member plurality (SMP) system, the dominance in Alberta was unique. Finally, the first three propositions led to the study's ultimate conclusion: "It is not that Albertans vote unusually heavily for a single party, or that they give unusually few votes to a opposing parties, but that they scatter their opposition votes in such a fashion that the each opposition party suffers heavily for the punitive effects of the single-member electoral system" (1980: 88). Effectively, the plurality of party choices and the disproportionate results from the SMP electoral system in the province act to re-enforce the dominant party advantage.

McCormick's work was revisited more recently by Jansen who tested the four key propositions in McCormick's 1980 analysis. Jansen correctly justifies his re-examination of McCormick's conclusion by pointing out that the last 25 years has witnessed a new era of volatility in provincial politics outside of Alberta, but paradoxically the Conservatives have held power the entire time in province. Since the early 1980s (the period of McCormick's analysis) Alberta's tendency towards strong single party dominance has become more of a unique feature compared to other provinces. Jansen suggests that McCormick's singling out of the distortional effects of the provincial SMP system as well as the fragmentation of opposition are re-implicated as the culprits for the weak opposition presence in the Alberta legislature (2004: 10).

The Effects of Single Member Plurality Electoral System

Archer (1992) and Jansen and Young (2005) have pointed out several ways in which the mechanics of Alberta SMP system can distort the relationship between popular vote totals and seat allocation. The "first past the post" nature of the SMP system tends to reward parties with geographically concentrated support and punish parties whose support is spread out between many ridings. The degree of competition in each riding can also have a distortional effect as well. In cases where three or more parties garner significant portions of the vote, the threshold to win the contested seat is reduced (Archer, 1992: 114). Building on McCormick's thesis, Archer argues that many of Alberta's ridings were demonstrating competitive characteristics (three or more parties with ten percent of the vote or more). This results in a situation where the winning party in a competitive riding may have a relatively small proportion of popular support (Archer 1992: 56). This observation is most applicable to the urban ridings in Calgary and Edmonton. In the 2004 election the Conservatives won eight urban ridings with less than a plurality of popular vote; by 2008 the total increased to 15 (Elections Alberta).

Chalmers highlights a secondary effect of the weak opposition positions inherent to the Alberta system, the propensity of the dominant party to govern with little regard for consultation with the opposing parties. The British parliamentary system, built on the concept of confidence, inherently grants a monopoly on policy formation to any majority party. This is balanced in theory with the assumption that a strong opposition will include alternate perspectives in question period, with committee membership, and

by other means including media coverage. However, in Alberta the opposition is so weak and fragmented that the governing party is able to force legislation with little or no debate. Tupper has noted the propensity for a "business" approach to politics that began with the Manning era Social Credit party and has continued with the Conservative party. Opposition leadership have charged the government with a style of leadership that builds policy behind closed doors, leaving debate in Legislature as an afterthought (Tupper, 1986: 94). Chalmers lists the lack of debate over the details of the formation of the Heritage Fund, the dissolution of the Environmental Conservation authority, and the decision to build the Red Deer River dam in an environmentally sensitive location as examples of the strong arm tactics utilized by the PC party in Alberta, despite resolute opposition to and lack of public support of such plans (Chalmers, 1986: 173).

This behavioral pattern by the government has been particularly pronounced in its dealings with organized labour. Unions in the public sector faced a series of strong arm tactics in the 1990s including budget cuts and wage reductions despite concerted efforts to open public debate (Reshef and Rastin, 2003). The recent revisions to the Alberta labour code aimed at curbing union rights in construction and ambulance services in the summer of 2008 are another example of this trend. This behavior has the effect of compounding the psychological effects mentioned by Jansen and Young. When a controversial policy is enacted with little consultation, opposition parties seem even more useless in their ability to influence the political system.

A portion of the post 1971 electoral results in Alberta are demonstrated in figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 present the total number of seats won by

the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives since 1971 in proportion to popular vote, while figure 4.3 presents the voter turnout. At first glance figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate the general trend of a dominant position the PC party has occupied and also highlight the ongoing marginal position of the New Democrats. Since 1971 the Alberta New Democrats have managed a peak performance of 16 seats (19.28% of the legislature) on a popular vote total of 29.22 per cent. The party repeated the electoral success of 1986 in the subsequent election, holding 16 seats despite a slight dip in popular support to 26.29 per cent. This era in the 1980s represents the best performance for the CCF/NDP in Alberta politics; however, the foothold as the official opposition party in the Legislature was short lived. The New Democrats were completely wiped out of the Legislature in the 1993 election, and saw their share of the popular vote plummet to 11.01 per cent. Since this boom and bust cycle, the party has maintained a small position of two to four seats in the Legislature and surrendered the official opposition position to the Alberta Liberal Party. Since 1971, the Alberta New Democrats have averaged 14.61 per cent of the popular vote and a meager 5.52 per cent of Legislature seats. The performance of the PC party has been the opposite extreme; the party formed a majority government in 1971 and has not been defeated since. The party has held a peak Legislature seat share of 75 (95%) and has averaged just fewer than 80 per cent of the Legislature seats since 1971.

Fig 4.1 Alberta New Democrat's Electoral Performance Post 1971 (Source: Elections Alberta)

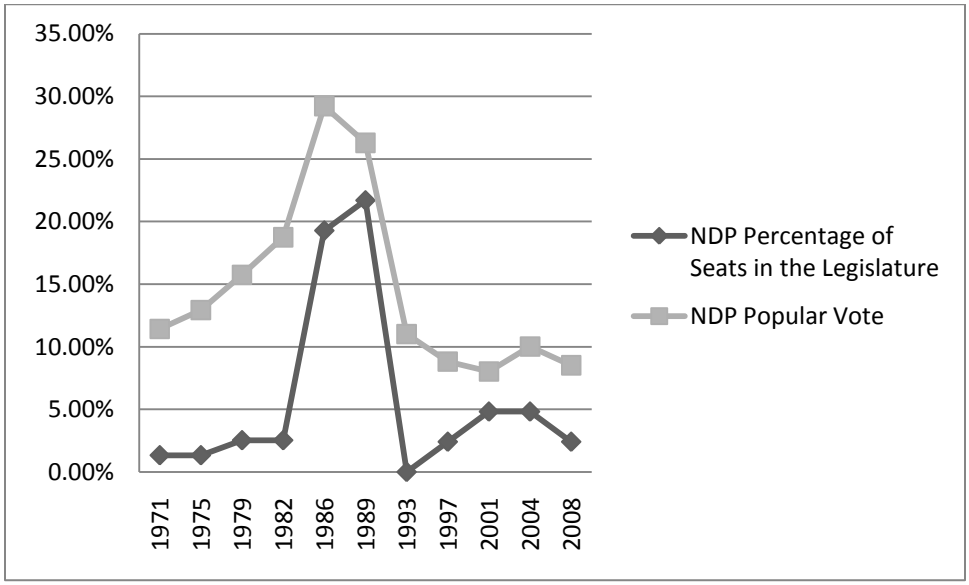


Fig 4.2 Alberta Progressive Conservative Electoral Performance 1971-2008 (Source: Elections Alberta)

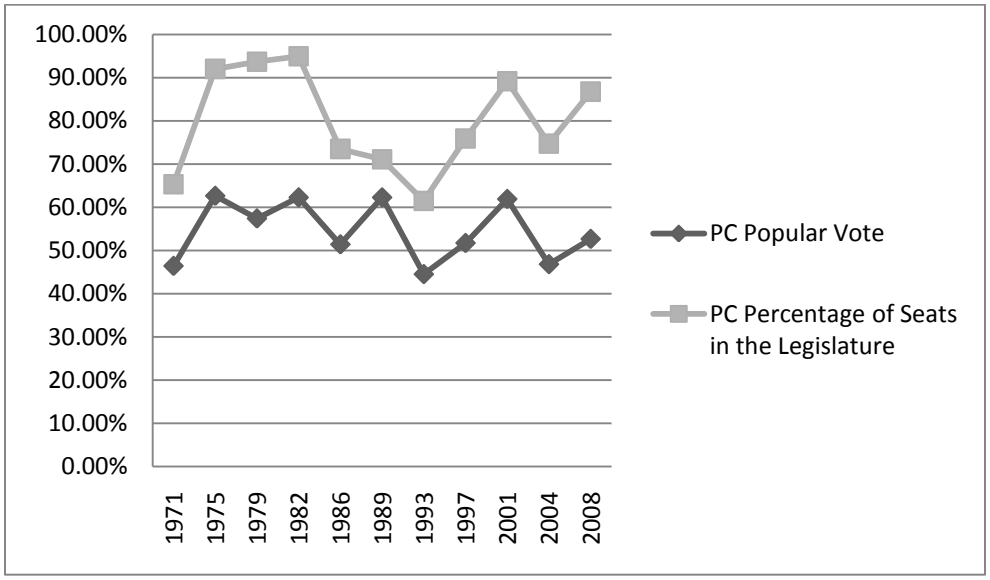
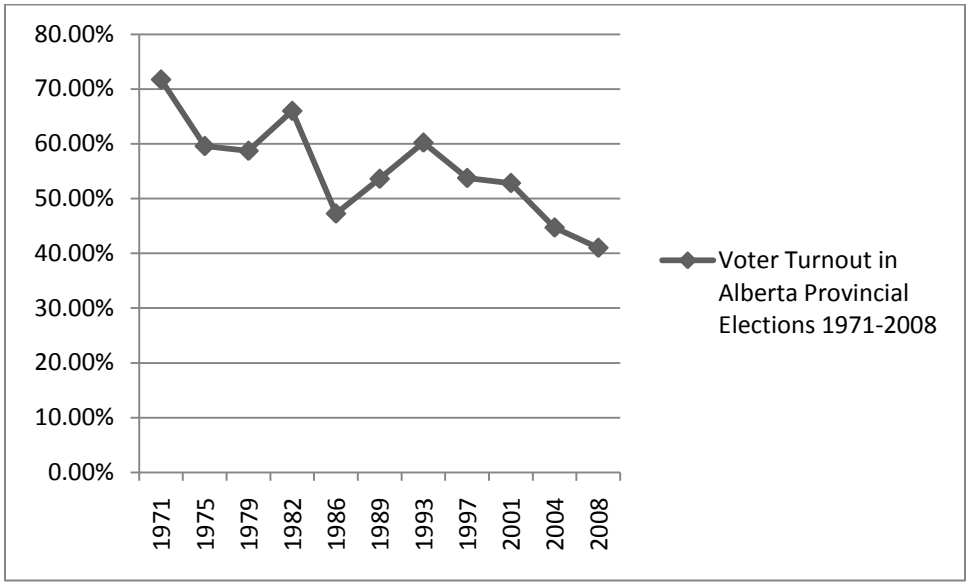


Fig 4.3 Voter Turnout in Alberta Provincial Elections 1971-2008 (Source Elections Alberta)



The charts also present the popular vote in each election during the era. The data presented illustrates the distortional effects of the single member plurality (SMP) system in Alberta pointed out by McCormick, Archer, and Jansen and Young. When comparing the two charts, the natural advantage of the dominant party becomes clear. Assuming that a party's percentage of popular vote in an election should result in a relatively comparable percentage of seats in the provincial legislature is desirable (the aim in proportional representation systems), the SMP system has delivered less than attractive results. Since 1971, an average of just under 80 per cent of the Legislature has been won by the Progressive Conservatives, with an average of only 54 per cent of

the popular vote. In effect, the electoral system has over rewarded the PC's by an average of about 21 seats per election since 1971. These seats come at the expense of opposition parties whose support is too geographically spread out to capitalize on election results properly (Jansen, 2004:16). The Alberta New Democrats, for example, have won a respectable average of 14.61 per cent of the popular vote from 1971 to the present; however, this has only translated to an average of 5.52 per cent of the Legislature. The Alberta Liberal party has faced much the same issue, in the 2008 election, despite winning more than a 26 per cent of the popular vote the party only holds 10 per cent of the Legislature seats.

To summarize, the electoral position of the NDP in provincial elections since 1971 has been mixed. The party enjoyed its greatest success when the NDP reached the position of official opposition for two consecutive elections. However, the success was short lived, and like the CCF, the NDP has failed to capitalize on any weaknesses the dominant party revealed. The trend of strong dynasty era governments has continued in the modern era with the Progressive Conservatives taking over the dominant position from Social Credit. As Jansen (2004: 15) has pointed out, no conclusive explanation has been established for the enduring presence of the PC's in Alberta. Even the notion that leadership (Bell 1993: 471), combined with the Albertan need to protect dominant resource interests against Central Canada (Dacks, 1986: 190) seems in doubt. The 2008 election saw an increase in Legislature presence and popular vote for the PC's despite the exodus of an iconic leader in Klein and his replacement with the less than charismatic Stelmach. As well, the election was contested on the heels of the

government's decision to raise the cost of oil exploration and extraction in the province via changes to the royalty package. The government made this change despite stern opposition from a variety of industry and financial groups. The structural contours of the Alberta party system place all opposing parties, in particular the NDP, in a perpetually weak position. Compounding the NDP electoral problems is the re-emergence of the Alberta Liberal party. The Liberals have occupied second party status since the early 1990s.

Finally, as it pertains to party and union linkages the weak legislature position occupied by the Alberta New Democrats has had lasting ramifications for the relationship. The party has been unable to constantly provide real policy influence during the era of Tory rule. This has come at the expense of organized labour directly, as in case of recent legislation curtailing the rights of unionized ambulance and construction workers in the summer of 2008, and indirectly because of small "c" economic policy. The final portion of this thesis will examine how unions and the party interact given the weak position of the party.

Chapter 5: The Union-Party Relationship in the Modern Era of Alberta Politics and the Importance of the Rational Exchange

Introduction

Chapter 5 will build on the contextual background, both historic and theoretical, established in the previous sections of this thesis and bring the discussion of the relationship between organized labour and the Alberta New Democrats into its current context. In particular, this chapter will argue that the relationship between the NDP and unions in Alberta is strained, internally by fragmentation in the labour movement itself, and externally by the difficult political and economic environment unique to Alberta. After reviewing interview data, party literature, and party and union financial data, this chapter will argue that a clear split is emerging in the political behavior of Alberta's labour movement. On one side, some unions are continuing long established patterns of support, and in some cases aligning for the first time with the party. Research presented in this chapter will show that these unions are participating in an asymmetrical exchange, betting that the party represents the best course of action in the difficult Alberta context, despite the lack of policy return on material investment. For these unions concerns over the lack of return of policy are lessened out a shred sense of ideological commitment.

On the other side many of Alberta's unions as well as the provincial labour federation are acting on a long standing history of disappointment with the party. A new strategy premised on unilateral action within the labour movement, absent of any party input, based on rational calculation has begun to gain momentum. Ultimately, if

the current trend in the union-party relationship that has emerged since 2001 is allowed to continue, the long term viability of the relationship could be in doubt.

Methodology

Primary research for this thesis was conducted two different ways. First, a series of interviews was conducted from April 17th, 2008 till November 30th, 2008. Interviews were conducted with leadership from both the labour movement and the party in Alberta, with particular attention to unions and labour organizations with a history of interaction with the party or active political agendas. Additional interviews were done with rank and file membership of a variety of politically active unions to collaborate information gathered from interviews with leadership. All interviews followed a semi structured format, based on a standard questionnaire (available for review in Appendix 1) with participants allowed a period for open comments. Permission to present data and quotes obtained in interviews was granted via signed consent, with confidentiality guaranteed in the same document.

Secondly, a review of party financial data and party records was conducted to in an attempt to quantify some of the links between the party and unions. Research on financial and party records was also used to cross reference data produced in interviews whenever possible[1]. Research is presented in two forms, first in the following section of the thesis and secondly in a series of appendixes at the end of the thesis which contain summary information on the labour movement as well as financial data.

[1] For example, party leadership claimed in the 2008 election close to half of all candidates had ties to organized labour, in order to verify this claim a review of candidate bios and information was done.

The selection of Alberta as a case study was based on several factors. Historically the province has been home to a long tradition of labour activism, and the birthplace for an important component of the Canadian left in 1932, with the formation of the CCF, and the Calgary Manifesto. Success for the labour movement's political ambitions has been elusive; as a result the labour movement in Alberta has developed into a small, divided, but effective and active portion of the Alberta political economy. Despite this history, and resulting unique labour movement, the relationship between unions and political parties at the provincial level in Alberta has not enjoyed a significant amount of scholarly inquiry.

This long-term strain in the relationship between the two players creates an interesting window into the factors that maintain the relationship in Canada, but on a more manageable scale for study. Unlike its western Canadian counterparts and in Ontario and Nova Scotia, Alberta has never had a CCF or NDP government. Therefore the ties that bind labour and the federal party can be studied at a provincial level under a similar, if not more difficult situation. In both federal and Alberta provincial politics, labour and the party must cooperate in an environment where tremendous pressure from within and outside the party is present, but where neither side can point to obvious tangible rewards that would could counterbalance the difficulty of the relationship (votes and substantial financial support for the party and policy and access to power for unions).

From a contemporary perspective, the 2008 election cycle and the Albertans for Change movement represent a new and unique strategy for provincial labour

movements in Canada. The full merit of this will be discussed in the following chapter, and could have implications in other provinces, and in the relationship that exists between unions and political parties at the federal level. Primary research and interviews immediately after the 2008 election could lend an important insight into a new development in the links between political parties and civil society.

The case suffers from some limitations. With regards to comparisons to the Federal example, the current trend in minority governments has dealt the NDP a valuable position, that the party has successfully leveraged in several budget negotiations with both Liberal and Conservative governments. The Alberta New Democrats do not benefit from a similar short-term stable access to decision making. As well, the federal party has seen a steady increase in the last decade in both seat count and popular vote, the Alberta new democrats have stagnated and cling to a small core of support in Edmonton. Notable differences exist in the way money flows between the federal party and unions that the Alberta equivalents. Bill C-24 fundamentally limits the flow of money at the federal level, while Alberta is home to a lightly regulated and wide-open campaign finance regime. Finally, where in the federal example we find a notable hesitancy towards overt references to "union friendly politics" we find in Alberta a situation where party leadership is attempting to expand and capitalize on historic bonds.

Theoretical Models and Practical Application

A variety of shaping factors, including the size of the legislature presence of the party and the political economy in Alberta, continue to influence the relationship between the NDP and its union support. Chapter 2 discussed several theoretical models that explain the logic for relationships between political parties and unions. Applying these models to the current Alberta situation is problematic, as many structural factors in the province, both political and economic are fairly unique. To begin, we will consider the political economy explanation. In this model, the logic for party and union co-operation is predicated on an exchange, or social bargain. The relationship between unions and left of center parties is a result of structural economic factors (Howell, 2001). Unions provide wage restraints and work force stability, while political parties (when able to influence policy making) provide a stable voice at the seat of power, maintain the welfare state that provides many public union sector jobs, and provide a well balanced structured environment where business, unions and government can effectively participate in a tripartite corporatist environment (Haugsgjerd, 2007).

The historical, political and economic context discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis has demonstrated that necessary elements for a European type corporatist relationship have failed to develop in Alberta. The current context in Alberta does not demonstrate any change in this trend. Alberta's union density is far less than most industrial economies (see table 5.1). Comparatively, with other provinces Alberta's union density is the lowest in Canada (see table 5.2), Manitoba has the highest rate in the region and the second highest in the country at 36.9 per cent, Saskatchewan and

British Columbia are both well above the national average of 29.7 per cent at 33.4 per cent and 31 per cent respectively (Statistics Canada, CANSIM: 2008). The percentage of unionized workers in Alberta has not shown signs of growth during the most recent boom cycle as some labour analyst have expected (Grant, 2005). Despite an increase in demand for unionized workers in building and construction related industries the unionization rate in Alberta shrank .01 per cent from 1997 to 2008 (Statistics Canada CANSIM 1997-2008).

Figure 5.1 Union Density as a Percentage of Total Workforce for Selected Countries (Pontusson, 2005; Statistics Canada CANSIM, 2005)

Country	Union Density
Sweden	**79**
Denmark	**74**
Belgium	**56**
Norway	**54**
U.K	**31**
Canada	**30**
Germany	**25**
Australia	**25**
Netherlands	**23**
Alberta	**22**
U.S.A	**13**

Figure 5.2 Union Density by Province 2008 (Akyeampong, 2008)

Province	Union Density
Newfoundland	36.6
Manitoba	35.9
Quebec	35.8
Saskatchewan	33.4
BC	31
PEI	29.5
Nova Scotia	28.9
New Brunswick	27.1
Ontario	26.8
Alberta	22.3

The industrial relations system in Alberta has developed along adversarial lines as opposed to the European model of co-operation. Alberta's unions behave in a similar fashion to their federal and American counterparts. Negotiations between employers, unions and governments are seldom proactive. Unions rely on strikes and disruptive activity to pressure concessions out of employers (Siaroff, 1999: 184). From 2003 to 2006, 743 individual work stoppages occurred in Canada, of these 622 (84%) were initiated by unions (Statistics Canada, 2006). Strike activity in Alberta tends to come in spurts when large public sector unions enter into contract disputes with the provincial government. For example, from January to May in 2001 over 76,000 days labour were lost to strike activity when transit and provincial workers could not reach contract agreement with the government. But, from 2003 to 2005, only 115 000 total days labour were lost in the province, marking a period of stability (Statistics Canada, 2006). The government and private employers in Alberta view unions as obstacles and

expenses, and generally avoid co-operative behavior with unions and government (Cox, 1974; Thompson, 1993).

The weak position of labour in the provincial economy does not allow unions to participate in industrial relations the way the more strongly positioned European and British unions were able to historically. Additionally, the Alberta labour movement lacks the cohesiveness of many European examples. Alberta's unions are represented by a several organizational bodies including the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), and the Alberta Building Trades Commission (ABTC). The result is a labour movement that is characterized by infighting (this will be explored in depth later in the chapter).

Research on the specifics of the Alberta case has revealed an additional constraining factor. Because of the small scale of the labour movement and the consolidation of power into several competing poles (the labour population in Alberta is less than 370 000 members concentrated in few large unions[2]) the relationship between elites in the party and labour movement can have an important shaping factor on the relationship. The phenomenon can both strengthen and weaken the formal links between party and union, research on the Alberta context points to destabilizing effect on the relationship. In particular, the weak relationship between the party leader and the leadership of the AFL will be shown to be eroding traditional bonds between the two players. In a similar situation the previous president of AUPE had strong negative

[2] Appendix 1 presents a breakdown of unions by population and number of locals, when such information was made available. The combined population of AUPE, CUPE, ATA, and UNA for example make up over 60% of the total union population in Alberta

personal views about the NDP, and a strained relationship with the party, this resulted AUPE's decision to withdraw from AFL and distance itself from the party, pulling the largest union in the province out of the union and party dynamic.

These structural factors, the electoral performance of the party, the political economy reality in the province, strained personal relationships, and the adversarial industrial relations system common in Canada quickly erode the elements necessary for the exchange that the political economy theory is predicated on.

The ideological affinity theoretical model proposed in chapter 2 highlighted the ability of common goals and beliefs to influence union and party relations. By default this seems to be strongest explanation of party and union behavior in Canada in the past, as the party has never seriously challenged power at the federal level (Bernard, 1991: 108). The Alberta context does provide some evidence of this type of exchange, especially between long term supportive unions and the party, interview data will be presented later in the chapter as support of this. Ultimately, this theoretical framework fails to explain the most interesting phenomenon that this study has produced: the fact that many unions with shared ideological positions with the NDP choose not to work with the party. To explain this trend we again return to the weak electoral position of the party. The Alberta case seems to indicate that no matter what the shared ideological position of the actors, after a period of mediocre electoral performance by the party the rational tendencies of unions take priority in political interaction with a few exceptional cases.

By default this leaves us with the rational choice account for union and party interaction. This theoretical model highlights the rational utility maximizing efforts of both unions and the party (Quinn, 2002: 209). It predicts than when unions can offer votes, and resources, and the party can provide policy and access to power the two actors will cooperate out of mutual benefit. More importantly, for our discussion of the difficulties facing Alberta union and party linkages the model predicts that the cooperation will break down when the exchange is not effective. The political, economic and electoral context developed in the previous chapters of this thesis has demonstrated that the party has been historically incapable of supporting its end of the bargain via its Legislature position. The union end of the bargain is less conclusive; unions in Alberta do not have the sheer numbers or resources to push the party into power but have made small but consistent donations of money and resources to the party. I will argue based on research presented in this chapter that this dynamic, the inability of the party to uphold its end of the rational exchange, is driving the calculation made by many unions to pursue unilateral action. Pooling the influence of the labour movement without the party is the rational course for union leaders that base political interaction on utility and not ideology.

The Current Context of the Alberta Labour Movement

The next section of this chapter will present a brief sketch of the current state of the Alberta labour movement based on interviews conducted as part of the primary research component of the project. The Alberta labour movement is far from a homogeneous entity and is heavily divided on how to participate in the political arena.

As one union leader explained it “there are lots of family fights in the house of labour” (interview with a union leader Sept. 14, 2008). We would expect in a normative sense that the AFL should act as the coordinating body for political action by labour in the province, mirroring the role of CLC at the Federal level. In reality, Alberta unions are split into competing camps, with competitive organizational bodies including the Building Trades Council and the Christian Labour Association of Canada. The result is a situation where the AFL is the major voice for labour in Alberta but not the only voice, and it is difficult if not impossible to aggregate the variety of union positions into a single voice.

The AFL is the provincial branch of the CLC and thus is affiliated with the party at the provincial level (NDP Constitution). The AFL is by far the largest representational body for labour in the province. The organization represents 27 unions, 186 locals and approximately 136 990 members (AFL, 2008). Unions in the AFL are from a diverse set of industries including healthcare, manufacturing, public service, and construction. However, only a small percentage of the unions that AFL represents are affiliated with the NDP. This places an immediate strain on AFL and NDP links in the province. AFL must balance the competing political leanings of all members of the house of labour (its primary responsibility is to unions and not to the party), while also attempting to promote the party to its members.

The second largest representational body for labour in the province is the Alberta Building Trades Council. The ABTC represents 16 unions, 22 locals and approximately 55 000 members, all concentrated in the residential and commercial

building sector (ABTC, 2008). The ABTC historically has had a mixed relationship with the NDP. The organization has donated money to the party and represents one affiliated union, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local 424 (IBEW 424), but also represents several unions with loose ties to the Liberal and PC parties, the organization is also a strong supporter of the emerging non partisan trend in labour politics that will be explored in the next section of this chapter[3]. ABTC enjoys more internal cohesiveness than AFL as all represented unions participate in the same section of the economy. In general the leadership from individual unions in ABTC are more concerned with effectively representing their individual membership and are less concerned with supporting a wide variety of policy positions, a stance that constrains the potential for wholesale support for the party (interview with union leaders, April 17th-October 29th, 2008). As well, the building trades often find their policy leanings at odds with the environmental focus of the NDP creating a natural tension between the two (interview with a union leader, May 22, 2008).

The Christian Labour Association of Canada represents the fastest growing portion of the organized labour movement in Alberta, and unlike ABTC or AFL does not maintain a relationship with the CLC or the AFL. CLAC Alberta represents 3 locals with around 27,000 members concentrated in the service industry, construction and the Save-on-Foods retail grocery chain (correspondence with CLAC Executive Director, June 2009). The organization is based on a less adversarial model than its counterparts in the

[3] Appendix 2 presents a breakdown of the membership of most major labour bodies in the province. The approximate size (when available from the organization) is provided along with a brief note about the union's relationship with the party.

Alberta labour movement, and as a result has found itself the target of significant negative attention from both the AFL and ABTC. CLAC avoids direct partisan affiliation, preferring to focus on the needs of its individual membership and the profitability and viability of the business as a whole (correspondence with CLAC Executive Director, June 2009).

The largest single union in the province, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE), has severed its ties with AFL, and since the mid 1990s has supported candidates for all major political parties. AUPE represents around 76 000 provincial employees in 28 different locals, all concentrated in the provincial public service (correspondence with AUPE Director of Communication, October 2008). The non affiliated state of AUPE is a major stumbling block to cohesive action in the Alberta labour movement. The Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) represents another major component of the labour population with over 44,000 members in 64 locals all focused in the public teaching and support system. Like AUPE, the union avoids direct partisan support. ATA members have run and have been elected for all major parties in the Alberta party system. In sum, labour in Alberta is divided, and does not demonstrate one single means of interacting with political parties. The movement is sub divided by several labour federations with contrasting approaches to partisan politics. The movement is further divided by several large public unions with non partisan policy and little interest in coordinated activity. In general, unions in Alberta employ a plurality of strategies determined by the individual calculation of unions or groups of likeminded unions.

A Three Part Division in Alberta Labour

Making sense of the labour movement in Alberta as it pertains to its links to the NDP is a difficult task. Based on interview data and a review of financial contributions to the party since 1993, I will argue that three distinct groups are apparent. The groups are differentiated by their contrasting partisan strategy and outlook on the future for the political engagement of organized labour in the province, but do not necessarily break down neatly according membership in labour federations. IBEW 424, one of the most vocal supporters of the party for example is a member of both ABTC and AFL. The largest union in the AFL (an affiliated organization to the party) is the provincial nurses union which maintains a non partisan perspective. Because of this reality in the Alberta labour movement the focus of this project is on the partisan tendencies of individual unions and not the provinces three labour federations. The first of the three groups is marked by clear partisan ties to the party. The group consists of unions that are formally affiliated with the NDP and unions that are not affiliated, but support the party with money and volunteers. The second group is largest in the provinces and is marked by non partisan or multi-partisan approaches to politics. The final group is made up of the CLAC affiliated locals that choose to avoid political engagement[4].

The first group is those unions that are openly loyal to the party. The group is comprised of both blue and white collar unions that have chosen direct affiliation, choose not to affiliate but continue to donate material support, or are forced at a

[4] Appendix 2 presents the suggested breakdown of most major unions in the province into three grouping affiliated/loyal unions (group 1), non partisan/multi partisan unions (group 2), and neutral/CLAC affiliated unions (group 3).

certain level via national leadership to show party support. Figure 5.3 presents a summary table of all unions affiliated with the Alberta NDP. The patterns of financial support can be examined during election and non election years in appendixes 3 and 4. The union leadership in this grouping is cognizant of the fact that the party has little ability to promote policy in the legislature. However, as the recent election has demonstrated, the PC party is as dominant as ever. These unions continue to support the party out of the belief the party still fights to keep a "progressive" and labour friendly agenda safe against the dominance of "conservative" economic and social thought that currently dominated the Alberta party system (interview with a party official, May 22, 2008). This relationship is the clearest evidence for an ongoing ideological linkage discussed in the theoretical section of this thesis. These loyal unions maintain that the party represents the best electoral choice for its membership and actively campaign for the party within organizational ranks.

Figure 5.3 Affiliated Unions to the Alberta NDP (Source NDP Alberta Party Records)

Union	Membership
CUPE Alberta	**26000**
UFCW 401	**8000**
IBEW 424	**6000**
USW Dist 3	**1500**
COPE 458	**100**
CEP 777	**3000**
CEP 855	**500**
Insulators Local 110	**2500**

The second and largest group is made up of unions that maintain either non partisan policy, choosing to avoid support for any single party, or opportunistic partisan policy, altering party support to fit individual situations. This group includes the largest union in the province, the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE), as well as the health care and teacher unions and the majority of the building trades. This group is politically active, believing that defensive action must be taken to protect individual members from the right-wing economic policy of the government, or to promote advantages in bargaining with public and private employers. The political interests of this group are primarily issue focused. These unions see little utility in supporting the New Democrat agenda wholesale. At times the group of unions finds the interests of its members at odds with some of the environmental and social policy of the party (interview with a union leader, October 29, 2008). These unions seek out political entities (individual MLAs, interest groups and political parties) that are receptive to their issue based negotiating, or run candidates themselves for a variety of parties.

AUPE, for example has supported "union friendly" candidates that ran for all three major provincial parties in the last two elections (interview with a union leader, Oct. 24, 2008). AUPE has institutionalized a multi-partisan approach by allowing a two day pay allowance for any union members who chose to work in a "labour friendly campaign" (AUPE Constitution, 2008: 23). In contrast, the ABTC represent unions that have run candidates for the Liberal party, as well as the NDP. This group of unions has adopted an anti-Progressive Conservative outlook for the most part, but believes that

the provincial Liberal party represents an acceptable alternative (interview with a union leader, May 28, 2008).

The group in general is governed by a rational approach to politics and believes that the party system in Alberta offers few tangible rewards for "dogmatically supporting the weak position that the NDP occupies" (interview with a union leader, April 27th, 2008). The rational tendencies of this group of unions illustrate the weak conditions that exist in Alberta for the exchange type relationships explained in Chapter 2. The group of unions prefers to view themselves an important portion of the Alberta political economy that is often overlooked and misunderstood (interview with a union leader, May 23rd, 2008). Preferring to lobby the government for labour issues, the group of unions is reminiscent of the Gomperist tradition in the province's history.

The union leadership in this non aligned group seem more aware that membership does not always follow even the best planned voting cues. Union members are educated about important political issues via email, print and direct mail campaigns organized by political action committees (PACs). Several interviews with union leaders revealed that union membership views being urged to vote for a single party negatively (interviews with union leaders, March 17, 2008 and May 29, 2008).

Paradoxically, this group includes both members and non-members of the AFL and also members of parallel organizations including ABTC. The non-partisan position of some of these unions impacts the political positioning of the AFL. For example, the United Nurses of Alberta (UNA) are recent additions to the AFL fold and have added a distinct non-partisan style to AFL policy. The pull of the rational non-partisan approach

is gaining support within AFL, at the expense of support for the provincial New Democrats. At times it appears that the organizational body prefers coordinated unilateral action within the house of labour as a primary political strategy with only a thin attempt at party support (interview with a party official, May 23, 2008). This trend will be supported with an analysis of the events of the most recent election, and in particular the Albertans for Change (AFC) campaign in the following section of this chapter.

The final component of the Alberta labour movement is single group of union locals organized by the Christian Labour Association of Canada Alberta (CLAC). The union has a fundamentally different approach to industrial relations compared to conventional unions. According to the CLAC website, "CLAC is an independent Canadian labour union that applies Christian social principles of justice, respect, and dignity to the workplace community. It provides quality representation and a wide range of benefits and training for its members, and active member advocacy that strives to build healthy work communities based on mutual respect and partnership" (CLAC website). CLAC implements an open shop policy in its locals and allows individuals who do not want to be in the union to opt out of signing union cards; their union dues are donated to a mutually agreed upon charity, and the individual is exempt from the decision-making process in the work place. In place of traditional adversarial negotiations with management, CLAC promotes a co-operative process that seldom if ever results in work place stoppages.

CLAC is viewed with open hostility by the conventional labour movement in Alberta. In fact, anti-CLAC feelings are one of the few universal commonalities in the Alberta labour movement. Alberta's conventional unions charge that CLAC is an "anti union" more concerned with appeasing management and ownership than fighting for workers' rights. CLAC's open shop policy "undermines the democratic rights we have fought for over the last century" according to one union leader (May 23, 2008). CLAC is officially non-partisan; the organization's leadership believes in applying the same cooperative labour principles it directs at employers to its relationship with government. Although the CLAC affiliated unions represent the smallest group in Alberta, they are of concern to both organized labour and the party as the organization is growing and has become the preferred choice of some fabrication and construction companies in the northern Alberta oil sands producing region. The group's significance is found in its growing popularity and its perceived threat status to conventional labour relations structures in the province.

Some interesting patterns emerge when examining patterns of support for the NDP among Alberta unions (see Appendix 2). First, the important influence of federalism in Canadian politics becomes evident. Unions that are provincial branches of larger federal bodies are sometimes compelled to support the party because of national focus, regardless of any calculation of benefit for the local union branch. This trend is clearly demonstrated by ongoing support from CUPE, UFCW, CEP and USW. Interviews with leadership from some of these unions indicated that support for the party was a result of national policy as oppose to local sentiment (interview with union leadership

April 17th-May 25th, 2008) Close examination of financial data presented in Appendix 3 reveals that the national body of unions often matches or exceeds donations from local chapters. It is also interesting to note the core of independent and non partisan unions is made up of Alberta specific unions and labour organizations, AUPE, UNA and the teachers unions being the most obvious examples. Also a clear divide between public and private unions can be seen. The non partisan trend is strong among large public unions that have regular dealings with or are directly employed by the provincial government (AUPE, UNA, Teachers Association), small private unions seem split on political strategy.

The Alberta New Democrat's Perception of Party-Labour links

With a three part division in the labour movement in Alberta established, I will now turn to an analysis of the party's perception of its relationship with the various labour components in Alberta. To begin, a summary of party literature that pertains to union party linkages in print and from online sources will be presented. Current NDP federal party doctrine seems to downplay union links in favor of appealing to "working Canadians." Most recently, NDP policy has emphasized environmental issues, progressive economic policy to promote job creation and retention, reduction in corporate tax breaks, social equality policy for women and minorities, and an increased focus on affordable housing (NDP National Platform, 2008). The federal party literature deals with issues in which unions have a direct interest, but does so by grouping issues by sub topic not as a union specific policy set. These issues include workplace safety,

protection for full time jobs from outsourcing, and government support for major industries under stress in the current market (NDP National Platform, 2008).

At the federal level, receptive unions will include similar policy positions in campaign literature (Boatright, 2009: 28). In the post C-24 era of campaign finance unions are now more reliant on parallel issue advocacy to promote the party to individual membership where desirable. The CLC, for example, issues a "Better Choice" campaign for all membership outlining party positions on a variety of issues and encouraging membership to vote their conscience. The campaign contains significant rhetorical overlap with the party platform and acts as an indicator for union support for the party without urging membership towards a single party (Jansen and Young, 2009: 662), while still allowing strategic voting where the NDP stands little chance of victory (Boatright, 2009: 29). Some unions employ a more direct means of party support at the public level. The Steelworkers and UFCW actively promote party membership and offer paid time off and internal training for members who wish to work in NDP campaigns (Boatright, 2009:29).

The Alberta wing of the party has a more direct approach to its relationship with labour when compared with the federal example. The ANDP lists provincially specific goals in keeping with the national focus. The Alberta party's four main priorities are: "making life affordable, a green energy plan, full value from oil and gas royalties, and taking big money out of politics (Alberta NDP on Your Side, 2009). For the most part the Alberta party literature adopts the "working families" language and approach of the federal party. However, the provincial site contains a link to labour specific concerns. At

the center of this literature is the party position that "Alberta's labour laws are designed to placate large corporations," and that "Alberta has the worst labour laws in Canada" (A Fair Deal for Working People, 2009). Along with this position the literature lists four policy planks aimed at issues Alberta unions have taken up with the Progressive Conservative government. These include an increase to the provincial minimum wage to $10.00/hr, amending the labour law that allows twelve-year-old children to work in restaurants, the establishment of "first contract" legislation to protect newly formed unions (Alberta lags behind most other provinces in this regard), and modification to the labour code to provide construction workers equal rights with other job sectors. In this way the provincial party literature provides more overt support for unions than the Federal party (Alberta NDP on Your Side, 2009). The provincial party website and literature seem more apt to display direct policy linkages between union concern and party policy.

This trend in overt support for organized labour in Alberta can be traced back through party campaign literature, but has enjoyed a renewed emphasis since 1993[5]. This recent party support for organized labour has been based on two separate themes. First the party has been critical of governemnt attempts at heath care privatization, showing direct support for public sector unions from a variety of fields (Prairie Manifesto ABNDPAB93YPPa-ABNDPABO4PPa). Secondly, the party has included a section on workers' rights in all platforms since 1993. The tone has changed according to the state of the economy; in general, policy is directed at two major themes. First,

[5] Primary document evidence for this portion of the project was sourced from the Prairie Manifesto project housed in the University of Calgary and directed by Jared Wesley.

the party has pledged to improve the safety of workers in the province arguing that health and safety standards in the province have slipped under Tory rule. Secondly, the party has taken a strong stance against government policy that has made the organization of new unions difficult. These policy positions have become more pronounced since 1997 as the Alberta economy reentered a boom cycle with climbing revenue from oil and gas project expansion (Prairie Manifesto ABNDPAB93YPPa-ABNDPABO4PPa).

It is important to note that recent provincial party literature also contains policy positions unfavorable to unions. The Alberta New Democrats are campaigning to have large corporate and union donations to political parties eliminated in the province, in keeping with the spirit of Federal Bill C-24, and campaign law changes made at the provincial level in Manitoba (Alberta NDP On Your Side, 2008). If the party succeeds in this attempt, it will eliminate one of the main elements of support that currently exists between the provincial party and unions. Interviews conducted with party officials demonstrated a unique logic for the proposed move. Party representatives were quick to point out their gratitude for campaign donations from unions, but argue that severing financial links between political parties, unions, and big business stands to hurt the Progressive Conservatives and Liberals far more than it would harm the New Democrats. The Alberta New Democrats have proven successful at raising money from a large number of individual small donations, displaying a similar pattern to the federal party (Boatright, 2009: 29), (Jansen and Young, 2009: 663). In the end, severing financial ties would hurt the party's finances, but the damage to the competition should corporate

donations be eliminated would be far greater. The move is motivated by rational political strategy calculation, and after some initial hesitation has been approved by labour in the province and adopted by both parties at the 2006 NDP convention (interviews with party and union leaders, May 26-29, 2008). What remains unclear is the potential impact severing financial links between party and union would have on the Alberta dynamic. The party seems to assume a "business as usual" perspective.

Interviews with party representatives revealed a more nuanced perception of the relationship with organized labour in the province than the party literature would suggest. In general, provincial party officials and leadership seem divided into two different viewpoints. One group was quick to point out recent positive trends in financial contributions, union candidate numbers and affiliation numbers. This group argues that organized labour represents an important strategic partner whose relationship needs to be cultivated in order for the party to succeed. The second group seems more pessimistic about the future of the relationship and holds the belief that the relationship will grow apart as the party regains popular support, even going so far as to attribute some of the weakness of the party to the lackadaisical attitude of organized labour in the province towards the party (interview with a party representative, April 17, 2008).

Both groups within the party hold the view that the relationship between the party and unions in Alberta has "languished badly" (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008). As discussed in Chapter 3 the agrarian socialist base of support for the CCF did not always view labour in the most favorable light, resulting is a rocky transition in

Alberta from CCF to NDP (Plawiuk, 1995). This being the case, some party leaders that were interviewed blamed the weak history of party and union in the province for the current state of the relationship. One representative went so far as to call the relationship stillborn (interview with a party leader, May 28, 2008).

The group within the party that holds a positive view of building up the relationship with organized labour can claim the support of the party's current leadership. Under the leadership of Brian Mason the party has assumed a more cooperative tone with organized labour. Mason is a member of the Edmonton local for the Amalgamated Transit Union, and has a history of activism for the labour movement. At the 2008 party convention Mason argued, "In my view, we need to get better at building affiliations to our party. This is how we strengthen our relationship with the broader left, and how we better work together"(NDP 2008 Convention). Under Mason, the party has a renewed program that encourages affiliation among union locals, and is encouraging union members to run for the party. These actions are based on strategic calculations and are intended to counterbalance the increase in union support for the other parties in Alberta and to provide a counterbalance to the natural advantage the PC party has from its vast network of corporate support. As one party representative commented, "union support can represent an equalizing force for us; they can't completely counterbalance the effect corporate support has for the Conservatives, but they can help us stay in the game" (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008).

As well, Mason characterizes the increased emphasis on relationship building with an overall strategy to counteract the growing influence of the non partisan union

movement. At the 2008 party convention, Mason stated: “I think the tendency towards non-partisanship on the left is causing harm. We need to focus on building an organization that has the capacity to elect MLAs. We need to concentrate on political change, not just raising issues. In a word, we need to focus on building the NDP” (NDP Convention, 2008). For Mason, the party should have a realistic view of its current political situation. The party leader encourages the NDP to adopt a strategy that provides a viable alternative to the right in Alberta, which in his view includes the other three major parties--the Liberals, PC, and Wild Rose Alliance.

The first group within the party, led by Mason, holds a positive and optimistic view of the union-party relationship. This group views the relationship between the party and unions as a continuation of an important historical trend that began with the metamorphosis from the CCF to the NDP. The relationship, according to this group of interviewees, is symbiotic, with labour supporting the party with donations of money and volunteer support, with the party providing a “voice” for unions in government. In this sense, the party leadership seems to hold the view that a rational exchange is possible in Alberta between unions and the party. The idea of NDP Legislature representatives providing a voice for labour was a recurring theme during interviews. The Alberta New Democratic leadership understands and is realistic about its weak position in the Legislature. The party holds the belief that the quality of their MLAs and access to media allows them a much larger voice than would be expected from a minor party. Because of their willingness to be advocates for labour, interviewees felt that the

weak legislature history should not be a decisive issue in the relationship (interview with a party representative, May 27, 2008).

Party leaders were quick to point out their willingness to lend support to issues brought to their attention by union supporters. Interviewees listed party support for policy change on offshore workers, construction site safety rules, twelve-year-old service workers, anti "scab" legislation, and anti CLAC policy as times when the NDP has taken up the labour cause in the Legislature. Another official pointed out the many times current and former MLAs lent their personal support during strikes by major unions. In particular the NDP MLAs spent time on picket lines, brought issues to debate in the Legislature and drew media attention to striking CEP union members during the 2005 strike against Telus, and again in 2006 with UCFW workers who went on strike for fair wages in Brooks. NDP MLAs have also taken the opportunity to promote union specific issues to the media, on the internet, in radio interviews and in editorials in Alberta papers (Martin, 2006). These combined efforts represent an important commodity that the party brings to exchange table with labour.

The direct interaction between unions and party leadership during important union events also acts to encourage union members to consider running for the party in elections. Party leadership explained this as another important element the exchange between unions and the party (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008). According to an interviewed official, the party can find it difficult to find candidates in ridings outside of Edmonton. Unions provide an important pool of potential candidates that already have a relationship with the party and a similar set of personal political values.

Several party officials were quick to point out that in the 2008 election over 40 per cent of NDP candidates had union affiliation, the highest total ever (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008). This claim can be corroborated with data in Appendix two which presents a summary of all NDP candidates in the 2008 election along with links the candidate have with organized labour. The data in Appendix two shows that 39 per cent of union candidates in the 2008 election came from union backgrounds or had clear links to organized labour.

Interviews conducted with party officials revealed that the party has noticed an increase in support from unions in Alberta over the last four years; they perceive this as a result of ongoing support from the party on important issues. As Mason stated at the 2008 convention, "I've worked hard over the last several years to strengthen our party's relationship with labour, and it's paid off". The increase in support can be measured by examining the change in campaign donations since the last election in 2004, as well as the recent affiliation of new union locals to the party. At the 2008 party convention Mason summarized the emerging trend: "Over half of our candidates in the last election were labour candidates. Union contributions tripled over the last election, and we achieved our first new labour affiliation in years – local 424 of the IBEW" (NDP convention 2008).

The increase in support claimed by party leadership can be analyzed by examining union donations to the party from 1993 to the present[6]. A moderate increase in monetary contributions during election cycles is present; however, it is not

[6] All data was sourced from Election Alberta financial disclosures reports and was adjusted for inflation to 2009

as dramatic as indicated by party leadership. Figure 5.2 indicates union donations over $375[7] did increase in 2008 by $10 196, representing an increasing from 32.37 per cent to 37.58 per cent of party finances from donations over $375. The total number of union donations increased for the 2008 election as well. In 2004, 27 unions made donations over $375; in 2008 this figure grew to 32. Finally, the average size of union donations grew. In 2004 the average donation over $375 from unions was $3396. In 2008 this average increased to $3420. Based on these figures, despite raising less money in the 2008 election cycle, the party was able to make marginal gains in financial links between party and union as expressed in overall donation amount, average donation and overall number of donations. The current level of financial support during election cycles represents a gradual climb up since the 1997-2001 era and has placed the party $1000 shy of its 1993 level of support.

It is important to note that in Alberta, there are currently only yearly caps of $15,000 annually, plus another $15,000 during election years for that govern individual as well as union/corporate donations to political parties. No restrictions on third party advertising during campaigns currently exist. Yet, in Alberta we do not find strong pattern of financial support during *non election* years. In the Jansen and Young (2009) analysis of party and union interaction before campaign finance reform at the federal level, the party-union relationship was described as an asymmetrical exchange, with unions providing money and volunteers, without the benefit of access to government

[7] Alberta election law requires parties to list all contributions from individuals or organizations over $375. Smaller donations are listed under a single category. These donations totaled $189 542in 2004 and $172 173 in 2008. Although these are significant monetary figures, party officials indicated in interviews that the category was made up of individual donations and not corporate or union contributions.

and decision making. From 1975-2002 Unions contributed an average of 18.1% of the non election year federal budget for the NDP, (Jansen and Young, 2009: 674). The research in this thesis demonstrates a similar trend in Alberta, but with lower levels of overall support. During non election cycles from 2004 to 2008, union donations only made up a tiny percentage of party funds, averaging 5.6% of donations over a 5 year period (Elections Alberta). In an environment with fewer restrictions on campaign finance, unions in Alberta have been less supportive on average than their federal counter parts.

Appendix 4 lists all donations by unions to the Alberta NDP during campaign cycles and for yearly operations since 1993. Summary data from Appendix 4, for election years, and yearly operational budgets is presented in Figures 5.5 and 5.6. The Tables present the largest contributions by organizations. Union financial support for the party for yearly operating budgets has been inconsistent. The party's current yearly totals lag behind the 1993 totals by well over $17 000. Union support for the party is far less pronounced for yearly budgets never exceeding $30 000, and hovering under $5000 during non election years. Fig 5.5 demonstrates yearly budget financial data for the party from unions. A clear level of support during election years is evident; however, the totals are modest at best.

Fig 5.4 Donations by Source over $375 for Election Years 1993-2008 ANDP in Constant 2009 Dollars (Source: Elections Alberta)

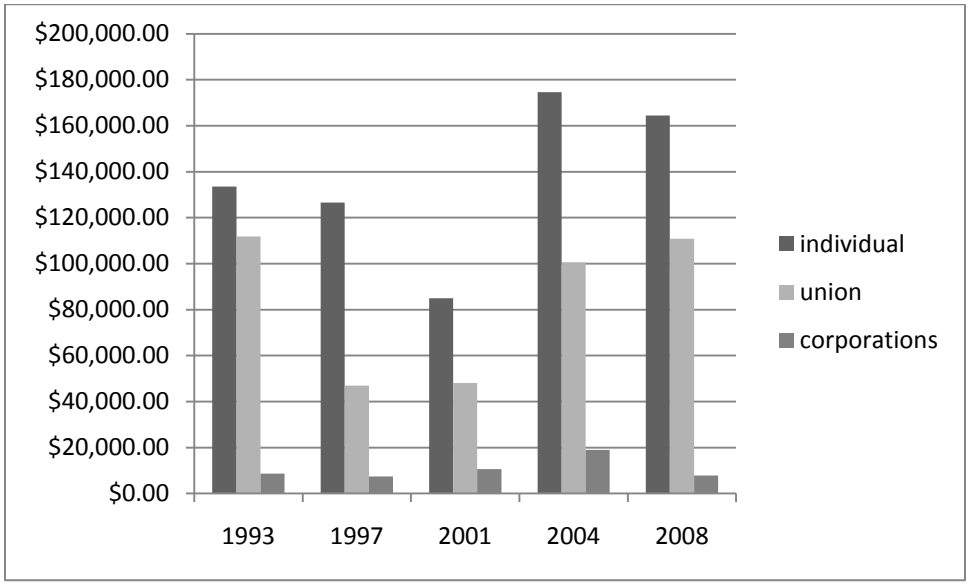


Fig 5.5 Union Donations to NDP for Yearly Operational Budgets, 1993-2008 in Constant 2009 Dollars (Source: Elections Alberta)

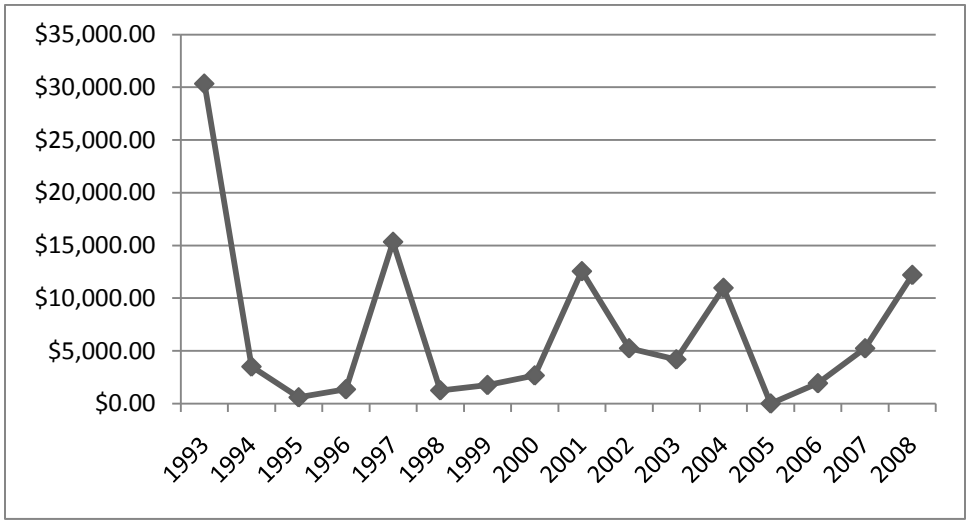


Figure 5.6 Donations from Selected Unions and Labour Organizations for Campaign Budgets 1993-2008 (Source: Elections Alberta)

Organization	Total Donations 1993-2008
AFL	$12,811.00
AUPE	$14,522.00
ATU	$10,500.00
CEP	$43,700.00
CAW	$19,750.00
CUPE	$24,800.00
Carpenters Union 1325	$19,400.00
Iron Workers	$11,000.00
IBEW 424	$18,250.00
Plumbers and Pipefitters 488	$24,750.00
UFCW	$21,250.00
USW	$16,500.00

Figure 5.7 Donations from Selected Unions and Labour Organizations for Yearly Operational Budgets 1993-2008 (Source: Elections Alberta)

Organization	Total Donations 1993-2008
ABTC	$22,590.00
CEP	$33,690.00
CUPE	$14,245.00
IBEW 424	$4,030.00
Plumbers and Pipefitters488	$3,830.00
UFCW	$16,760.00
USW	$40,425.00

The party leadership points to the increase in union affiliation as evidence for the improving relationship between the NDP and unions in Alberta, and the vibrancy of the exchange mentality. The total number of affiliated union members has grown by over 5000 since 2006 (NDP Convention, 2008). To date only Alberta CUPE and steelworker locals were formally affiliated with the party, a result of national union policy rather than local initiative. In reality, the growth in affiliated membership is a result of the affiliation of two large locals, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 424, as well as United Food and Commercial Workers local 401. The addition of IBEW 424 in particular provides what party leadership hopes will be a visible cue to other union locals about the benefits to formal affiliation to the party (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008).

The Alberta New Democrats have been successful to a limited degree at re-building the relationship that existed between the party and unions during the peak electoral performance of the party from 1986-1993. As of the 2008 election, the party can point to modest increase in financial donations, a significant number of union candidates, and a rise in affiliated unions locals and members. The increased effort by the party to promote traditional links between party and union is a strategic move to encourage unions to view the party as the best way to protect their interests from current government policy (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008).

The second group in the Alberta NDP party movement views the increased efforts by the party leadership at rebuilding the relationship with organized labour with

hesitancy. This second group within the party is forward focused, believing that attracting voters who are disenfranchised with the majority tendency of the Alberta system should be the party's top priority. Interviews with party representatives revealed that some in the leadership ranks of the Alberta NDP view organized labour as a stable "basement of support." These interviewees felt that the party would regain the second party position in the province eventually, at this point the links with labour could become more "expendable" (interviews with a party officials, May 22-29, 2008). Several interviews with party representatives revealed that this hesitancy towards increasing formal links with organized labour is based on a perception of scarce party resources. Interviewees indicated the party has a stable base level of union support, and that committing resources to growing the relationship may at best produce marginal results.

This second grouping in the party is instead focused on re-connecting with grassroots, non union support in Alberta. In an analysis of the 2008 election, a party official argued that over-emphasis on generating labour support produced a situation where the party was talking to itself and not focusing on connecting with new voters. The attempts to generate labour support by adjusting campaign strategies to attract union votes resulted in a healthy dialogue between progressive elements in the province, but failed to speak to the general public (interview with a party official, April 17, 2008). This scenario is reminiscent of the parties past during the final days of the CCF. While new party clubs sprang up, connected with new voters and highlighted new

policy positions, the old guard CCF supporters stubbornly maintained an agrarian socialist perspective.

Critics within the party who disagree with the continued favoring of the labour movement also offered a geographic argument for reallocating resources away from party-union projects. The current base of support for the party is concentrated in Edmonton. Even during the peak electoral performance of the party from 1986-1993 only 5 of the 32 seats won by the party were in non urban ridings. In the 2008 election the party's Edmonton popular vote share was 18 per cent, 7 per cent greater than any other region. As well, in the 2008 election the party was only able to place second in a single riding outside of Edmonton (Elections Alberta, 2008). That year also saw the party surrender two legislature seats from Edmonton ridings on slim margins. In Beverly-Clearview, Ray Martin lost by 300 votes, and in Calder, David Eggen was only 204 votes short.

The Alberta New Democrats have always suffered from the distortional effects of Alberta SMP electoral system (see chapters 3 and 4). The strategy of devoting resources to a geographically dispersed union population that resides in many ridings where the NDP is far from competitive "plays to our historic weakness" according to one interviewed party representative (interview, May 22, 2008). The simplest strategy for immediate elections should focus on winning ridings where the party is competitive. These urban Edmonton ridings respond to the progressive policy position of the party much more than to labour issue advocacy.

The argument is made by some within the party that overemphasis on union-party relations comes at the expense of relationships with other progressive movements and organizations within the province. Several party representatives commented on a growing division between those concerned with progressive social and environmental policy and union supporters in the party (interview, April 17, 2008). Most recently this trend has been expressed by the distancing of the party and the Sierra Club prairie chapter. In an Edmonton newspaper interview the president of local Sierra Club, Lindsay Telfer commented that the group enjoyed a strong relationship with former NDP MLA David Eggen, but not with the current leadership. Tefler states:

> Brian Mason has never met with us or done any significant outreach to us. The Sierra Club has never been contacted by Rachel Notley or her people either. We now have a better relationship with the Liberals than we do the NDP, and that is really sad, seeing as the NDP is the party that is supposed to be connected to social movements. (Phillips, 2008).

The party's attempts to strengthen its relationship with unions also place strains on the already difficult relationship between environmental policy advocates within the party and union support. The central issues for these two groups are policy positions on the development of the Alberta oil sands (interview with party official, April 17, 2008). Unions benefit from the development cycle in the oil sands, while environmentally concerned elements in the party favor a moratorium on further development. The current leadership of the party has come under criticism by some elements within the party over a softening of policy on the environment and the oil sands. In particular, in the most recent election, the party abandoned its previous position that called for a hard cap on $C0^2$ emissions. The differing views on development of the provinces fossil

fuel resources have clashed over the issue of the nuclear power in the Athabasca region as well. The development of nuclear power in province would represent a significant amount of work for many unionized sectors. Environmentally concerned party supporters oppose the project citing environmental impact and hazardous waste disposal concerns.

Union Perceptions of Links with the Party

Reducing down the plurality of opinions on the NDP that exist in the Alberta labour movement was a difficult task. Often during interviews divergent views were expressed by leadership in the same union or labour organization. This demonstrates the fractured nature and lack of coherency inherent to the Alberta labour context. Despite the variety of represented industries, interests and policy preferences, some commonalties emerged during interviews. Most union leaders that were interviewed for the project echoed the party analysis and agree that the relationship between party and labour is weaker than it was in the past. In nearly all interviews union representatives pointed out the weak position the party has occupied in the Legislature since 1993. Most union leaders were aware of the party efforts to advocate labour issues in the Legislature; however the majority of union leaders were pessimistic about the effectiveness of the party's ability given its modest legislature presence (interviews with leadership, May 25 to October 29, 2008).

The majority of union leaders that were interviewed explained that organized labour in the province operates in a difficult environment; often, union leaders explained their situation as a "state of siege." They cite the 1993 election win by Ralph

Klein as the starting point for an overt offensive on the rights of unions and unionized workers in the province (interview with a union leader, Oct 29, 2008). During the Klein era, public sector unions were targeted with wage roll backs and other punitive government action as part of "Klein Revolution" aimed at reducing the government deficit by curbing spending on social programs and Medicare. Large public unions reacted with a series of legal and illegal strike actions, along with public awareness campaigns held in conjunction with social awareness including The Friends of Medicare. The era after 1993 has been marked by a new era of antagonism between unions and government.

The recent boom cycle in the Alberta economy has had mixed results for organized labour in the province. The building boom in commercial and residential projects has created a strong demand for labour in sectors that are represented by unions (AFL, 2008). However, this demand for skilled labour has been used by government and large corporations as a tool against unions in the province. Many union leaders pointed out the government strategy of promoting temporary foreign workers (TFW) as a way of dealing with perceived skilled labour shortages in the province during the recent boom cycle. Large corporations argue that there are insufficient numbers of skilled workers in many fields and are relying more and more on non union TFWs. These workers perform the same job as their domestic unionized counterparts but at a lower total labour cost. The strategy has been capitalized on by companies like Canadian Natural Resources Limited which has used labour sub contracts that use TFWs even when domestic skilled labour was available (AFL, 2008). Union

leaders also charge that the provincial government maintains legal loop holes that make it easy for companies to use management supported “dummy unions” or associations. As well, the provincial government via the Alberta Labour Board granted formal union status to CLAC, whose locals are generally more cost effective and less likely to strike than its conventional union counterparts (AFL, 2008). Union leaders argue that provincial government support for CLAC and TFW’s are part of an overall strategy aimed at reducing the strength of unions in the province.

Union leaders also point to recent amendments to the Alberta labour code in 2008, found in Bill 26 which restricted unionized workers’ rights and pushed the provincial labour code further behind the national standard as further evidence of the hostile environment facing organized labour in the province. Bill 26 targeted three sectors of unionized workers. In the construction sector, employees who have worked for a construction company for less than 30 days are now prohibited from participating in a certification vote. The bill also gives 90 days following the vote for workers to rescind their certification vote. Bill 26 also eliminated the ability of ambulance workers to strike and forced all ambulance drivers into binding arbitration in the event of conflict over employment contract. Finally, Bill 26 eliminated the use of market enhancement recovery funds (MERFs). MERFs were a tool used by employers and unions to ensure the competitiveness of union bids on construction contacts (interview with an AFL representative, May 28, 2008). Bill 26 represents the first amendment to the provincial labour code in over 20 years. The bill was tabled and passed in three days, right before the summer Legislature break. The swift passage eliminated any public debate or

enquiry in the bill, and represents another attack on the rights of union in the province by the provincial government. As well, the swift passage of the bill reinforced the perception that the NDP is unable to protect unions from Conservative policy (interview with a union leader, May 22, 2008). Conservative policy that contains a restriction for farm worker from collective bargaining is an ongoing example of the hostile position towards organized labour by Alberta's government. As well, the legislation that designated all post secondary students as employees of the provincial government effectively eliminating their ability to sue post secondary institutions in the event of negligence, is another cited example of the government's attitude towards workers rights.

This hostility from the provincial government towards labour placed into the context of a numerically small labour community in Alberta places provincial unions in a difficult position. The constant "state of siege" has also taken a toll on solidarity within the labour community. The largest union in the province, AUPE and the largest union in Canada, CUPE have been engaged in a bitter rivalry for the last ten years. The AUPE under the leadership of Dan MacLennan actively raided CUPE locals for members (Hampshire, 2005). Interviews with CUPE leadership revealed that the union leadership perceived the raiding as a bi-product of the difficult environment labour faces in Alberta. CUPE leaders viewed AUPE's raiding as a rational response to provincial government policy. As one leader put it, "organizing new locals in Alberta has been made nearly impossible by the provincial government; AUPE was doing the next best thing to increase their numbers" (interview, Oct 29, 2008). AUPE leadership claims that

CUPE locals approached their leadership for better representation, and are motivated by wanting to provide the best representation for unionized labour in the difficult environment in Alberta (interview with a union leader, Oct 24, 2008).

These difficulties that have faced organized labour since 1993 have resulted in the three part split explained in the beginning of this chapter. Interviews with labour leaders revealed the emergence of two different strategies among politically engaged unions. The first strategy is predicated on increased support for the Alberta New Democratic party. Interviews with union leaders representing organizations with long history of support for the party most commonly argued this view. These unions seem to ignore the broken exchange, or accept the party belief that the lack of legislature presents can be offset by the quality, and activity level of the parties two MLA's. Both affiliate and non affiliated union leaders argue that "the party represents the progressive voice for labour in the political sphere; they lobby what we ask them to" (interview with a union leader, May 25, 2008). In this strategy the effectiveness of the party seems to be irrelevant. Interviewed union leaders indicated a perception of utility in the efforts of the party to lobby labour issues, buttressed by a share ideological view. When asked about the ineffectiveness of the NDP at protecting labour from government policy one leader explained that the movement faced "a constant ebb and flow in the effectiveness of lobbying labour interests to the provincial government, when government seems less receptive, it is all the more important to work for progressive policy with our partners in the party" (interview with a union leader, May 28, 2008). Leadership from this group of unions were quick to cite examples of times when the

party brought direct attention to specific issues of concern for unions, the most recent being temporary foreign workers in the oil patch (interview with a union leader, May 24, 2008). The TFW issue provides a good example of the combination of shared world view and perception of exchange that drives loyal unions in the province. Union leadership seems satisfied that their material support is buying party action despite the lack of tangible reward in government policy. One union leader explained the TFW issue campaign as a situation where the party and the unions were "partners in moral struggle" (interview with a union leader, May 24th, 2008). This pattern of a somewhat asymmetrical exchange buttressed by a shared ideological view is common among supportive unions in the province.

Loyal unions return support from the party in several ways. Unions lobby their membership to volunteer during elections and highlight ANDP policy during elections. This cooperative approach can be traced through union communications with membership via newsletters and through campaign issue communication. For example, UFCW 401 makes regular favorable references to the party in its publication *Directions.* Other unions like CUPE and IBEW list the party as a strategic partner on union websites. The Steelworkers promote an internal program that selects and trains union members for campaign work for the party (Boatright, 2009: 30).

Support for the party also comes from shared personnel. The project interviewed two employees of the party that held day jobs in unionized environments. These employees played an important role in linking union PACs with party fundraising and membership drives. Interviews with party officials revealed that CEP Edmonton

locals shared several personnel linkages with NDP campaign staff; these relationships strengthened the bond between the party and union during the Telus strikes three years ago (interview, May 26, 2008).

Within the divided and difficult environment in the province, many labour leaders in Alberta are also developing a second strategy and are beginning to look for a "new way forward". These unions and their leadership are made up of the second, larger group in the Alberta labour movement that has an increasingly strong non partisan attitude (interview with a union leader, May 22, 2008). The leadership in this group of unions is critical of the decision of some unions to increase levels of support for the party. One interviewee characterized the actions of newly affiliated IBEW 424 in particular as a "circling the wagons" mentality, indicating that the party was in serious decline and looking for any kind of support, the interviewee argued that the strategy lacked "forward focus" (interview with a union leader, Sept 24, 2008). Many union leaders expressed skepticism over the benefits of renewed levels of support for the party. The potential for unions to be influenced by new affiliations to the party appears to be constrained by divided opinion over the motives of new affiliates for joining the party. One union leader pointed out that the provincial secretary of the Alberta New Democrats and a member of IBEW 424's leadership were married. Another union leader pointed out that the relationship was based on a single issue (TFWS) and that if the Liberals seemed to be a viable successor to the PCs in the future and could address union concerns over TFW's, the relationship would fall apart (interview with a union leader, May 22, 2008).

Leadership in this group held a negative view of the potential of the NDP to regain its 1986-1993 legislature levels and political influence. Interviewees likened the party to the Titanic in one instance, stating that "going down with the ship may not be the best way of representing your membership" (interview with a union representative, May 22, 2008). Proponents of a new approach to union politics in Alberta explained union and party linkages historically in Alberta as an asymmetrical relationship. In this account, the labour movement has acted as a base of support for decades, providing money, votes and volunteers. In return labour would supposedly benefit from a sympathetic NDP government. One union representative referred to this exchange model as the "cookie cutter approach in Canada," explaining that the labour movement at the federal level in Canada "has suffered the same lack of return on investment" (interview with a union leader, Oct 29, 2008).

The decision to support the NDP seems to be an increasingly difficult commitment for labour in the province. As one labour leader explained "the dichotomy facing labour is whether labour should be the organizing arm for the NDP, or whether labour should focus on effective policy change that affects our membership" (interview with a union leader, Oct 29, 2008). Another emerging tension that was referenced by several interviews was the lack of interest in partisan politics by individual membership. Several union leaders explained that their membership preferred their leadership to work in a way that maximized the gains for individual members, in place of blanket support for a single party. This assessment was collaborated with interview data with rank and file union members. Few of these interviewed union members were dedicated

supporters of any party. Instead, concern for individual issues seemed to be the primary focus (interviews with union leaders, May 23 and Oct. 29, 2008).

The issue facing union leadership in the province is how to respond to both the pressure from government and business, member apathy and the weak performance of the party. As a result, the priority for many labour leaders has become uniting the "house of labour" in Alberta against the policy position of the provincial government, with the hopes of re-engaging membership by providing some tangible results (interviews with a union leader, May 27 and Oct. 29, 2008). A union leader explained that the last three elections have been "disappointing from the perspective of organized labour." According to this leader, "quietly over the last ten to twelve years labour leaders in the province have begun to ask some serious questions about labour's approach to politics" (interviews, Oct 24, 2008). Interviews with leadership from a variety of factions within the labour movement revealed a desire to work from within the labour community itself in place of co-ordination with the NDP as a future political strategy (interviews, May 27 to Oct. 29, 2008).

A New Strategy for Organized Labour: Albertans for Change, and Uniting the Left

Against a backdrop of continued debate both within the party and the labour movement over how best to develop an effective strategy of cooperation in the increasingly difficult Alberta polity a series of events surrounding the 2008 election cycle unfolded that will have lasting implications for the future of the relationship. Interviews with leaders from several unions in Alberta revealed that the movement had begun to consider a different approach following the disappointing results of the 2004 election,

citing the broken exchange present in Alberta and the continued inability of the party to protect unions from undesirable government policy (interview with a union leader, May 25th, 2008). The manifestation of this new strategy was the Albertans for Change campaign (AFC), and the "unite the left" movement.

The AFC campaign represented a coming together of the diverse interests in the Alberta labour movement. The AUPE, which is multi partisan and not affiliated, partnered with the ABTC and AFL on a new campaign strategy for the 2008 election. The campaign was divided into two phases. The first featured prime time television ads that criticized the Stelmach government for having no plan on healthcare and the economy. The second phase was made up of 130 000 direct mailed pamphlets that paralleled the TV ads. The actual cost of the campaign was never released to the public, but several interviewed union and party officials estimated the total cost at over one million dollars (interview with union leaders April 17th-May 26th, 2008). Direct funding by AUPE for the second phase of the ad campaign alone was more than $300 000 (AUPE AGM minutes).

The campaign was non partisan and had no party branding and at no point consulted the Alberta New Democrats. Contrary to conventional union sponsored third party campaign advertising patterned after the federal union-party relationship the party was not offered any opportunity for policy tie in. Interviews with party officials revealed that many in the party learned about the campaign for the first time while watching TV at home (interview, May 26, 2008). AFC was of particular concern to the party when the material costs of the campaign are compared with the donations made

by labour to the NDP campaign. Total union donations to the party were only $109 450, barely one-tenth of the estimated cost of the AFC campaign.

By far the greatest concern within the party was the willingness of an affiliated organization (AFL) to keep the campaign secret from the party. Unions frequently run parallel add campaigns at the federal level and in other provinces. Alberta is unique as the union sponsored ad campaign was done without consulting the party and was not part of overall strategy for the election generated by both unions and the party. Union leadership that was willing to comment on AFC explained the rational for the campaign in the following terms. First, AFC represented an important "coming together" of the diverse elements of the labour community in Alberta. Union leadership explained that uniting the various elements of the Alberta labour movement behind a single set of agreed upon goals as an important step for the provinces unions. Secondly, union leadership explained that despite the lack of tangible impact of the campaign (the Conservatives won an even larger majority) AFC represented an important test of a new style of political engagement that would be geared at harnessing the collective resources of the labour community to pressure for specific policy gains. Union leadership argued that this represented a more efficient way of promoting labour interest in the province (interview with union leaders, May 24-Oct 25th, 2008).

AFC had a secondary effect of increasing tension between the party and the supportive elements in the labour movement of the campaign. The tension between AFL and the party was increased after the election through a series of exchanges between the party leader Brian Mason and AFL leader Gil McGowan at the party convention. In

his opening address, Mason condemned the non-partisan approach of AFL and denounced the AFC campaign (Mason, 2008). The AFL is a formally affiliated member of the party and therefore has the right to introduce binding motions for membership voting at party conventions. McGowan used this ability to introduce a motion that would unite the Alberta New Democrats, the Green Party and the Alberta Liberals into one umbrella left-of-center party, effectively dissolving the party from the inside in the short term, and supplanting the current party leadership. The plan called for the separate members of the coalition to agree not to run candidates against each other in competitive ridings and attempt to divide up the various seats in the legislature. The final aim of the motion was to win power for the coalition and enact proportional representation through a democratic vote in the Legislature or public referendum. Once this was achieved, the coalition would be dissolved and the parties would compete separately again in a more competitive and equal environment (Resolution 01, 2008 Alberta NDP convention).

The resolution was defeated in a floor vote and dismissed by party leadership as ill-advised. However, the move by a formally affiliated member of the party and coordinating body for organized labour in the province was telling. Critics of the motives of AFL within the party after the AFC campaign saw the move as further evidence that much of organized labour in the province was not truly committed to the party. Some within the party blamed the move by AFL on the ongoing poor relationship between Mason and McGowan (interview with a party official, May 26, 2008). Union leadership that were supportive of the "unite the left" attempt at the party convention

explained the action as part of the “new approach” of labour in the province. The perception among these union leaders was that the Conservative government represented the greatest threat to union interests, and that pushing the party out of government should be the number one goal for the movement over the next four years. Dissolving the NDP to achieve this goal was acceptable for these union leaders as the benefits to membership outweighed the negatives of losing the party (interviews with union leaders, September 10-October 25th, 2008).

The tension between elements of the labour movement and the party spilled over into the media following the 2008 election campaign and party convention over the issues of campaign finance reform. As stated previously, NDP provincial policy has called for an end to donations from unions and corporations. The party expanded this policy to include a moratorium on third party campaign spending, a direct rebuttal to the AFC campaign. This places the provincial New Democrats in the interesting position of supporting Conservative policy aimed at curtailing labour’s ability to spend unlimited amounts of money in election campaigns. In interviews in the *Calgary Herald* and *Edmonton Journal*, Mason argued that the AFC campaign worked against the party and represented a threat the democratic process in Alberta (McLean, 2008). Mason argues, “The main conversation that took place in the election was not between the opposition parties and the government; it was between Albertans for Change and the government, and I think that had a serious impact on the election" (McLean, 2008).

Support by the party for the elimination for third party advertising is surprising. Even in the most recent election, a rhetorical overlap clearly existed between some

third party advertising created by unions and party policy. The IBEW, for example, ran an ad campaign on TV and radio criticizing the government support of temporary foreign workers and unsafe working conditions for the electrical trades in the province. The ads did not mention any party but fit neatly in with NDP campaign literature. At the federal level both the Steelworkers and UFCW have run supportive ad campaigns with clear links to NDP policy in the past (Boatright, 2009: 31; Jansen and Young, 2005: 667). Large scale third party advertising at the federal level designed to present election issues has been done for the most part with consultation with the party. The CLC, for example, spent over $400 000 in the last federal election on a "Labour Issues" campaign that had no party branding, but was still designed with the party's full knowledge and input (Boatright, 2009: 28). The move by AFL, AUPE and ABTC to devote millions of dollars to a third party labour issue campaign without consultation with the party at all represents a clear emerging rift in the relationship between the two political entities.

The attempt at uniting the provincial Liberals, Greens and the NDP during the 2008 convention, the AFC campaign and the subsequent media spat can be understood as a call to action by elements in the Alberta labour movement who are considering new approaches to politics in Alberta. As one labour leader explained "I think you have to look at what Gill did in a more nuanced way. Of course the party did not react positively to the move. What the party has to understand is that we have been doing the same thing for over 40 years now; I think it's obvious that it's time for a change" (interview, Oct 29, 2008).

Conclusion

Research on conducted on the Alberta NDP and the provinces labour movement for this thesis suggest some interesting features and emerging trends in the relationship. The previous chapters in this thesis established the unique and difficult nature of the Alberta context for both party and unions, the long term effects of this context is producing some lasting effects. First, research indicates that despite the fractured nature of the labour movement in the province, unions that are politically engaged align along one of two strategies. Unions that are affiliated or loyal to the party are responding to the ongoing weakness of the party by re-enforcing the long term strategy used in Alberta. This study has labeled this the asymmetrical exchange; unions provide resources and attempt to lobby their membership to support the party. In exchange the party provides a voice for labour concerns in the legislature, and used the media access of Legislature members to lobby union issues. The exchange is asymmetrical as the donations of money and resources by unions have seldom been offset with real changes in government policy. This chapter has argued that the political and economic reality in Alberta has become more difficult since 1993. Unions that support the party justifies this reality by arguing that the party is an important partner against the difficult conditions in Alberta, that both parties are "fighting the good fight" (interview with a union leader, May 28, 2008).

Returning to the theoretical discussion presented earlier in this chapter this behavior by unions and the party represents an interesting hybrid of the rational choice and ideological affinity explanations. An exchange of sorts is present, union contribute resources while the party provides access and support but not policy. The shortcomings of the relationship are overlooked because of the importance of a shared world view and value set. The approach is proving somewhat effective for the party, research for the this thesis has demonstrated a modest increase in the financial relationship between unions and the party, a strong presents of union members among NDP candidates in the most recent election and a sizeable increase in the number of affiliated union members to the party.

In contrast to this phenomenon is the emergence of a non partisan style of political engagement by unions without strong ties to the party. The ongoing weak Legislature position of the party was implicated as the primary driver for this new strategy in the research presented in this thesis. The 2008 election cycle bore witness to a substantial expression a "union only" style political engagement, in the form of the Albertans for Change campaign. Further evidence of decline of support for the party by this group of unions was manifested in the attempt to "unite the left" at the 2008 NDP party convention. These new developments in the relationship between the party and some unions in the province highlight one of the principal elements of the rational choice theoretical model. If either side of the exchange is unable to hold up the bargain the logic for cooperation is eliminated and eventually the relationship will sour.

In both cases research presented in this chapter points to the importance of the union perception of the exchange that occurs between the party and unions. Unions that are loyal to the party perceive the lapse in the exchange as a result of the difficult conditions in the province, and adjust their expectations. Unions that are less understanding are pushing for a formal divorce from the party in favor of a unified labour movement with political engagement geared towards benefiting individual members.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The central aim of this thesis was to analyze the difficult relationship that exists between the NDP and organized labour in Alberta, and to examine why the two entities continue to co-operate in such a difficult environment. After an analysis of the historical and contemporary context of the relationship it is clear that no single parsimonious explanation is forthcoming. Research has revealed a complex relationship, which faces strains internally and externally, and a general lack of cohesiveness in the labour movement itself. We can, however, draw a series of conclusion about the interaction between the Alberta NDP and their links to organized labour that may shed light on what the future holds for party-union interaction in the province.

The first conclusion is the ongoing importance of the rational exchange theoretical model to the understanding of the Alberta union and party relationship. The review presented in this thesis has argued that the conditions necessary for the bargain that exists in the political economy argument are simply not present in Alberta. The province has a very low union density, while the labour movement is divided into competing federations. Research has also shown significant tension between elites in the relationship that act to push unions away from the party. The Alberta economy, with its dependency on oil and gas, and tertiary service jobs does not show any future potential for strong growth in union influence. Alberta is also home to the longest standing center-right government in Canada with a long standing tradition of business friendly policy, and little to no history of corporatist style behavior.

Interviews with union leadership revealed an ongoing concern over the legislature presents of the NDP in Alberta and the inability of the party to protect the labour movement. This structural feature of Alberta politics seems to drive union calculation on how to interact with the party more than anything else. In some cases, unions have chosen to remain loyal to the party and to encourage other members of the movement to affiliate or support the party. The party argues that the ongoing weak legislature position is offset by the ability and willingness of Legislature members to bring union issues to debate and to the media. Loyal unions seem to accept this explanation, and see utility in financial and organization support for the party in exchange for "a voice in the legislature" (interview with a party representative, May 26th, 2008).

The relationship between these loyal unions and the party represents a hybrid of the rational exchange and the shared ideological position theories. This study has labeled this phenomenon an asymmetrical exchange. Unions remain loyal to the party, donate money, volunteer support, run supportive parallel add campaigns, and encourage members to run for the party. In exchange, the party offers a voice for unions in the political sphere, but not policy guarantees. The party maintains the loyalty of some unions despite the irrationality of the exchange by relying on a perception of a shared world view. Loyal unions accept this logic citing the difficult nature of the Alberta context and the importance of having partners that "fight the good fight" (interview with a union leader, May 28th, 2008).

This reliance on ideological affinity has obvious limits in the context of Alberta. The majority of unions that were interviewed explained a preference for representing the needs of their respective membership even at the expense of partisan ties to the NDP. Leaders from these unions referenced the inability of the party to protect the labour movement from unfriendly government policy as the most important factor in deciding how to engage in the political sphere. This demonstrates a practical example of an important facet of the rational choice theory; when one party in an exchange is unable to provide the desired commodity, the relationship will break down. The irrationality of the exchange, and subsequent decision by some unions and labour federations in the province to pursue a new strategy for political engagement is evidence of this. In particular, the 2008 election campaign saw a major third party advertising campaign by elements of the labour movement in Alberta, aimed at toppling the government without the consultation or support of the NDP. This political strategy was complimented by a labour driven attempt at "uniting the left" by dissolving the NDP from within at the party's 2008 convention.

These efforts by the AFL, ABTC and other elements in the labour community were ultimately unsuccessful, the party voted down the "unite the left" motion at the convention and the Conservatives won a strong majority in the 2008 election. The lasting importance of the events is found in their expression of a new strategy in the Alberta labour movement aimed at healing old divisions and uniting disparate parts of the community without any involvement with the NDP.

The research in this thesis also reinforces our understanding of one of the more obvious characteristics of Alberta politics: overwhelming single-party majorities. Building on McCormick's thesis presented in chapter 4, research in this thesis has shown that while the labour movement is not strong enough to push the NDP into power, it does have the numbers and resources to keep the party alive. Interviews and financial data presented in chapters 4 and 5 reveal that after the disastrous 1993 election for the NDP the labour movement was instrumental as a life support role for the party. In practical terms, this has resulted in the party maintaining a small foothold of between two and four seats in the Legislature concentrated solely in Edmonton, with around 10% of the popular vote. This small percentage of popular vote is critical when considering some of the close margins at the riding level in the 2004 and 2008 elections, where the Liberal party placed second to the Progressive Conservatives and may have fallen victims of opposition vote splitting. In effect, the labour intervention after the 1993 election results may have hurt the prospects for a change in government. The continued and reduced presence of the NDP in the provinces politics acts to fragment opposition vote, the 2008 election saw the Tories gain considerable legislative presences, in part by capitalizing on the increasingly fragmented opposition.

Research in this study has also highlighted the continued importance of federalism to the study of Canadian politics. In our review of the partisan tendencies of Alberta's unions, the study revealed that many large national unions support the party due to their Canada wide policies. This study revealed a long history of financial support by the locals of large national unions including CUPE, CEP, and UFCW despite the lack of

tangible rewards for the provincial arms of the unions. Inversely, the drive for an independent and unified Alberta labour movement has been supported primarily by provincially based unions. The AFL with support from AUPE were major financial backers of the non-partisan AFC ad campaigns. Leadership from the AFL in particular explained their actions during the 2008 election cycle as part of an overall strategy to develop an Alberta specific, new way forward. The simple continued presence of the provincial NDP despite decades of poor electoral performance demonstrates the strong influence federalism can have on provincial politics.

Finally, this thesis may have provided some insight into what the future holds for the party-union relationship. 2008 saw Alberta enter into another economic downturn as oil and gas prices depressed in response to a global downturn in demand. Traditionally, these cyclical downturns favor opposition parties; unfortunately for the Alberta NDP the effects of the recession may have subsided before the next scheduled election in 2012. The legacy of the downturn however will linger on into the next decade, as was the case in the 1990s. The current rash of public spending and the accumulating public debt should result in a new emphasis on cost cutting by the provincial government as the provincial economy recovers. If the pattern of the 1990s holds this should result in a difficult environment for public sector unions in the province as the government decreases public spending in response to debt load. This set of events could exasperate the already tense relationship between unions and the NDP in Alberta that this project has presented. If the party continues to be unable to protect unions from government policy, the pattern of independent action seen in the

2008 election may continue, resulting in long term damage to the existing weakened power dynamic.

Appendix 1: Sample Questionnaires

Semi Structured Interview Questionnaire Labour Component:

1. Does your organization formally co-operate with the NDP in Alberta?
2. How would you characterize your organization's interaction with the NDP in Alberta at the provincial and national level?
3. Can you comment on the past relationship between your organization and the NDP?
4. How important is this relationship to the future of your organization? Would you characterize the relationship as healthy and growing, in a holding pattern, or in gradual decline?
5. What are some of the benefits your organization has enjoyed from the relationship with the NDP?
6. Why is it important for organized labour to participate in the political process?
7. Is supporting a single party an important part of this political activity?
8. How does your organization interact with individual members who have questions about Alberta's political movement?
9. What benefits do you feel the NDP enjoys from the ongoing relationship with your organization?

Semi Structured Interview Questionnaire NDP Component

1. How important is labour to the success of the NDP in Alberta?
2. What do unions contribute to the party?
3. How would you characterize the relationship between the party and labour in Alberta? Is the relationship strong and growing, in a holding pattern, or in gradual decline?
4. How would you describe the benefits of the relationship between organized labour and the party?
5. How important is it to have more union locals affiliate with the party?
6. Should more locals be encouraged to join?
7. What is the best way to approach this?
8. Are there any impacts positive or negative to an association with labour in the eyes of the average non labour voter in your opinion?
9. Given the difficult political climate in Alberta what do you feel organized labour gains from the ongoing relationship with the party?

Appendix 2: Summary Table of Union Patterns of Support for the NDP

Union		Size	# of Locals	Loyal to NDP	Non Partisan/Non Affiliated	Explanation
Alberta Federation of Labour Unions						
United Nurses of Alberta	*UNA*	24000	1		x	Non partisan tradition in party constitution
United Food and Commercial Workers	*UFCW*	21000	6	x		History of financial contributions and volunteer support, formally affiliated with the party
Canadian Union of Public Employees	*CUPE*	20000	24	x		Affiliated with party, strong financial links
Health and Sciences Association of Alberta	*HSAA*	1500	1		x	Non partisan tradition in party constitution
Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Union of Canada	*CEP*	10000	29			Strong financial relationship

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	*IBEW*	10000	4	x		Some recent affiliations with party, strong financial support for party
Public Service Alliance of Canada	*PSAC*	7000	42		x	Non partisan tradition in party constitution
United Steelworkers	*USW*	5000	12	x		Long history of support for federal, and provincial party, some locals affiliated with the party
Canadian Union of Postal Workers	*CUPW*	4500	11		x	Non partisan tradition in party constitution
Telecommunications Workers Union	*TWU*	4500	1	x		Strong relationship build after party support during Telus strike
Canadian Auto Workers	*CAW*	4000	18		x	Party leadership encourages strategic voting. Despite a strong history of financial support for the party

Amalgamated Transit Union	*ATU*	3000	3	x		Party leader is a member of this Union, strong financial support after election of Mason to leadership
International Association of Machinist and Aerospace Workers	*IAM*	3000	6		x	Weak financial support
International Association of Fire Fighters	*IAFF*	1700	7		x	Some financial support
International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, its Territories and Canada	*IATSE*	1200	2		x	Little evidence of party support
International Brotherhood of Iron Workers	*IBI*	600	1	x		History of support for federal and provincial party
Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco and Grain Millers International	*BCTGM*	560	1		x	Weak history of support

UNITE-HERE	*	350	1	x		Financial support for party
Athabasca University Faculty Association	*AUFA*	250	1		x	No clear links
International Union of Painters and Allied Workers	*IUPAW*	250	1		x	Some Financial Support
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers	*IBB*	240	3	x		Party officials report strong support
United Transportation Union	*UTU*	220	3	x		Recent modest campaign contributions
Canadian Union of Office and Professional Employees	*COPE*	200	4	x		Some locals affiliated with the party
Media and Communications Workers of Alberta	*MCWA*	150	1		x	
Teamsters Canada	*	100	1	x		Support for party at federal and provincial level, financial donation history

United Mine Workers of America	*UMWA*	100	1			History of support for progressive parties
Grain Services Union	*GSU*	70	1		x	
Alberta Building Trades Unions						
International Brotherhood of Boilermakers	*IBB*	1000	1	x		Party officials report support
International Union of Bricklayers & Allied Craftsmen - Local 1	*IUBA*		2		x	Little evidence of support
Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons International	*OPCM*		1		x	Little evidence of support
UNITE-HERE	*		1	x		History of financial support
International Union of Elevator Constructors	*IUEC*		2		x	Little evidence of support
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	*IBEW*	5000	1	x		Recent affiliation with party, strong financial support
International Union of Operating Engineers	*IUOE*	1000	1	x		History of financial support

International Association of Bridge, Structure and Ornamental Ironworkers	*IABSOI*		2		x	
United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters	*UAPP*	10000	1	x		Employees work in NDP office, financial support
Construction & General Workers	*				x	
International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators	*IAHFI*		1		x	
International Union of Painters and Allied Trades	*IUPAT*		1	x		Recent increase in financial donations
International Brotherhood of Teamsters	*		2	x		Party officials report support
The Alberta Regional Council of Carpenters and Allied Workers	*	10000	1	x		Party officials report some support
Millwrights, Machinery Erectors and Maintenance Union	*		1	x		Financial donations and NDP candidate
Sheet Metal Workers International	*		1		x	

Christian Labour Association of Canada Unions						
Local 63 Construction		2 0,600	1		x	Non partisan, non affiliated history
Local 56 Transportation and related		1 200	1		x	Non partisan, non affiliated history
Local 301 Service and retail		5 325	1		x	Non partisan, non affiliated history
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees						
Provincial Government Sector	*AUPE*	2 3000	9		x	Withdrew from AFL, multi partisan support clause in Constitution
Health Care Sector	*AUPE*	36500	8		x	Withdrew from AFL, multi partisan support clause in Constitution
Education Sector	*AUPE*	8000	6		x	Withdrew from AFL, multi partisan support clause in Constitution
Boards, Agencies and Local Government Sector	*AUPE*	5000	5		x	Withdrew from AFL, multi partisan support clause in Constitution

Alberta Teachers Association Unions						
Alberta Teachers Association	*ATA*	44000	64		x	Non partisan history

Appendix 3: Summary of NDP Candidate Ties with Organized Labour 2008 Provincial Election

Riding	Name	Occupation/Union Affiliation
Airdrie-Chestermere	Bryan Young	None
Athabasca-Redwater	Peter Opryshko	Alberta Teachers Association
Banff-Cochrane	Anne Wilson	None, defense lawyer practicing in Canmore and Banff
Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock	Rod Olstad	Edmonton Musicians' Association, local 390
Battle River-Wainwright	Doris Bannister	None, self-employed business woman, now semi-retired.
Bonnyville-Cold Lake	Jason Sloychuk	Fourth class power engineer, CNRL
Calgary-Bow	Teale Phelps Bondaroff	Student
Calgary-Cross	Shelina Hassanali	Canadian Union of Provincial Employees
Calgary-Currie	Marc Power	Social Activist
Calgary-East	Chris Dovey	Board Member 17th ave Planning Committee
Calgary-Egmont	Jason Nishiyama	Alberta Teachers Association
Calgary-Elbow	Garnet Wilcox	Manager within a large Canadian retail company
Calgary-Fish Creek	Eric Leavitt	University Professor
Calgary-Foothills	Stephanie Sundberg	Member of ATU local 583
Calgary-Fort	Julie Hrdlicka	Southern Alberta Outreach and Promotion Coordinator for the Parkland Institute
Calgary-Glenmore	Holly Heffernan	Nurse (board with AN, AFL)
Calgary-Hays	Tyler Kinch	Second year student at SAIT
Calgary-Lougheed	Clint Marko	Electrician with IBEW
Calgary-Mackay	Daena Diduck	Program Delivery Specialist (AUPE)
Calgary-McCall	Preet Sihota	Realtor
Calgary-Montrose	Al Brown	Electrician IBEW
Calgary-Mountain View	John Donovan	Retired
Calgary-North Hill	John Chan	Civil servant (AUPE)

Calgary-North West	Collin Anderson	Communications Electrician (TELUS)	
Calgary-Nose Hill	Tristan Ridley	Works at an acupuncture clinic and a health food store	
Calgary-Shaw	Jenn Carlson	Not Listed	
Calgary-Varsity	Tim Stock Bateman	University of Calgary as the Director of Development for Corporate & Foundation Relations	
Calgary-West	Chantelle Dubois	Rail Traffic Controller	
Cardson-Taber-Warner	Suzanne Sirias	Registered Social Worker	
Cypress-Medicine Hat	Manuel Martinez	Owner-operator of two small businesses	
Drayton Valley-Calmar	Luann Bannister	Works at an acupuncture clinic and a health food store Works for judicial system	
Drumheller-Stettler	Richard Bough	Former Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers	
Dunvegan-Central Peace	Nathan Macklin	Farmer	
Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview	Ray Martin	Former Teacher	
Edmonton-Calder	David Eggen	Former Teacher	
Edmonton-Castle Downs	Ali Haymour	Owns a small business	
Edmonton-Centre	Deron Bilous	Alberta Teachers Association	
Edmonton-Decore	Sid Sadik	Hayati Homes	
Edmonton-Ellerslie	Marilyn Assheton Smith	Former University Professor	
Edmonton-Glenora	Arlene Chapman	Registered Social Worker	
Edmonton-Gold Bar	Sherry McKibben	Health and social services administrator	
Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood	Brian Mason	Tranist Workers Union	
Edmonton-Manning	Rick Murti	IAM Local 1579	
Edmonton-McClung	Bridget Stirling	Editor with an Edmonton-based non-fiction publisher	
Edmonton-Meadowlark	Pascal Ryffel	Language instructor	
Edmonton-Mill Creek	Stephen Anderson	Millwrights Local 1460	
Edmonton-Mill Woods	Christina Gray	Computer programming instructor	
Edmonton-Riverview	Erica Bullwinkle	Works in the office of Edmonton-Strathcona MLA	
Edmonton-Rutherford	Michael Butler	Small business owner	
Edmonton-Strathcona	Rachel Notley	Labour Lawyer	

Edmonton-Whitemud	Hana Razga	Human Resources Consultant for the federal government (former CUPE)	
Foothills-Rocky View	Ricardo deMenezes	United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401	
Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo	Mel Kraley	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville	Clayton Marsden	United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 488	
Grande Prairie-Smoky	Neil Peacock	Owns and operates a ranch in the TeePee Creek area, and works for Safeway	
Grande Prairie-Wapiti	Manuela Campbell	Social worker	
Highwood	Carolyn Boulton	Student	
Innisfail-Sylvan Lake	Tophie Davies	Professional figure skating coach	
Lac La Biche-St. Paul	Della Drury	Forestry	
Lacombe-Ponoka	Steve Bradshaw	Transit Workers Union	
Leduc-Beaumont-Devon	Lisa Erickson	Farmer	
Lesser Slave Lake	Habby Sharkawi	Café Owner	
Lethbridge-East	Tom Moffatt	I.T. Systems Administrator	
Lethbridge-West	James More	Home business, Distancedge Communications.	
Little Bow	Duane Petluk	Community Health Team Leader	
Livingston-Macleod	Phil Burpee	Singer/Song writer	
Medicine Hat	Diana Arnott	Retail sector manager.	
Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills	Andy Davies	Artist	
Peace River	Adele Boucher Rymhs	Former Teacher, Business Owner	
Red Deer-North	Shawn Nielsen	Student	
Red Deer-South	Teresa Bryanton	Alberta Teachers Association	
Rocky Mountain House	Jorge Sousa	UofA Professor	
Sherwood Park	Katharine Hay	AUPE	
Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert	Peter Cross	Graphic Designer	
St. Albert	Katy Campbell	Student	
Stony Plain	Shelina Brown	Faculty UofA	
Strathcona	Denny Holmwood	Student	
Strathmore-Brooks	Brian Stokes	Sub contractor family business	
Vermilion-Lloydminister	Wendy Myshak	AUPE	

West Yellowhead	Ken Kuzminski	Apprentice carpenter	
Wetaskiwin-Camrose	Sarah Mowat	Student	
Whitecourt-Ste. Anne	Leah Redmond	Not Listed	
Total Number of Union Links:		37	

Appendix 4: Union Contributions to NDP Campaigns

Union Local/Labour Organization	1993	1997	2001	2004	2008
CLC				$10,000.00	
AFL	$1,411.84	$1,000.00	$4,400.00		$6,000.00
Alberta Building Trades			$4,500.00		
Mcmur Labour Council			$2,500.00		
Yellowhead Labour Council			$1,250.00	$500.00	
Edmonton Labour Council	$600.00			$750.00	
Medicine Labour Council	$1,650.00		$800.00	$1,500.00	
Red Deer Labour Council	$1,000.00				$1,000.00
AUPE PROVINCIAL		$4,022.58			$5,000.00
AUPE CAMROSE OFFICE		$1,000.00			
AUPE 002		$1,000.00			
AUPE 39		$500.00		$3,000.00	
ATU 569			$1,000.00	$2,500.00	$2,500.00
ATU 583			$1,000.00		$1,500.00
ASBESTOS WORKERS 110					$2,000.00
CECU COALITION			$400.00		
ADVANCMENT LABOURS			$1,500.00		
CEP SASK					$2,000.00
CEP ALBERTA		$2,500.00	$3,000.00	$1,000.00	$5,000.00
CEP NATIONAL			$4,000.00	$11,000.00	
CEP 855				$2,000.00	
CEP 1900				$500.00	
CEP 1118		$500.00			
CEP 777		$6,700.00	$2,000.00		$3,500.00
C&GWU 92	$500.00				
CAW NATIONAL	$5,000.00			$8,000.00	$5,750.00
CAW 99	$1,000.00				
CECU				$1,000.00	
CEPU	$6,000.00				
CMPL				$5,000.00	
CSU				$1,000.00	
COPE	$8,700.00				
CUPE ALBERTA	$750.00	$1,400.00	$1,200.00	$5,000.00	
CUPE 3197					$750.00
CUPE 30	$2,250.00	$3,900.00	$650.00		

CUPE 38			$1,700.00		
CUPE 1505			$500.00		
CUPE EDMONTON		$1,200.00			
CUPE 417	$500.00				
CUPE NATIONAL	$5,000.00				
CUPW	$500.00				
CARPENTER UNION 1325	$500.00		$1,500.00	$3,400.00	$14,000.00
ECWU 777	$950.00				
Edmonton Fire Fighters	$5,000.00			$4,000.00	
IRON WORKERS 720				$3,000.00	$8,000.00
IAMAW NATIONAL			$1,000.00		
IAMAW 2583	$1,000.00				
IAMAW 721	$1,000.00				
IUPAT 177					$5,000.00
IWA 1-207	$2,000.00	$5,000.00	$1,000.00		
IUEC 130					$1,000.00
IBEW 424		$1,750.00	$1,500.00		$15,000.00
IUOE 955					$3,000.00
OPCMIA 222					$1,200.00
TEAMSTERS 362					$1,000.00
CDN MACHINISTS UNION POL LEAGUE	$500.00	$3,000.00		$5,000.00	
UNA PROVINCIAL				$500.00	
STEEL WORKERS NATIONAL				$500.00	
UNA 183				$500.00	
PLUMBERS/PIPEFITTERS 488			$2,000.00	$14,000.00	$8,750.00
UFCW NATIONAL	$15,000.00				
UFCW 401			$500.00		$2,000.00
UFCW 1118	$12,756.56	$2,500.00		$500.00	
UFCW 280P	$1,750.00				
USWA PAC				$500.00	
UFCW 380P	$1,250.00				
USWA (COPE FUND)	$3,000.00	$2,000.00	$3,000.00		
USWA 3				$500.00	$7,000.00
USWA 6034				$500.00	
UNITE HERE 47					$5,000.00
UTU				$1,500.00	
WUT (WORKERS UNOIN TELECOMMUNICATIONS)				$10,500.00	
TOTAL	**$79,568.40**	**$37,972.58**	**$40,900.00**	**$97,650.00**	**$105,950.00**

Appendix 5: Union Contributions to the NDP Non Election Donations 1993-2000 and 2001-2008

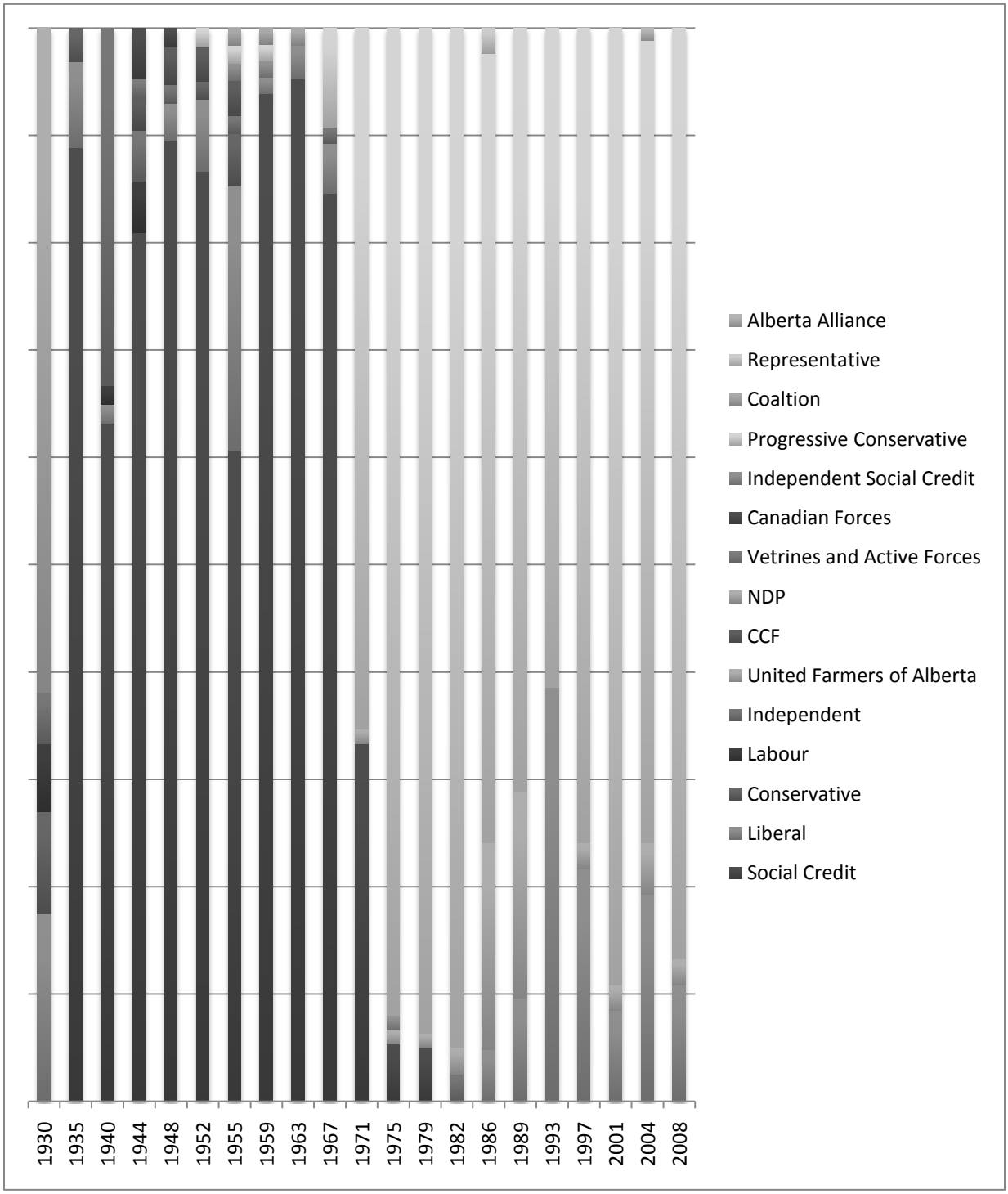
	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	1993-2000
AFL COPE FUND	1200	400							1600
AFL	500				2400				2900
FT MCMUR LABOUR COUNCIL	1135								1135
YELLOWHEAD LABOUR COUNCIL					1210				1210
Medicine Labour Council	500								500
Red Deer Labour Council	500								500
CEP ALBERTA					2850			1218	4068
CEP 707	2639								2639
CEP 1118									0
CEP 777					425				425
CEPU ALBERTA						1000			1000
CMPL									0
CSU 52								1000	1000
COPE									0
CUPE ALBERTA			450	550	525		420		1945
CUPE 30					800				800
CUPE EDMONTON	500								500
ECWU 501	1200								1200

IAMAW 99							500		500
PLUMBERS/PIPEFITTERS 488	500								500
UFCW 401					700				700
USWA (COPE FUND)	15000						500		15500
USWA 7226					1075				1075
USWA 7621					2150				2150
USWA 3		1300							1300
TOTAL	23674	1700	450	550	12135	1000	1420	2218	

	2001	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**Total 2000-2008**
AFL	690						730		1420
ALBERTA BUILDING TRADES				4000		4000	14540		22540
ATU 569						2000			2000
ASBESTOS WORKERS 110							620		620
CEP ALBERTA			1100	4000		4118			9218
CEP FT MAC			1000						1000
CEP NATIONAL			450	10000					10450
CEP 777	5000		500				380		5880
CECU							1200		1200
CUPE ALBERTA							10000		10000
CUPE 30		1000							1000
IBB 146							890		890
IAMAW NATIONAL								750	750

IBEW 424							4030		4030
CDN MACHINISTS UNION POL LEAGUE						2000			2000
SMU								900	900
PLUMBERS/PIPEFITTERS 488						2250	680	400	3330
UFCW NATIONAL						2000		5000	7000
UFCW 401	500						4460	4100	9060
USWA (COPE FUND)							3000		3000
USW 207						1000		900	1900
USWA 5885							500		500
USWA 7621							10000		10000
USWA 3						5000			5000
TOTAL	6190	1000	3050	18000	0	22368	51030	12050	

Appendix 6: The Alberta Party System Since 1930



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