

**LIFE AT THE FRINGES OF CANADIAN FEDERAL POLITICS: THE EXPERIENCE
OF MINOR PARTIES AND THEIR CANDIDATES DURING THE 1993 GENERAL
ELECTION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis marks the first attempt to systematically study Canadian minor parties. Minor parties, as distinct from third parties, are those that acquire less than 5 percent of the national vote (usually much less than one percent) and have never sent an MP to Ottawa. We know little about parties as a group except that their numbers have steadily proliferated over the last 20 years and that this growth shows no signs of abating. The goal of this paper is fill the knowledge gap surrounding minor parties and to assess the health of electoral democracy in Canada.

Specifically, nine minor parties are studied through the experiences of their candidates during the 1993 federal election. The findings presented are based on data collected from government sources and on surveys and interviews administered to a sample of minor party candidates who ran in the greater Vancouver area.

The dissemination of political beliefs not represented in mainstream politics was the dominant reason candidates gave for participating in elections. Winning is a long term ambition, but not expected in the short run for the majority of parties. Despite their modest aims, minor parties and candidates are unduly fettered in their ability to effectively compete in elections and communicate with the public. Minor party campaigns typically have scant political resources, including money, time and workers; electoral laws — concerning registration thresholds, broadcasting time allotments and campaign reimbursements — designed to promote fairness, disadvantage the system's weakest

players; and subtle biases on the part of the press, debate organizers and potential donors close important channels of communication.

Of these factors, money emerged as the most important, with media exposure — or the lack of it — a close second in terms of determining a party's competitiveness. The National Party, with superior resources, was often an exception to the above characterization, but ultimately, media neglect sealed its fate as a marginal party. Notwithstanding the great odds facing minor parties, winning is not impossible given the right alignment of factors. The Reform Party did it in 1993, providing other small parties with hope and an example to follow.

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Chapter I: WHY STUDY MINOR PARTIES AND CANDIDATES

To the casual observer, it would appear that electoral choice in Canada is limited to a small handful of established parties. Opinion polls, lawn signs, news editorials and lunch room conversations would all seem to confirm this view. Prior to 1993, the electoral buffet consisted of the Liberals and Conservatives, or for the more progressive palate, the New Democratic Party (NDP). In 1993, Canadian political consumers were treated to an expanded menu of four parties, the three on the old list, plus one other depending on where you lived. Voters in Quebec were offered the Bloc Québécois, a nationalist party dedicated to secession, and voters outside Quebec could elect the Reform Party, a right-wing populist organization centred in Alberta.

However true this depiction may seem to most, it is a superficial view of reality. There were not five parties competing in the 1993 general election, there were 14. In the four preceding contests there was an average of 10.25 parties, not three. The parties omitted in the initial picture are the subject of this thesis. They are the small, forgotten parties surviving at the periphery of the political process.

These parties, termed 'small' or 'minor,' are all officially registered federal parties that receive less than five percent of the national vote (but usually much less than one percent) and

have never sent a member to Ottawa. It should be noted that the Canadian literature on parties often treats 'minor' as synonymous with 'third' (Gagnon and Tanguay 1989). To avoid confusing the two terms, a third party is understood as a non-traditional party that does not have one of the two largest blocks of seats in the legislature, but receives more than five percent of the national vote or has more than five seats in the House of Commons. The parties of interest in this study are those that have never met the criteria for third party status, thereby excluding a party like the federal Social Credit. Although Social Credit performance since 1979 fits the profile of a minor party, because they once sat in Parliament they are not defined as 'minor'. They are a party on the way out, not one struggling to break in.

Individually, or as a group, very little is known about Canada's minor parties. We do know that there has been a steady proliferation in their numbers over the past 20 years, and that this growth shows no signs of abating. This thesis marks the first attempt to inquire into life at the fringes of Canadian politics. This project has two broad aims: to assess the health of our democracy from the perspective of the many parties excluded from power; and to stimulate interest in the plight of minor parties so that they may be given more serious consideration in the future.

Why Study Minor Parties? Redressing the Neglect

The motivation to study minor parties came from a recognition of the indifference displayed towards them by the public, the press and, most significantly, by academics. These three communities seem to share the opinion that small parties are ephemeral fringe elements to be acknowledged in passing but paid no serious attention. Small parties come and go, appear then fade, unimportant because there is always another there to fill the space (Thorburn 1996b, 126). The public betrays their indifference when they complain of choice-poor politics,

then fail to seek out alternatives (Thorburn 1996b, 118-9). Voters appear unconcerned, for example, that leaders debates do not present them with the full range of political options. The media as well, make a habit of dismissing small parties without critical scrutiny. Television producers and journalists, mindful not to overload voters with too much information, are reluctant to divert attention away from 'real' politics to cover parties that will not form governments (Hackett and Hissey 1996, 46). The academic community can also be faulted for trivializing small parties. Professor Hugh Thorburn of Queen's University discounts them from his analysis of party systems in two brief sentences: "Most of the mini-parties are mere epiphenomena, not likely to grow or to last. And together they account for an insignificant proportion of the Canadian electorate" (Thorburn 1996b, 126). That Thorburn even mentions "mini-parties" sets him apart from the bulk of his colleagues who ignore them entirely.¹ So, despite a tradition in Canada of studying political parties from a myriad of perspectives, virtually no mention is made of minor parties (Carty 1991).

Marginal actors may or may not have something of interest to teach us, but we will never know if we do not inquire. While the mountain of research on third parties continues to grow, no comparable work is conducted with respect to minor parties.² Even in discussions of the origins of third parties (Brym 1984), somehow the experiences of less successful organizations are not deemed relevant. If a small party can make the transition to a third party then academic attention is forthcoming, but not before. In another example of scholarly neglect, party systems theorists fail to conceptualize a position for small parties in the political order (Thorburn 1996a; Lemieux 1989). Granted, such parties exist on the periphery, but by

¹ An exception is Carty's (1991) inclusion of the Christian Heritage Party in his analysis of "Canadian Political Parties in the Constituencies."

² Much of the work on third parties concern provincial protest parties. Some of the more important pieces include Lipset (1950); Macpherson (1953); Pinard (1971); Blais (1973)[a critique of Pinard's thesis]; Irving (1959). For writings on federal third parties see Gagnon and Tanguay (1989). McDonald (1987) and Morton (1986) look at the NDP as do many works by Keith Archer and Alan Whitehorn.

excluding them, we miss the opportunity to discover how the functioning of our party system keeps minor parties from positions of power. In the field of voting behaviour, survey designers have never questioned the public on why they do not vote for minor parties. This could have been an extremely revealing question to track over the years; the choices voters make are just as important as the ones they do not.

The non-treatment of alternative parties by academia ought to be rectified for three reasons. First, the neglect would seem to imply that it is unimportant how small parties are treated by the political system. Yet, when the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* gave constitutional recognition to the right to equality (Canada 1982, s.15), it also guaranteed, by extension that "the federal electoral process... first and foremost reflect and promote fairness" (Lortie 1991a, 322). Unless we examine the principle of "fairness" for all electoral participants, we are remiss in our duty to apply the *Charter*. We must therefore investigate how our most vulnerable parties fare out on the political battle field.

The second reason to redress the neglect of minor parties, is to fill the hole in our understanding of the dynamics of federal politics. Should we consider the marginality of small parties an inevitable byproduct of a simple-majority single-ballot electoral regime (Lemieux 1989), a lack of commitment to pluralism, or a vote of confidence for the established parties? Do small parties fail because of poor internal organization or a lack of knowledge or resources? Are there formal and informal rules ensuring they never succeed, or perhaps electoral success is not an overriding concern for them? We do not know the answers to any of these questions because they have not been asked let alone debated in the literature.

The third reason to study small parties recognizes the potential importance of this stage in our history. Although it is still too soon to judge the full meaning of the 1993 election, it may prove to be a watershed in Canadian history. For the first time, an election did

not result in the mere flip flop between government and opposition. The Liberals made the common transition from the latter to the former, but sitting in the seats of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition is the Bloc Québécois, a new party devoted to the dismemberment of the country. Another newcomer, Reform, was a minor party in 1988 but managed to bring 52 MPs to Ottawa, just two shy of the Bloc's Opposition total. The victories won by the two new parties resulted in significant defeats for two old parties. The Conservatives saw its 169 member government disintegrate into a two-seat caucus. Even the NDP, the perennial third party, was more successful earning nine seats in its election disaster. We will have a better indication of the legacy of 1993 following the next election, but early speculations suggest we may be seeing the "beginning of the endgame" in terms of the national unity question (Cameron 1996). Our national party system too, is looking increasingly like a relic of the past (Cameron 1996, 550). I am not predicting sudden success for minor parties, but if the party system is in a phase of realignment, it's possible that the window of opportunity may have just opened a crack. It is only fair that we consider what alternative parties may have to offer.

The Current State of Minor Parties and Candidates

A benchmark year in the life of minor parties was 1970. Before that time, there were no statutory provisions for the registration of political parties. Any organization that wished, could field candidates and call itself a party. In 1968, 12 organizations sponsored candidates: four parliamentary parties and eight minor ones. Revisions to the *Canada Elections Act*, passed in 1970, created a registration procedure for the legal recognition of political parties and a means for the identification of parties on the ballot. The *Act* also stipulates that parties seeking approval for participation in an election, must nominate a minimum of 50 candidates.

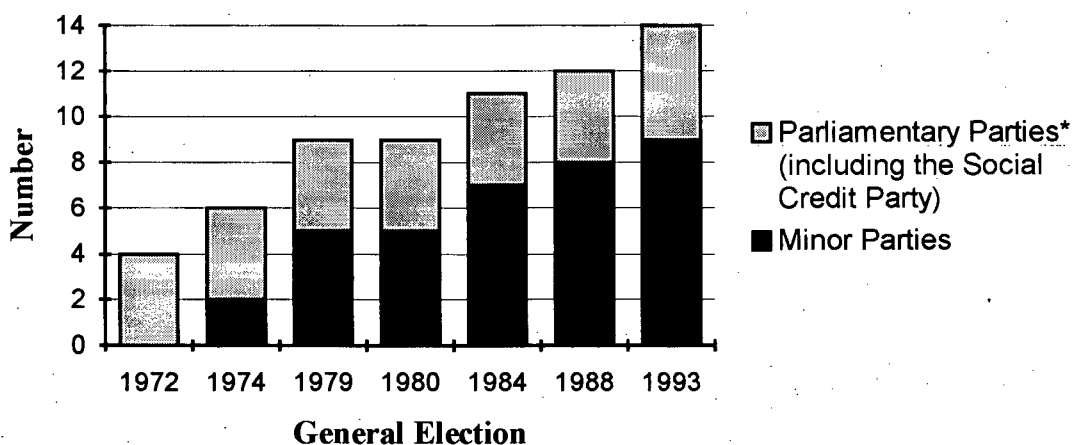
If it fails to do so, it is denied party status.³ As a result of this change, none of the eight minor parties that contested the 1968 election managed to be approved for registration in 1972.

After 1972, minor parties slowly began to reappear in federal politics.

There is greater minor party activity today than at any time since the 1970 amendments were passed. As Figure 1.1 indicates, there were more small parties in 1993, indeed more parties of all kinds, than in any other recent general election. In 1993, an unprecedented 14 parties ran for Parliament, nine of which can be considered minor. This is a

Figure 1.1

NUMBER OF REGISTERED PARTIES SINCE 1972



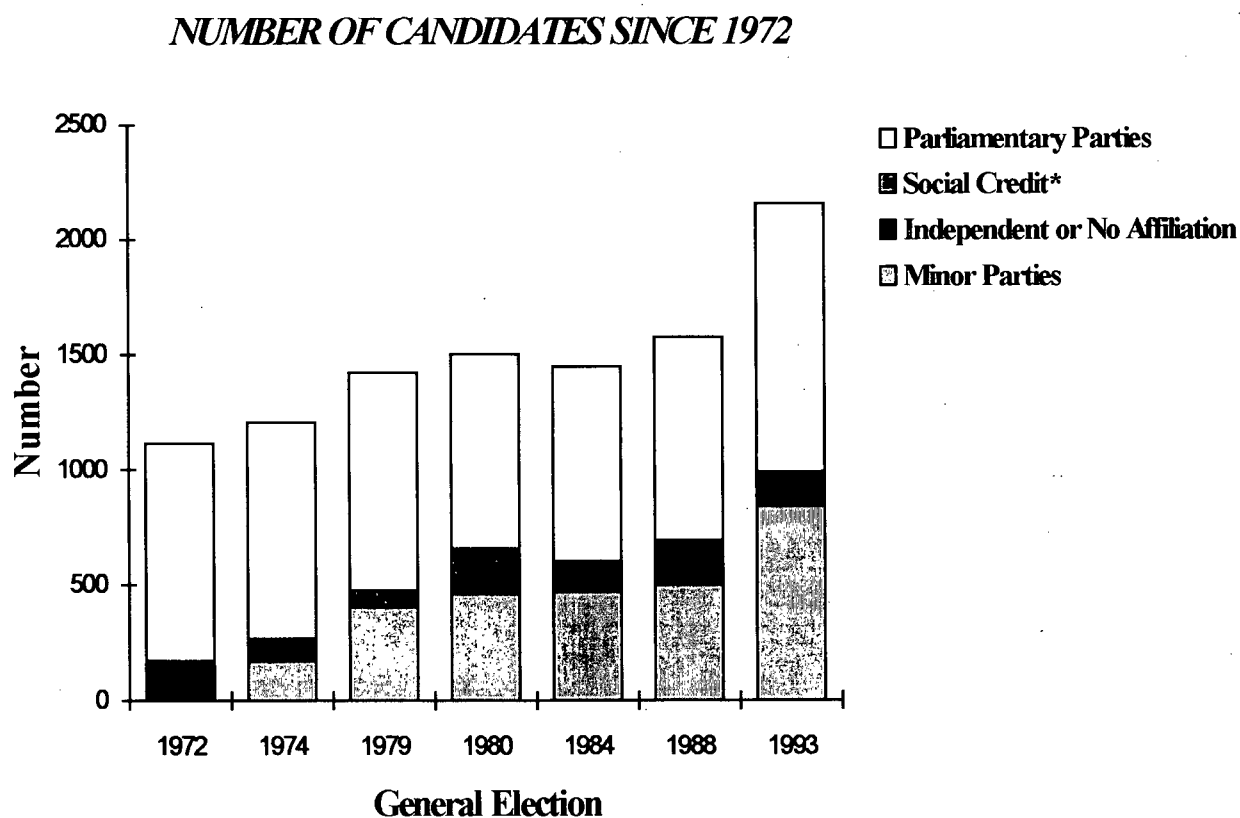
* All parties represented in the House of Commons.

³ A party may apply for registration with the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) up until 60 days before the issue of the writs for the next general election. If the application is in order (i.e. it includes the full and short names of the party, the names and addresses of the leader, offices, officers, the auditor, the chief agent and 100 party members), the CEO informs the leader that the party has been approved for registration. Official registration occurs the day after 50 candidates have been nominated. A party may also apply for registration in the 59 days leading up to polling day, but it will not be approved until 50 candidates have been nominated for the next election. A registered party will be deleted from the registry if (a) it fails to inform the CEO of changes to information contained in the registry; (b) its auditor ceases to be qualified; (c) a fiscal report is not submitted at the end of the year; or (d) at the close of registration for the next general election, the party has failed to nominate 50 candidates.

significant increase over the past when just two decades earlier, in 1972, only four parties were on the ballot, none of which could be considered minor.⁴

Together the nine parties in 1993 sponsored 838 candidates, accounting for 38.9 percent of the total. This is only a slight increase over the period between 1979 to 1988 when the proportion remained constant at roughly one third. But if we look at Figure 1.2, the ratio

Figure 1.2



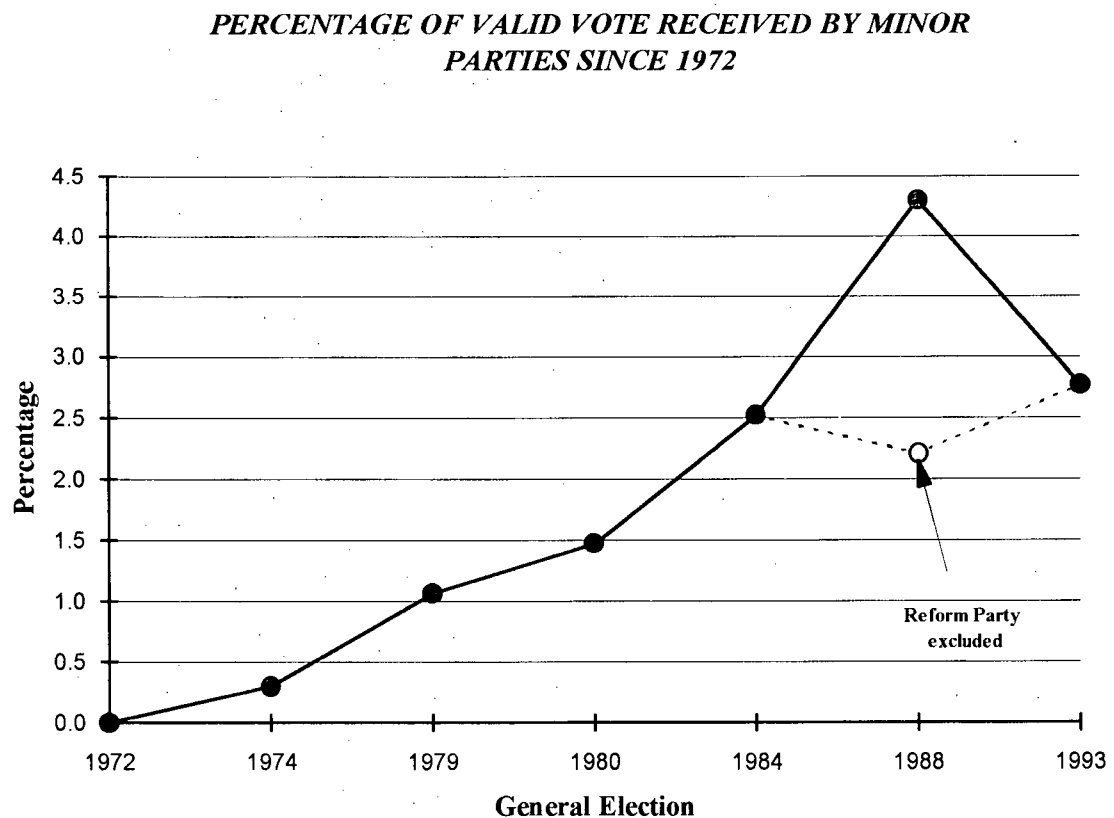
* After 1979, the Social Credit Party failed to elect any MPs and therefore is no longer a Parliamentary party.

⁴ In 1972 the four party were the Liberals, Progressive Conservatives, the NDP, and the Social Credit.

of minor parties compared to the total in 1993 is misleading because of the addition of two new parliamentary parties. Looking more closely, 1993 actually marks a striking increase in the total number of minor party candidates.

As more minor party members run for office, the total vote share garnered by those parties also increases. Critics might point out that this is an obvious relationship: we should not be surprised when votes increase along with the number of candidates. Figure 1.3 certainly seems to reflect this pattern. But this criticism misses the key point. Overall more Canadians are supporting alternative parties. So although each party in itself may have limited electoral

Figure 1.3



support, when considered together, there appears to be growing public interest in minor parties. If we are not paying attention to small parties now, at what point will they be considered significant enough to study?

The performance of each of the nine minor parties from the 1993 campaign is indicated in Table 1.1. The National Party fared far better than any of its colleagues, earning 1.4 percent of total valid votes, almost half of all minor party votes. The party did particularly well in three western provinces — British Columbia, Manitoba and Alberta — obtaining 4.1, 3.1 and 2.4 percent of votes respectively. This is reflective of the fact that the National Party

Table 1.1

PERCENTAGE AND TOTAL OF VALID VOTES: 1993 ELECTION

Party	Total Valid Vote	Percentage of Valid Vote	Average # of Votes per Candidate
Abolitionist Party of Canada (Abol.)	9 141	0.1	114
Christian Heritage Party of Canada (CHP)	30 358	0.2	515
Party for the Common- wealth of Canada (Com'lth.)	7 316	0.1	124
Canada Party (CP)	7 506	0.1	127
Green Party of Canada (GP)	32 979	0.2	417
Libertarian Party of Canada (Libert.)	14 630	0.1	281
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada (M.-L.)	5 136	0.0	101
National Party of Canada (Nat.)	187 251	1.4	1 095
Natural Law Party of Canada (NLP)	84 743	0.6	367
TOTAL	379 060	2.8	472

was centred in the west and concentrated its efforts there, running in almost all BC and Manitoba ridings and in three-quarters of Alberta's constituencies (see Table 1.2). The Natural Law Party had the second best showing of the minor parties with 0.6 percent of the national vote. However, in terms of average vote per candidate — it ran 231 candidates or over three and a half times more candidates than the seven weakest parties — it did not fare better than other parties.

The average number of candidates nominated by a minor party was 93.1 with a median of 59. British Columbia, the locus of this study, enjoyed the highest rate of minor party participation. An average of 4.5 minor party candidates ran per riding in BC, more than one and a half times the national average of 2.8. This may be explained by the current process of political realignment taking place in that province (Ruff 1996). Perhaps minor parties are attempting to exploit weakened party loyalties in BC voters to gain support for their own movements? Ontario and Manitoba had the next highest rates of minor party candidacy at 3.5 and 3.4 candidates per riding respectively.

Approach

The inherent dilemma of opening the door to a new field of research is where to begin. Any number of approaches might have been adopted, but the one that makes sense is to learn about the nation's smallest parties through a close examination of the experiences of their candidates during an election campaign. There are three reasons why this framework can be considered advantageous. First, the *raison d'être* of any political party is to contest elections. The type of campaign run by a candidate can tell us much about that the nature and goals of that party. For instance, if a party felt it had a legitimate chance to win, a more elaborate

Table 1.2

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES NOMINATED PER PARTY: 1993 ELECTION

PROV/TERRI- TORY (# OF SEATS) PARTY	ONT (99)	QUE (75)	NS (11)	N.B. (10)	MTBA (14)	BC (32)	PEI (4)	SASK (14)	ALTA (26)	Nfld (7)	NWT/ YUK (3)	TOTAL (295)
Abol.	50	30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	80
CHP	25	2	2	2	4	13	2	2	5	1	1	59
Com'lth	13	35	—	—	—	11	—	—	—	—	—	59
CP	5	—	—	3	13	15	—	11	9	—	—	56
GP	34	6	1	—	—	24	1	—	12	—	1	79
Libert.	29	6	—	—	2	15	—	—	—	—	—	52
M.-L.	29	10	1	—	4	5	—	—	2	—	—	51
Nat.	74	14	7	3	13	30	1	8	19	1	1	171
NLP	87	47	11	4	11	32	1	6	25	5	1	231
TOTAL	346	150	22	12	47	145	5	27	72	7	4	838

campaign would be mounted than if the election was merely a vehicle for publicizing a point of view.

Second, because so little is known about small parties, and even less about how they relate to other political actors, an approach that included as many parties as possible was desired. A single party case study, for example, would ill serve the aim of significantly broadening our knowledge base about small parties. It would also maintain the parties in isolation from the whole, as would other possible approaches such as comparing party constitutions or platforms. On the other hand, a survey of many of the minor parties' candidates accomplishes two things: it ensures diversity in the sample; and it preserves the dynamic of the relationship between minor parties and the political whole.

The third advantage of studying candidates is that in small organizations such as minor parties, candidates represent all facets of the party. Many participants were on their executive councils, some were founding members, one was a former leader and others still were party rank and file who ran because they were needed. Using candidates as the sample group, then, actually gives a much more complete picture of the party than might be expected.

Methodology

The findings presented in this thesis were collected from two different sources representing two overlapping groups. The larger group encompasses all minor parties and candidates that participated in the 35th general election, 1993. Of the 19 minor parties that were approved for registration by the Chief Electoral Officer by September 27, 1993, official nomination day, only nine were able to field the 50 candidates necessary to officially register for the election: Abolitionist Party of Canada, Canada Party, Christian Heritage Party, Green Party of Canada,

Libertarian Party of Canada, Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada, Natural Law Party of Canada, National Party of Canada and the Party for the Commonwealth of Canada. These nine parties and their 838 candidates constitute the total population. Statistical information concerning them was taken exclusively from Government of Canada sources (CEO Canada 1993, 1994).

It is important to note that candidates nominated by a deleted party are still eligible to compete in an election, but their party label does not appear on the ballot. Instead they are listed as having "no affiliation." Since this designation can be used by independent candidates as well, there is no way of determining which candidates might have been members of a deleted party.⁵ The point being, that although many of the ten parties disqualified in 1993 enjoyed a history of electoral competition, it was impossible to capture them in the study.⁶

Most of the data utilized in this paper is generated from a research project conducted of a limited sample of candidates. A comprehensive survey of all 838 minor party candidates proved too large an undertaking for this initial investigation, so the study was scaled down the 14 ridings of the Vancouver area. To balance the smaller sample size, the paper refrains from over generalization, and relies more heavily on direct quotations. This will give the reader a flavour for candidates' experiences in the greater Vancouver area, without making potentially false claims about their universality.

There are two prongs to this project: a written survey as well as personal interviews conducted with selected survey respondents. The details are as outlined below.

⁵ Independent candidates are generally listed as "independent" unless they specifically request the label "no affiliation."

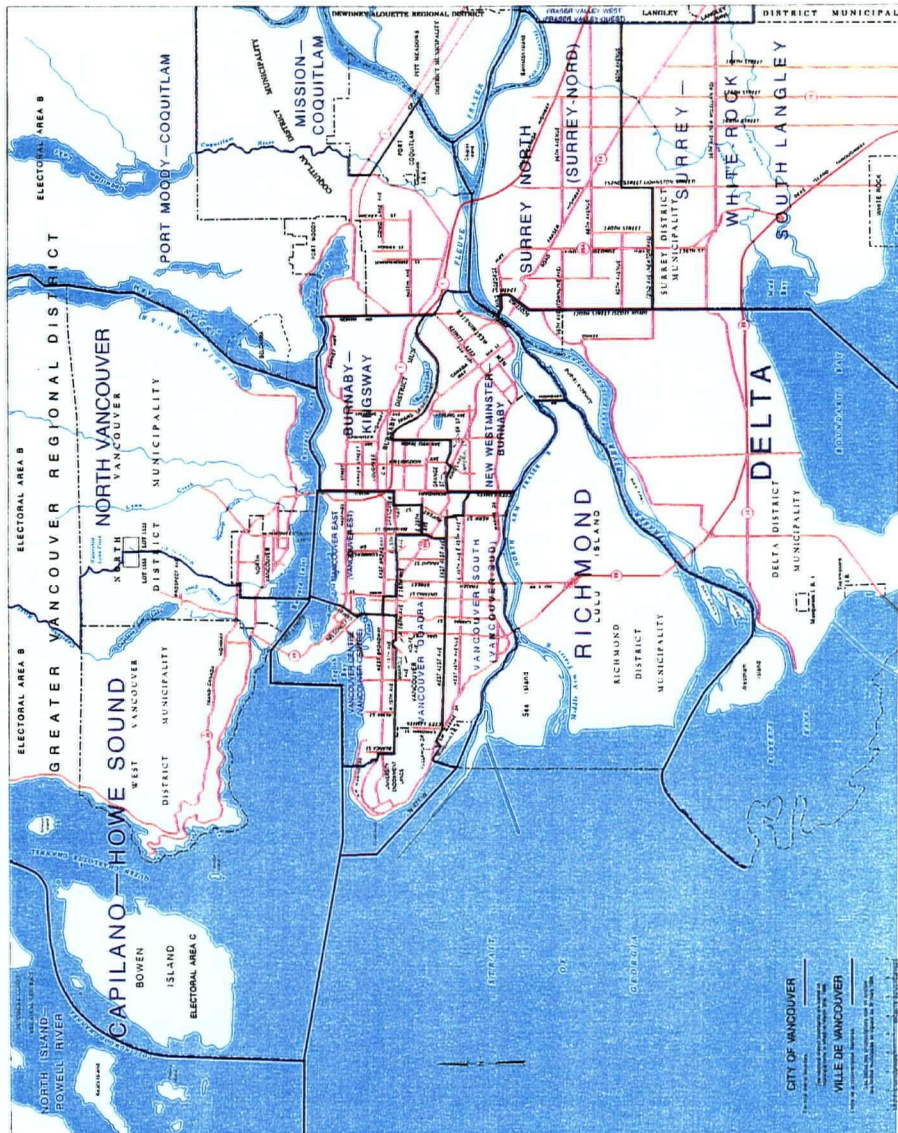
⁶ Political parties deregistered in 1993 for failing to nominate 50 candidates: Canadian Economic Community, Canadian Party for Renewal, Confederation of Regions Western Party, Communist Party of Canada, Freedom Party of Canada, Reform of the monetary law, Option Canada Party, Parti Nationaliste du Québec, Parti Rhinocéros, Social Credit Party of Canada.

THE SAMPLE:

As indicated, the sample consists of all officially registered minor party candidates from 14 electoral districts in the greater Vancouver area, shown in Figure 1.4. The main reason for

Figure 1.4

GREATER VANCOUVER ELECTORAL DISTRICTS



selecting these ridings is their proximity to the research centre, assisting the interview process. All 14 ridings are predominantly urban with only two — Capilano-Howe Sound and Mission-Coquitlam — containing more than three rural polling stations. Capilano-Howe Sound had 38 rural polling stations, or 25 percent, and Mission-Coquitlam 51, or 23 percent. All 14 ridings displayed high levels of electoral competition, averaging 10.4 candidates per contest, with a median of 11.5.

A total of 74 candidates, representing eight of the nine possible minor parties, are included in these ridings. The Abolitionist Party is the lone exception, since it did not sponsor candidates outside of Ontario and Quebec. The National and Natural Law parties ran a full slate of 14 candidates, the Green Party ran in 12 ridings, the Libertarians 11, the Party for the Commonwealth of Canada 10, Christian Heritage 7, the Marxist-Leninists contested 5 ridings and the Canada Party in only 1. There were 17 female candidates and 57 men.

DISTRIBUTION AND RETURNS:

Candidates' names and addresses, as they appear on their nomination papers, were obtained from Elections Canada. Since the information was two years old and potentially out of date, every effort was made to determine their accuracy. This entailed cross referencing with telephone directories and contacting candidates' official agents (also on the lists provided by Elections Canada). Of the 74 candidates in the original sample group, nine addresses proved unattainable. The questionnaire was therefore mailed to a total of 65 people at the beginning of October, 1995. Three undelivered surveys were later returned by Canada Post, reducing the total potential subjects to 62.

The return rate was exactly 50 percent, based on 31 responses, with all ridings and parties represented. The results by party and by riding are shown in Table 1.3. Of the 62

surveys delivered, 13 were sent to women and 49 to men. Of those, six women (46%) and 25 men (51%) responded giving each gender roughly the same response rate.

The survey (Appendix A) questions candidates on four different topics: political background, experiences as a candidate, the national party organization, and personal background. Nine out of 59 questions asked respondents to write-in an opinion or

Table 1.3

NUMBER OF RETURNS BY PARTY AND RIDING

PARTY	#
Canada Party	1
Christian Heritage Party	5
Green Party	6
Libertarian Party	5
Marxist-Leninist Party	1
Natural Law Party	4
National Party	8
Party for the Commonwealth of Canada	1*
Total	31

RIDING	#
Burnaby-Kingsway	1
Capilano-Howe Sound	1
Delta	2
Mission-Coquitlam	2
New Westminster-Burnaby	3
North Vancouver	2
Port Moody-Coquitlam	2
Richmond	4
Surrey North	2
Surrey-White Rock-S. Langley	3
Vancouver Centre	2
Vancouver East	3
Vancouver Quadra	2
Vancouver South	2
Total	31

* This case was largely omitted from the study because most of the data contained in it was considered unreliable. The respondent had run in many previous elections and attempted to answer questions for all election experiences. There were also a great many non-responses; the candidate was not interviewed.

explanation.⁷ Space was also provided at the end of the questionnaire for additional comments or observations. These open ended questions proved to be the most fruitful in terms of getting a feeling for the texture of a minor party candidate's election experience. They therefore

⁷ See Appendix A questions A1, A6, B5, B6, B16, B17, B21, B22, B24.

became the springboard for structuring the content of the set of personal interviews that followed.

THE INTERVIEWS:

Included with each survey was a form asking candidates if they would be willing to help the project further by participating in a personal interview. No candidates refused to be interviewed; 29 indicated that they were definitely interested and the other two answered that were willing to discuss the possibility of meeting with me.

Several factors came into play when deciding which candidates to interview. The initial goal was to arrange meetings with 16, two from every party. This quickly dropped to 13 when only one survey was returned from three of the parties. The pool of potential subjects shrank further after eliminating candidates living far from Vancouver, as well as those who indicated they would be away in January and February 1996 when the interviews were to be conducted. The final selection process was based on an attempt to strike a balance between the following elements: party, gender, electoral district, experienced versus non-experienced candidates, and candidates who seemed to have had a positive experience and those who did not. There was also a bias towards candidates who were the most prolific in their survey responses.

After weighing all of these factors, 13 candidates were selected for interviews. Two each from the National, Natural Law, Libertarian and Green parties. Three were Christian Heritage members and the last two came from the Marxist-Leninist and Canada parties. There were four women and nine men. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were all conducted in person save for one done by telephone. Each was tape recorded, with the candidate's permission, then later transcribed. Unfortunately, the tape recording of the one phone interview, with a Natural Law candidate, proved inaudible and the case had to be

discarded. This reduced the number of usable interviews to 12. Three months later, a candidate reached me by phone to inquire if it was too late to return a survey. A telephone interview was conducted with the candidate bringing the total back to 13 and adding one more National Party case.

Because this project began with limited prior knowledge, the precise content for the interviews was determined by the survey responses. Appendix B is the list of questions that were used as a guideline for conducting the interviews, with the section on the candidate's personal experiences receiving the greater emphasis. Most of the topics presented in the findings, were first raised by candidates in their write-in answers and then expanded upon when asked in person interviews. For instance, the open ended survey question, "What was the **most important** reason why you wanted to run for Parliament?" became the basis for chapter two, 'Why They Run.' The forced choice question concerning all-candidates debates prompted so many additional comments, that the debates became a major topic of conversation in the interviews and an entire section in chapter four. The treatment of minor parties by the news media appeared nowhere on the written survey, yet was referred to as the "most negative aspect of running as a candidate" so often that it became a prominent interview theme. Other complaints — such as a lack of time and volunteer help — and benefits — such as the enjoyment derived from the experience — were only captured because the survey asked candidates what they would do differently the next time and about their most positive experiences.

All told, because of the small number of surveys, their greatest use was in giving direction to the more qualitative interviews. Thus, when survey results are presented, greater emphasis is placed on the written comments rather than raw data. Some aggregated results are given — campaign activities engaged in by candidates, number of contested nominations,

whether or not candidates would run again, how “rewarding” or “disappointing” the election experience had been — but these instances are relatively infrequent. The interviews, by contrast, emerged as much more important. This is chiefly because the central issues in this paper, i.e. those of greatest concern to small party candidates, were not identified until the surveys had been returned, and to some extent until the interview process had already begun. Had two or three test interviews been conducted prior to designing the final survey, a much more revealing questionnaire might have been developed. Most of the empirical elements of this paper, then, found in chapter three, rely on government of Canada sources. In these discussions, all minor party candidates that ran in 1993 are included.

The following three chapters explore what it means to run for federal office under the banner of a marginal political party. Chapter two examines the reasons candidates gave for standing for election despite their remote chances of success. The explanations given were tied to the preservation of the party, to the propagation of strongly held personal beliefs shared by the party and to individual fulfillment. Most candidates felt rewarded by their efforts, but others were disheartened by the process.

The third chapter picks up on some of the sources of discontent for minor parties and their candidates. It looks at how the framework of the *Canada Elections Act*, specifically campaign reimbursements and broadcasting allotments, penalizes the weakest members of the party system. It examines the adverse financial situation in most minor parties and how this limits their ability to compete effectively. Lastly, the chapter describes how chronic deficiencies of capital, time and workers force candidates to run only the most meager of campaigns.

Chapter four focuses on one specific, yet exceptionally important, obstacle encountered by small parties: the difficulty of getting their message out. Whenever the media is involved, whether it be televised leaders debates, interview shows or news coverage, minor parties and candidates are all but ignored and afforded no respect. The situation of constituency level all-candidates debates was better, but the format was seen as lacking the vitality to make up for scant major media attention.

The final chapter examines the prospects candidates saw for their future success. Winning was not an immediate goal for the majority of participants in the study, but many had optimistic ambitions for the long term. In this last chapter, the conditions necessary to make this success a reality are discussed. It begins by looking at the statutory amendments suggested by candidates, and the social conditions they felt would be required to make the public amenable to their policies. Recommendations made by the 1991 Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (the Lortie Commission) are also examined. The chapter ends with a summary of the central themes of the paper and with suggestions for future inquiry into the life of minor parties.

Chapter II: WHY THEY RUN

For the majority of minor party candidates winning is not a realistic election outcome. Nevertheless, in increasing numbers they are sacrificing time and money and entering the election fray. This chapter will consider the many reasons candidates give for committing themselves to battle, and a few of the disappointments that resulted from the experience.

The factors that motivate candidates to participate can be divided into two categories: those pertaining to the party and those pertaining to the individual. From the former category, we learn much about the *raison-d'être* of minor parties because when candidates articulate party-centred objectives, they speak as the front-line soldiers charged with the task of executing their party's mission. Further, in small organizations such as these, the goals of the party, i.e. of the executive, are literally the goals of the membership since the gulf between the two can be as near as mother and son or husband and wife. So when candidates explain why they represent their parties, it is the voice of the party we are hearing as well.

From the second category of factors — personal motives — we gain insight into the type of person that stands for election for a party with scarcely a chance of winning. We therefore also learn something about the party that attracts that kind of personality.

The reader should keep in mind that although the reasons in these two categories are discussed discretely, they have been separated for analytical purposes only. In truth, any combination of incentives to run may be present in one individual. It is also often impossible to distinguish personal motives from political ones, particularly when elections are seen as a vehicle for espousing a philosophy, i.e. is it a personal vision that drives the individual to run or a desire to further the political ends of the party? Though it may be somewhat artificial to breathe independent life into these two categories, since candidates differed on which aspects they stressed, they do provide a basis for an analytical distinction.

Party-centred Reasons

TO KEEP THE PARTY ALIVE:

A common reason why candidates run for minor parties is to keep their party alive. As noted, under the *Canada Election Act* (section 24(3)) a party cannot be registered if it fails to nominate 50 candidates in a general election. If deregistration occurs, the party's assets are disposed of and it loses all the privileges of party; it can no longer accept contributions or distribute political literature during the campaign period, it loses its broadcasting allotments and the party label disappears from the ballot. To prevent this collapse, many candidates agree to run to keep their party on the ballot. Three survey respondents listed it as their primary reason for standing for election, and several candidates who are party insiders, admitted that there is pressure placed on their membership to reach the 50 candidate threshold.

The threat of deregistration is very real. Ten parties that applied for registration in the 1993 federal election met this fate for failing to nominate 50 candidates. These are parties that would still have legal existence if not for an arbitrary nomination threshold, a threshold that many parties experienced difficulties in achieving. Of the parties included in this study,

candidates from the Natural Law and National Parties were the only to report that it was either “very easy” or “somewhat easy” to run a full slate of candidates. A majority of survey respondents in each of the other parties wrote that it was either “somewhat difficult” or “very difficult” to reach the necessary goal. Table 1.2 provides evidence of this difficulty. While the Natural Law Party nominated 231 candidates and the National Party 171, the rest of the field averaged only 62.8 candidates each. Four parties — Canada Party, Christian Heritage, Marxist-Leninist, and the Libertarians — were less than ten candidates above the 50 person threshold.

The exigency of securing 50 nominations has resulted in the creation of a new class of minor party candidate called ‘paper candidates.’ Paper candidates merit that label because they only exist on paper, i.e. they are nominally on the ballot, but do nothing else to promote themselves or their party. There is no way of telling for certain how many minor party candidates belong in this category. One possible method would be to count how many candidates reported zero expenditures since paper candidates typically incur no costs. However, that method is unreliable since several people in the sample reported no expenses even though they actively campaigned. Another reason why it is difficult to determine the number of paper candidates is that the candidates themselves can be undecided about how involved they plan to be in their campaign. An example of this involves a Green Party candidate who had intended to run a paper campaign only, but later found reason to expand her efforts. Her change in approach is explained in a letter to the federal Green Party leader:

...One of my early experiences happened when I was collecting signatures for my nomination papers. I was using a complimentary phone provided by one of our local stores late one afternoon. There was a fellow waiting for me to finish my calls but since I had checked my answering machine and found several messages, I decided to let him use the phone first.

When he finished and I headed back to the phone, he made some off-handed comment about how many calls I was making. I said, “I’m running my campaign from this phone.”

"Yeah sure," he said, and laughed.

I told him that I was serious and then to emphasize it, asked him to sign my nomination papers. He continued to jest with me and asked why he should vote for the Greens. He was a bit of a tough character and was really trying to put me on the spot. He wanted to know how we were going to fix all that was wrong with the country.

At this time, I can't remember quite what I said but I spoke to him about the process of government that we are striving to bring about. We don't profess to have the answers but we feel that each of us holds part of the solution and that Greens hope to facilitate the process to find those answers. I spoke about the failure of governments who blame and criticize and strive to widen the gaps between peoples of different political philosophies. I said that at this time in our world history, we must find ways to cooperate rather than compete. I spoke of interconnectedness.

The man listened for about five minutes. When I was finished he said, "I'll sign the thing. You've made more sense than any politician I heard. Good luck."

We parted ways. I don't know whether or not he voted Green but at that moment I realized that my efforts would make a difference even if I touched only one person. I decided to run an active campaign rather than be just a "paper candidate..."

Her story is important because it illustrates how nebulous the difference between an active candidate and a paper candidate can be. It also demonstrates how a party-centred motive — ensuring representation on the ballot — can easily become entangled with personal convictions.

Little further comment can be made regarding this group since no self-proclaimed paper candidates responded to the written survey. The suspicion is that this segment omitted themselves from the sample under the assumption that they had no valid election experiences to contribute. This hypothesis is based on one brief conversation I did have with a paper candidate. In it, the candidate explained that he neglected to fill out the survey because he knew nothing about the party save for what was said in a presentation at a cultural centre where he was an active member. He ended up as a candidate because following that one meeting, he received a desperate phone call asking him to enter his name on the nomination papers and eventually he consented.

In some cases, candidates were recruited to have the party as widely represented on the ballot as possible. The rationale for this is that anyone who intends to vote for a platform should have the opportunity to do so. A Green Party official explains why it was decided that this ethos was more important than consolidating the party's resources behind one candidate in the hopes of getting their first MP elected:

I just feel that we owe it to people who believe in Green ideology to have the opportunity to vote for that. Because they're not voting for that when they vote for the NDP, they're not voting for that when they vote for any of the other parties. I think it's democratic to allow that option to be presented.

In other words, if democracy is about choice, it would be undemocratic to willfully eliminate one of those choices.

To DISSEMINATE VIEWS:

A second party-centred impetus for participation is the dissemination of ideals and party philosophies. A common refrain heard in small party circles is that *if only more people heard this message they would like it and Canada would start to change*. Thus for many respondents, elections simply represent an ideal opportunity to inform. It is a chance to perhaps expand membership and gain *a few converts for the core group*. The unique benefit of elections is that it is one time Canadians "become interested and even directly involved in the democratic process" (Van Loon and Wittington 1987, 372). A Libertarian candidate explains that elections furnish a once-in-a-four-year chance for unconventional political pundits, like himself, to speak to a willing audience.

During elections, a lot of people at that time feel a certain civic obligation to be open-minded about listening to alternative views. People who would be in your face about a point of view at one time will politely hear you out during an election. So elections do give the minor parties a chance to ventilate at least their views in public and be treated politely.

A Christian Heritage member covets the opportunity provided by elections to express potentially unpopular views:

...to bring the issues that other parties don't want to talk about to the platform... It is the knowledge that this platform is almost the only forum left for speaking "politically incorrect" views.

Because parties are most visible during elections, a campaign is a useful way to publicize a party's existence or to gain support for a new proposal. This is how a Marxist-Leninist candidate conceives of the reason his party's contests elections despite the remote chance of winning.

Our party is not an electoral party. We have run in elections since 1972... The purpose for running candidates way back in '72 was to let the people know that such a party existed; you could say to do some general propaganda for communism. In the last federal election, more specifically, the reason for running candidates was to put forward proposals for renewing the whole electoral process... We didn't have any illusions about getting our candidates elected.

Without polling information there is no sure well of telling how successful candidates may have been at spreading the gospel to the general public. But, in terms of their own perceptions, 26 (84%) of the survey respondents judged that they were either "very successful" or "somewhat successful" at making their party known to new voters during the election. This is a high level of belief in the efficacy of their efforts considering the sparse campaigns mounted by many candidates.

A second, perhaps more important set of targets of these dissemination campaigns are the established parties. The hope is that if ideas are presented consistently and cogently (at an all-candidates debate for example) governing parties might adopt them and see to their implementation. This is termed 'policy appropriation' and was mentioned as a specific party goal by members of the Canada Party, the Christian Heritage Party, the Green Party, Natural

Law, the Marxist-Leninists and by Libertarians. For a Natural Law candidate, the ultimate goal of enlivening natural law is paramount to political power for the party itself.

And if we don't get elected, that wouldn't bother us a bit as long as the party in power adopts our programs because they're good programs. We're not interested in power, we're interested in enlivening natural law and improving the quality of life for all Canadians.

For Green adherents, their definition of electoral success includes the adoption of Green policies, by any party.

Part of the electoral success that we would like to have would be for all the other parties to take on our platforms, especially our environmental and humanist platforms. As a friend of mine says, the Green Party is the only party he knows that wants every other party to steal their platform.

The notion of policy appropriation has not come out of nowhere. Governing parties in Canada have a history of implementing innovations from third parties, such as the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) or the NDP, if there is enough pressure to do so and public acceptance is highly probable (Horowitz, 1966). A Libertarian candidate hopes that his party can have the same impact:

We're hoping our ideas will basically be taken. If we make a really cogent case for something, we just keep grinding away at people and by default someone else will take up your issue whether its the flat tax, legalization of drugs, all those various things that Libertarian's have strong views on, but no chance of getting elected... In the same way the NDP for a many years was never a serious force but they put a lot of very well argued points of view about various matters and if they seemed popular one of the major parties would glom [sic] onto it and put it forward as their own. That's not bad at all being co-opted like that... If you've got a problem with that then you've got an ego problem.

Some parties explicitly gear their work towards having it adopted by others because they are not appropriately constituted for taking power themselves. The Canada Party, for instance, has little platform beyond the scope of their founding goal to reform the Bank Act. They would rather the other parties take this idea and educate their people rather than fight with every party to get in to power. Like the Marxist-Leninists, they are a self-proclaimed

non-electoral party. The Greens, too, are not particularly interested in federal power because they are a *party of decentralization* whose *strongest structures tend to be at the most local level*. Nonetheless, their concerns are relevant nationally and so they field federal candidates to communicate those concerns and offer solutions.

Only a Christian Heritage representative seemed to take a more possessive view of the prospect of policy appropriation. She was the only one to employ a term like *steal* and spoke of wanting to *influence government, but more than that we would like to form government*. This attitude may stem, somewhat, from the success of the Reform Party. When the two parties were both just beginning, she explained, they discussed amalgamation, but Reform was *not willing to take a principled stand on moral issues and so [the Christian Heritage Party] said there's no point*. As a result, there seems to be some residual sense that this common origin was used by Preston Manning to his advantage. For instance, when asked about the Reform leader's success, the same candidate commented that *he had a lot of really good policies that he had taken from the Christian Heritage Party, so that was good equipment for him*.

The only other party not committed to giving away its platforms was the National Party. No promoters of that organization touted policy appropriation as a desirable goal. This should not be surprising, of all the parties in the sample the National Party appeared the most seriously mobilized towards winning seats. They had money, organization, a high-profile leader, a broad-based platform, and high expectations. They had a vision of Canada to sell but their market was the voting public, not other parties. They viewed themselves as contenders sold short by a party that self-destructed shortly after the election with the resignation of their leader, Mel Hurtig. One former candidate summed up this view.

I actually think that the National Party would have been every bit as successful as [Reform]. In fact, our result in the first election that we ran in was actually better

than Reform and if the party had managed to hold itself together and proceed in a normal direction, I think we would be a player.

To sum, minor party candidates ran for office to keep their party's alive and amply represented on the ballot. Minor parties, in turn, rely on elections to publicize their views to potential supporters in the public and in government.

Personal Reasons

IDEALISM:

The notion of idealism was invoked several times throughout the interviews to describe the character of small party members. Many candidates, it would seem, believe that minor parties attract a different breed of people than do the parliamentary parties. There were plenty of comments to support this view: these are people: *more interested in the causes than in personal power; they represent a set of ideals — they have steadfast principles instead of putting their fingers to the wind; Basically like me they're starry-eyed idealists.*

In general, minor party candidates report that they participate out of personal conviction and an unfailing drive to improve the human condition, not to win elections. They join parties and contest elections to propagate an ideology that they know to be true. In a couple of cases, candidates described their idealism as a moral obligation.

The minimal is holding up a flag for what you believe in. It doesn't matter if everybody thinks you're wrong, by God I couldn't live with myself if I didn't speak up about this. How could I look myself in the mirror? How could I look at my children if I knew an evil was happening and didn't speak up about it? What right have I to complain later down the road? Look what happened to Nazi Germany. You can get into that line of rhetoric, especially if you're predisposed already, it's a very convincing reason. I know, it works for me. Even if I wasn't going to get any votes I still felt a moral obligation.

Perhaps not all minor party contenders would describe themselves as an idealist, but we can say at the very least, as one respondent did, that *there are [not] too many cynics out*

there. For the most part, people join alternative parties not for personal gain or prestige, but out of devotion to a cause. As confirmation, two particularly strong candidates told me of unsuccessful attempts by other parties to woo them over. One seasoned Green Party member describes the frustration this causes her.

...in every election where I have run I have been encouraged by members of other parties, who were either the candidates or the workers for other parties, have asked me to leave these people, come and join us. As if the values of something like the Green Party are not important enough to hold onto. And I found that really distressing... They see a smaller party as — you don't really represent anything, you could be a winner... It sort of as though we don't count, or what we're saying isn't of value... Because you're small you're therefore not a value system to be reckoned with or seen as principled.

Of course it is difficult to measure how deeply it runs, but idealism must be considered one of the foremost motivating factors in the decision to join and participate in the life of a minor party. I was greatly impressed by the quality of many candidates and the strength of their convictions.

ENJOYMENT:

It may seem self-evident or superfluous to include enjoyment on the list of reasons to run, but given how frequently the point was raised it deserves mention. Often candidates were surprised how gratifying the experience had been and count it among their *most memorable life experiences*. In the Vancouver sample, 26 of the 31 candidates classified their election experiences as either “very rewarding” or “somewhat rewarding.”⁸ One survey respondent even wrote that bringing *a sense of humour to the campaign* was their main reason for entering the race. Another characterized his candidacy as a hobby, contrasting it to traditional party candidates:

⁸ 16 found the experience “very rewarding” and 10 said “somewhat rewarding,” two others answered “very disappointing” and one said “in retrospect, I would not have run,” there were 2 non-responses See Appendix A QB18: “How would you describe the overall experience of standing for election?”

We don't treat it as seriously. Some of those people have their careers on the line, we treat it as a hobby. We have less at risk and therefore it's more enjoyable... If you've spent your political capital building up a Conservative Party it's pretty serious stuff.

This attitude hints at a reason why, apart from poverty, marginal candidates mount sparse campaigns. If your career is not at stake, or the balance of power in the country does not rest on your shoulders, then the pressure is off and you have the luxury of running any type of campaign you want.

Was the contest enjoyable enough to repeat? When asked whether they would run again, 23 candidates, or three quarters of the sample, said yes they would. These 23 candidates correspond almost exactly to the 26 people who regarded their election experience as "rewarding."⁹ Of the remaining eight candidates, five would not stand for office again and three were unsure. In one case, the candidate would not run again because of *age*, although described the election as "very rewarding." Another candidate was *too busy with career and family* to run again. One of the undecided cases gave no reason. The remaining five candidates in this group have two significant things in common: all were candidates for the National Party and each came away from the election with varying degrees of antipathy for the political system. Their misgivings sprang from several sources: two concluded from their experience that even if they had won, they could accomplish very little in Parliament due to the irrelevance of individual MPs. A third candidate was greatly discouraged by the seemingly long odds of electoral success, and another was aggravated by how *draining and frustrating* the campaign had been. A lament common to many in the group was the rapid dissolution of the National Party itself in the aftermath of the election. On the whole, though, most candidates derived satisfaction from the campaign and plan to compete again. Strictly

⁹ Only one of the 23 candidates who would run again did not find the experience rewarding; he reported that it was "very disappointing." There were two missing cases for Question B18.

speaking then, these five cases are anomalies. But why they all occurred in the same party is an intriguing question and will be returned to in the following section.

TO WIN? — THE LOSS OF INNOCENCE:

To what extent, if at all, do minor party candidates enter elections to win? All candidates who offer themselves for election think about winning. Some only when they *lay down to go to sleep... have a brief flitting dream*, and others *looking for a career change* considered it more consciously. But thinking about winning is not the same as thinking you're going to win. The thousand dollar question is, "Do candidates from marginal parties believe they can win?" The simple answer is 'yes.' When questioned about the prospect of winning, only two candidates in the sample had *never thought realistically* about it. The rest, caught up in the thrill of the race, did allow themselves to consider a future in Ottawa. In terms of how rational a thought it was, one seasoned candidate captured the spirit best.

Q: What were your goals at the beginning of the campaign?

A: To win!

Q: Were you seriously thinking about that?

A: I really think you can't get into it without suspending your disbelief. Its just like drama. I can't just say this is a charade. I have to say, this is real, in fact, people could decide to vote for me. But of course, the miracle never happens, the lightning never strikes.

Most candidates seemed to fall into the camp described above. You buy into the possibility of winning an election as you would buy into the hope of winning the lottery when you buy a ticket. Nonetheless, a few who bought tickets had considerably higher expectations for their performance and for the process, and came away disheartened. They entered the election race with their *idealism intact* and emerged with a certain *loss of innocence*.

For a few, their naiveté was in imagining that the campaign path would be more forgiving than it was. Aware now of the long odds of success, they would only run again

given some guarantee that their party and / or leader could obtain a large proportion of the votes. Or, as another said, *I would run again if I thought I had a very good chance of winning... The next time around I would say I would have to see before starting that there was a better than even chance of winning.*

Others were jaded more from a loss of faith in politicians and in the political process. In the aftermath of a frustrating election, one candidate felt the need to withdraw from the world of formal politics altogether.

It's definitely jaded me. I used to eagerly devour my newspaper every morning and now I don't want to look at it. There are more important things to worry about.

One first-time candidate for the Christian Heritage Party was astonished by the lack of integrity displayed by his colleagues.

... their lack of desire to be totally honest, or lack of integrity, it shook me for a while. I would say in the first week of the campaign I almost pulled out. When I saw that I said, "wow, no wonder people say politics is dirty." I couldn't believe it because I wanted to believe — maybe because I was too naive, maybe — I wanted to believe that Canadians and politicians had the peoples' best interests at heart. That's what I wanted to believe. And I did till I saw contrary, and I was shocked. No wonder I went out swinging. No wonder I went out so excited.

Another new candidate commented on how skewed the political process seemed to be towards monied interests:

I rather quickly realised for any substantive democratic change through the democratic process we have — well it's hard to imagine how it is possible. You need a major organ of publicity behind you, you need a major amount of money to get the message out there. Campaigns don't have any great bearing on what happens... It was an experience that brought great sadness. I started out with an idealistic view to save Canada, I now realise it's very difficult to make any changes of substance at all.

Canadian democracy was also indicted for denying citizens undistorted political choices.

I am much more aware and cynical about the shallowness of "democratic" elections and consider that our choices are limited and manipulated.

The bulk of those who 'lost their innocence' belong to the group of National Party candidates identified at the end of the previous section. Members of the National Party appear to have suffered from disillusionment more than most in 1993.

All National Party candidates in this sample were first-time contenders, which was typical for the party formed less than one year before the election. At the time of the election the party had signed up over 9000 members from its starting point of 45 founding members. A personal donation of four million dollars from benefactor Bill Loewen kick started the organization putting it in an enviable financial position for its first federal contest. The picture painted by its former candidates was of a dynamic leader, Mel Hurtig, leading a committed and organized army of recruits on a crusade *to save Canada through a commitment to economic nationalism*. They did not anticipate winning, but hoped to *lay the foundation upon which to build, targeting the next election as being able to do something significant*. Based on *what Reform had done* in the space of one election, they *had hopes of doing as well*.

The National Party did not fare poorly. They did considerably better than their peers in other small parties earning 1.4 percent of the national vote, just 5.5 percentage points behind the NDP. But after the election the dream collapsed. A power struggle ensued between Mel Hurtig and the new party president over control of finances and Hurtig quit the party. Apparently, there are strong indications of *mishandling of funds* and as I write the fate of the party is in the hands of the courts: *the party itself is a bit in legal limbo because there are challenges as to who are the rightful board of directors and the rightful leader and president*. Two factions arose from the debris, one wanting to keep the party alive and the other working to shut it down. This conflict has yet to resolve itself. *The party is still alive, some people don't think it is... Compared to what it was during the election, it's a shadow of its former self*. But more than that, each National Party member interviewed alluded to, as one said,

serious questions about whether the founding of the party was above the board or not. Was it sincere? Another was more blunt about the suspicions that began circulating soon after the election:

... sometimes we honestly wondered whether the party wasn't set up as a smoke screen to divert attention away from other parties. There's been a couple of theories: one away from the NDP and one away from the Liberal — you know it was a Conservative plot or whatever. I don't know. It certainly seemed to self-destruct far too soon, and whether it was a combination of really unusually power and money hungry people who saw this pot of four million — and they sift upwards very quickly and nobody knows anybody — or whether it was some kind of diabolical thing to distract people, I don't know.

All three mentioned evidence of *conspiracy* but felt the truth would never be known. It is not the task of this paper to investigate such alleged conspiracies, but the issue was raised to shed light on why a disproportionately high sense of disillusionment was present in National Party ranks.

SUMMARY:

A few other individual reasons not yet mentioned, were offered by candidates as to why they stood for election in 1993. Some had to do with specific policy aims, for instance, *to reduce the deficit*, and a couple made general comments about *improving the political system* or making a *difference needed by my community*. The youngest candidate in the sample ran to *experience the Canadian political atmosphere* and to *better develop [his] skills as a politician down the road*. But for the most part, the answers to why minor party candidates ran were remarkably similar: to propagate a particular philosophy (held by party and candidate), to preserve the integrity of their party so that this philosophy can have a voice, and for the pure enjoyment of the experience.

The significant point is that elections, as the pinnacle of the political process, are engaged in because they constitute the foremost opportunity for the party and its membership

to disseminate its views. Winning an election is certainly a long term aspiration, but it is not the *raison-d'être* of a minor party nor is it a realistic aspiration for most minor party candidates. Having said that, it is debatable to what extent this conclusion holds true for the National Party and its candidates. Of all the parties, the National Party appeared to be the least ideological, or the least like a 'single issue' party (Hackett 1991), and the most success oriented. More than in other parties, its candidates perceived themselves to be potential contenders with a genuine chance to win, if not in this election then in the next. Ultimately because of this self-perception, they were more disappointed than most with the election experience. The following two chapters look more closely at the experiences of the 1993 campaign; the unique situation of the National Party, compared to the other small parties, will be encountered again.

Chapter III:

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE 1993 CAMPAIGN

The key to developing a clear picture of the life of minor parties lies in discovering what happens during an election campaign. How the individual campaigns are fought and the nature of the environment in which they are contested, determine how effective a party can be in achieving its goals.

This chapter takes a close look at the experiences of the 1993 election. It begins by outlining the legislative framework that governs the rules of the game for all players. Particular attention is paid to how these regulations handicap small parties while appearing to promote fairness. The data in this section is drawn from Canadian government sources and is supplemented with occasional quotations from interview subjects. The second section of the chapter examines the financial position that small parties and candidates found themselves in during the 1993 campaign. Aggregate data from financial returns filed with the Chief Electoral Officer are used to compare levels of spending across all parties. Differences in how minor parties and candidates used their funds, and where candidates' contributions came from are also discussed. The final section of the chapter focuses on the actual campaign activities of the candidates who participated in the study. This is the most textured section in the sense that it provides first-hand accounts of what small party campaigns looked like. Survey data is relied

on predominantly, but interview evidence is also drawn upon. All three parts are then sewn together in a conclusion which gives a summary profile of why minor party campaigns look the way the do.

Legislative Framework

REIMBURSEMENTS:

Public funding is available to all registered political parties and their candidates in the form of government reimbursements. For parties, 22.5 percent of election expenses are refunded if at least ten percent of the prescribed spending limit is spent. In 1993, a party's spending limit was set at \$0.57 per voter¹⁰ (based on the preliminary voters list) in every constituency where the party had candidates. Of the small parties, only the heavily funded Natural Law and National parties received reimbursements. The other parties spent only a fraction of their permitted limits, as seen in Table 3.1. In fact, the problem is that limits are set according to formula which does not take into account the discrepancies between the parties' financial means. This is because limits were imposed to help curb the trend of escalating election costs (Lortie 1991a, 328-32). A ceiling was set, but it still had to be high enough to allow parties reasonable access to all voters. On the face of it, \$0.57 to spend per voter is not an excessive amount. The Liberals and Conservatives usually report expenditures within a few percentage points of their spending caps (Lortie 1991a, 348). The reimbursement threshold was set at 10 percent to deter non-serious parties and to ensure "frivolous" parties are not supported with public funds (Lortie 1991a, 364). But as the population of Canada grows, spending limits are increasingly out of reach for most non-parliamentary parties. Therefore, however fair the formula may seem in theory, in practice only the wealthy parties receive the government

¹⁰ The base amount was set at \$0.30 in 1974 and is adjusted every year according to the consumer price index.

Table 3.1

SPENDING LIMITS AND REIMBURSEMENTS BY PARTY: 1993 ELECTION

Party	Spending Limit (\$)	Percent- age of Limit Spent	Reimbursement (\$)
P.C.	10 531 510	98.7	2 339 753
Lib.	10 531 510	94.1	2 076 624
N.D.P.	10 499 280	70.9	1 675 702
R.P.C.	7 519 716	19.4	329 710
B.Q.	2 718 745	69.7	426 631
NLP	8 575 544	36.9 [†]	712 722
Nat.	6 357 587	32.9	470 855
GP	2 998 643	*	0
Abol.	2 994 660	2.4	0
Com'lth.	2 290 297	0.9	0
CHP	2 201 171	1.7	0
Libert.	2 106 016	1.0	0
CP	1 939 126	0.0	0
M.-L.	1 851 489	0.1	0

Source: CEO Canada 1993.

* The party's auditor was unable to, and did not, express an opinion as to the fairness of expenditures of \$942 081. As a result, this amount was not deemed eligible for reimbursement by the Chief Electoral Officer thereby reducing the amount of election expenses to below the minimum 10 percent required for a reimbursement. Since \$942 081 represents 96.7 percent of the Green Party's expenditures (87.8% of which reportedly spent on 'professional services'), the case has been omitted from subsequent inter-party spending comparisons.

[†] This figure is slightly inflated because it is based on election expenses which include G.S.T. and applicable Q.S.T.; however, these amounts were excluded for the purpose of calculating the reimbursement.

subsidy. Thus the system for reimbursement perpetuates minor party poverty by denying them public assistance precisely because they are poor. This "creates severe hindrances to the introduction of new parties or the expansion of small ones" (Jenson 1991, 127).

The reimbursement regime for candidates is no better from the point of view of smaller parties. In fact it is worse because refunds are tied to electoral success, which we saw in the preceding chapter, is not necessarily a goal for small party candidates. The *Canada Elections Act* stipulates that if a candidate is elected, or receives 15 percent of valid votes in the riding, he or she will be reimbursed for 50 percent of election expenses.¹¹ No minor party candidate even approached a 15 percent vote share and no minor party candidate received a refund from Ottawa. In the six elections since this legislation came into effect (in 1974), 3144 candidates from parliamentary parties were reimbursed compared with only 51 from minor parties.¹² The fairness of the 15 percent threshold is highly dubious considering that an average of 7.3 candidates contested each riding in 1993. Since mathematically only six candidates can earn 15 percent of the vote, it is impossible for at least one candidate in the average riding to receive a reimbursement. In BC, the average was almost ten candidates per riding which means four of those candidates could not qualify for a subsidy. Thus together, the party and candidate thresholds "send a clear message to smaller parties and their candidates...: their participation is not welcome" (Lortie 1991a, 364).

All candidates pay a deposit when they file their nomination papers. They are entitled to get half back when post-election financial returns are duly filed with the Chief Electoral Officer. The deposit in 1993 was \$1000, up from the \$200 it had been since 1882. This

¹¹ To receive a reimbursement a candidate must also submit a post-election financial return to the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO).

¹² The figure 3144 includes the three main parties (Liberal, PC and NDP) for all five elections and Reform and the Bloc in 1993.

deposit is another source of grievance for poorer parties because of the financial strain it places on them.¹³ Based on the legislated minimum of 50 candidates, each party laid out \$50,000 simply to be permitted to run. That is a 400 percent increase over the \$10,000 required in previous elections. Even though \$25,000 is returned following the election, the burden of this entrance fee was certainly perceptible; a Libertarian candidate explains:

I think our budget on the previous election was \$50,000. We had ads across the country. This time we spent all of our money getting our deposits and we had nothing left over when the campaign began.

BROADCASTING ALLOCATIONS:

A complex set of rules governing political broadcasts has developed over the past 65 years in Canada to ensure maximum fairness in political communication (Lortie 1991a, chapter 6). The *Canada Elections Act* regulates two types of political broadcasting: paid time and free time. In both cases, the application of laws designed to promote fairness, severely restrict the ability of small party to gain access to the media.

All political parties are entitled under the *Act* to purchase advertising time in the 28 days leading up to the day before polling day. Section 307(1) of the *Act* states that "every broadcaster shall ... make available for purchase by all registered parties ... an aggregate of six and one-half hours of broadcasting time during prime time on its facilities." In allocating that time, the broadcasting arbitrator¹⁴ is instructed to use the following formula: (a) two-fifth's weight is given to the percentage of seats held by the party in the House of Commons, (b) two-fifth's to the percentage of the popular vote received in the previous general election, and

¹³ Although the deposit is levied on candidates, the parties are ultimately responsible for supplying the funds if they wish to fulfill the 50 candidate requirement. For instance, the National Party paid half of the deposit for all its candidates to ease the burden on individual candidates.

¹⁴ The broadcasting arbitrator is responsible for all decisions concerning the allocation of broadcasting time to registered political parties. The office is answerable to the CEO and is selected by a committee chaired by the CEO and comprised of two members of each registered party represented in Parliament.

(c) the remaining one-fifth weight is given to the percentage of total candidates ran by each party in the previous general election. An additional 39 minutes of broadcast time is made available to divide between any newly registered parties. In the case of new parties, the maximum amount of time they can receive is equal to the **lesser** of, the smallest amount of time allocated to any party under the above formula, or six minutes. The results of this elaborate computation for recent elections are found in Table 3.2. Table 3.2 reveals that a wide discrepancy exists between the time offered to small parties compared to what is offered to the established parties. Thus, the application of the paid-broadcasting formula clearly discriminates against minor parties.

The situation for existing minor parties did improve somewhat in 1993. In 1988, the nine minor parties that contested the election were allocated only 36 minutes of paid broadcasting time combined; in 1993, the nine officially registered minor parties were entitled to a total of 76 minutes. The change came at the hands of Peter S. Grant, the acting broadcasting arbitrator, who took full advantage of the discretion accorded his post by the *Canada Elections Act*. Based to a large extent on arguments presented by the Reform Party in *Reform Party of Canada v. Attorney General of Canada* (1993), he concluded that the pure application of the formula outlined above was "neither in the public interest nor fair to all the registered parties" (CEO Canada 1994, 149).

I concluded that the statutory factors as applied to allocation unduly fettered the ability of emerging parties to purchase time to make a meaningful case to the Canadian public (149).

For fledgling parties, however, the discrimination persists. Regardless of their ability to pay or their level of popular support, a new party is prohibited from mounting an effective advertising campaign on the airwaves. The Natural Law and National parties were both exceedingly well financed in 1993, but could not use these funds to compete side by side with

Table 3.2

MINUTES OF PAID BROADCASTING TIME ALLOCATED: 1984 - 1993

PARTY	1993	1988	1984
Progressive Conservative Party of Canada	116	195	129
Liberal Party of Canada	78	89	173
New Democratic Party	55	67	69
Reform Party of Canada	17	^a 3	—
Bloc Québécois	^a 5	—	—
L'Action des hommes d'affaires du Canada	—	—	^{a b} 5.5
Canada Party	x	^{a b} 3	—
Canadian Party for Renewal	^{a b} 5	—	—
Christian Heritage Party of Canada	16	^a 3	—
Communist Party of Canada	^b 14	3	5.5
Confederation of Regions Western Party	^b 14	4	^a 5.5
The Green Party of Canada	15	4	^a 5.5
Libertarian Party of Canada	16	5	5.5
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada	^a 5	—	—
National Party of Canada	^a 5	—	—
Natural Law Party of Canada	^a 5	—	—
Option Canada Party	^{a b} 5	—	—
Parti Nationaliste du Québec	^{a b} 5	^b 6	x
Parti Rhinocéros	—	7	8
Party for the Commonwealth of Canada	14	4	x
Pro-Life Party of Canada	—	—	^{a b} 5.5
Social Credit Party of Canada	—	3	x
Student Party	—	^{a b} 3	—
United Canada Concept Party	—	—	^{a b} 5.5
Western Canada Concept	—	^{a b} 3	—
Western Independence Party of Canada	—	^{a b} 3	—
Total Number of Minutes Provided to Minor Parties (excluding lapsed time)	76	36	30

Sources: CEO Canada 1994, 1989 and 1984.

x Registered political parties that but did not apply for time allotment from the Broadcasting Arbitrator.

^a Newly registered parties that applied for time under the 39-minute additional allotment.

^b Time allocated to these parties lapsed because they failed to field 50 candidates by the cutoff for nominations.

the established parties. Reminiscent of the rules for reimbursements, this cycle of disadvantage is self-perpetuating: parties that advertise most, reach the greatest number of voters (Lortie 1991a, 384); a party's inability to communicate with the electorate is one reason for poor electoral performance. But, when a party does not perform well at the polls, it is rewarded by

being denied access to the single most effective medium of mass communication, television (and to a lesser extent radio).

The major networks are also required under section 316 of the *Canada Elections Act* to provide free time to all political parties (free time is not required to be during prime time hours).¹⁵ Illustrated in Table 3.3, any inequities that resulted from the paid broadcasting

Table 3.3

MINUTES OF FREE BROADCASTING TIME ALLOCATED: 1984 - 1993

PARTY	1993	1988	1984
Progressive Conservative Party of Canada	62	101	64.9
Liberal Party of Canada	42	46	87.6
New Democratic Party	30	35	34.7
Reform Party of Canada	9	2	—
Bloc Québécois	3	—	—
L'Action des hommes d'affaires du Canada	—	—	2.75
Canada Party	—	2	—
Canadian Party for Renewal	3	—	—
Christian Heritage Party of Canada	9	2	—
Communist Party of Canada	8	2	2.75
Confederation of Regions Western Party	8	2	2.75
The Green Party of Canada	8	2	2.75
Libertarian Party of Canada	9	3	2.75
Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada	3	—	—
National Party of Canada	3	—	—
Natural Law Party of Canada	3	—	—
Option Canada Party	3	—	—
Parti Nationaliste du Québec	3	3	—
Parti Rhinocéros	—	4	4.9
Party for the Commonwealth of Canada	8	2	—
Pro-Life Party of Canada	—	—	2.75
Social Credit Party of Canada	—	2	—
Student Party	—	2	—
United Canada Concept Party	—	—	2.75
Western Canada Concept	—	2	—
Western Independence Party of Canada	—	2	—
Total Number of Minutes Allocated to Minor Parties	68	32	24.15

Sources: CEO Canada 1994, 1989 and 1984.

¹⁵ Not all broadcasters are required to provide free time. Only operators that (a) reach a majority of those Canadians whose mother tongue is the same as that in which the network broadcasts, (b) that is licensed with respect to more than a particular series of programs or type of programming, and (c) that does not involve any distribution undertakings such as cable.

formula are replicated here since free time is allocated in proportion to the purchasable time. And in this case, the broadcasting arbitrator has no discretion to correct imbalances he or she perceives. New parties, and parties that wave their right to paid time, are allotted a meager two or three minutes each.

The intention behind free time broadcasts is to allow parties direct, unmediated access to the public (Lortie 1991a). Free time is also meant to be an equalizer in that it benefits those parties unable to afford costly advertising. But because of the paltry number of minutes allotted to small parties, these objectives can hardly be met. Instead, major party dominance on the airwaves, and in political life in general, is reinforced once again.

Finances

CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURES:

An obvious difference between minor parties and their parliamentary counterparts is the amount of money each has to spend on elections. In terms of both party and candidate expenditures in 1993, the major parties vastly outspent their smaller competitors. Table 3.4 shows this discrepancy.

By small party standards, the National, Christian Heritage and Natural Law Parties were well off. When compared to expenditures by major party candidates, however, there is little for even the richest small party to boast about. The aggregate of average candidate expenditures for the nine minor parties was still almost \$2,000 less than what one NDP candidate had to spend, and \$30,000 less than a Progressive Conservative candidate.

Table 3.4

SUMMARY OF EXPENSES BY CANDIDATE AND PARTY: 1993 ELECTION

Party	Average Election Expenses per Candidate (rounded to nearest \$)	Number of Candi- dates	Total Election Expenses by Candidates (\$)	Total Election Expenses per Party (\$)	Total Combined Election Expenses by Candidates and Party (\$)
P.C.	46 141	295	13 611 723	10 398 901	24 010 624
Lib.	43 475	295	12 825 115	9 913 190	22 738 305
B.Q.	38 260	75	2 869 481	1 896 137	4 765 618
R.P.C.	29 657	207	6 139 093	1 465 380	7 604 473
N.D.P.	17 375	294	5 108 354	7 447 564	12 555 918
Nat.	6 210	171	1 061 950	2 092 689	3 154 639
CHP	4 481	59	264 389	37 022	301 411
NLP	1 971	231	455 421	3 398 883	3 854 304
M.-L.	840	51	42 867	1 000	43 867
GP	465	79	36 746		
CP	653	56	36 572	173	36 745
Libert.	426	52	22 144	20 963	43 107
Abol.	271	80	14 098	72 176	86 274
Com'lth.	59	59	3 477	21 456	24 933

Source: CEO Canada 1993.

The pattern of candidate spending was relatively similar across all parties. As Table 3.5 illustrates,¹⁶ with the exception of the Natural Law Party, the greatest portion of funds in all

¹⁶ The total expenditures by candidates in Table 3.5 do not include personal expenses, which is why the totals are lower than those shown in Table 3.4.

cases was devoted to non-radio / television advertising. The bulk of this was spent placing ads in small community newspapers. Fourteen of the 31 survey respondents reported that they bought advertising space in printed publications. Although the sample is not large enough to be considered representative, it is worth noting that this group includes all five Libertarians. This agrees with the fact that the Libertarian Party had one of the highest ratio's of money spent on printed ads.

Most candidates did not indulge in radio and television advertising to any significant degree (this would include ads placed with small stations not part of the system for allocating broadcasting time). For the most part, these types of ads reach audiences beyond single constituencies and thus are not cost efficient for individual small party candidates. More importantly, because broadcasting allocations are made to parties, individual candidates have to go through their central organizations to procure time for their own use; most do not bother. Nonetheless, Natural Law Party candidates did exploit their ability to buy advertising time. Together they paid \$213,065, representing 54.8 percent of expenses. This was more than one and a half times greater than the aggregate advertising spending (on radio and TV) by all candidates in the six poorest parties. Even when calculated as an amount per candidate, it works out to \$922 per Natural Law Party candidate which itself exceeds the means of those running for less well-off parties. The only other candidates who approached this figure were from the National Party; they paid \$412 on average for TV and radio ads. The Christian Heritage Party was next at \$118 per candidate and the remaining candidates spent negligible amounts or nothing at all. In comparison, candidates from the five parliamentary parties were able to spend between \$1,100 (NDP average) and \$4,500 (Bloc

Table 3.5

BREAKDOWN OF CANDIDATE EXPENDITURES: 1993 ELECTION

Party	Advertising radio/TV		Advertising other		Salaries		Office Expenses		Other		Average Candidate Expenses (\$)	Aggregate Candidate Expenses (\$)
	^t \$	^{tt} %	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%	\$	%		
Abol.	—	—	79	61.6	21	16.1	21	16.3	8	6.0	128	10 237
CHP	118	2.8	3 096	73.3	31	0.7	656	15.5	320	7.6	4 223	249 070
CP	7	1.4	316	69.5	—	—	105	23.1	27	6.0	455	25 464
Com'lth.	—	—	44	98.8	—	—	—	—	0	1.2	44	2 608
GP	—	—	303	65.2	23	4.9	96	20.6	43	9.2	465	36 746
Libert.	5	1.5	320	89.9	6	1.6	14	4.0	11	3.0	356	18 512
M.-L.	92	11.9	557	71.9	—	—	60	7.7	66	8.6	776	39 559
NLP	922	54.8	557	26.1	113	1.5	180	10.7	116	6.9	1 682	388 633
Nat.	412	7.2	3 132	54.7	407	7.1	1 404	24.5	373	6.5	5 728	979 509

Source: CEO Canada 1993.

Note: All minor party candidates included.

^t Average amount spent per candidate in that party.^{tt} Percentage of total candidate expenses for that party; percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Québécois average) each on radio and TV advertising, which only ate up about 8.5 percent of their election budgets, far below the 54.8 percent spent by Natural Law Party candidates.

For candidates from six of the nine parties, the second most expensive category of election expense was the campaign office. National Party candidates led the field spending \$240,060, or \$1,404 per person on office expenses. This high figure is reflective of the efforts made by the National Party to establish a comprehensive organizational infrastructure across the country. Even before the 1993 election was called, \$1.7 million had been invested in 11 offices nation-wide to give the party the support it would need to mount a competitive campaign (Stanbury 1996, 84). The Natural Law Party likewise set up regional offices in every province prior to the election, but its candidates only spent \$180 each on offices after that. The only other party that set up what could be called constituency offices was the Christian Heritage Party whose candidates spent an average of \$656. Very few other candidates had any elaborate centre of operations. In the survey sample, only eight candidates reported renting office space specifically for the election, six of those were in the National Party (three-quarters of all National Party respondents), one was a Libertarian and the other came from the Natural Law Party. The rest of candidates worked out of their homes, their places of business or as in one case, made arrangements with a local café to set up campaign headquarters in a store front window.

No election is fought solely at the constituency level. The work carried out by the national party association during a campaign can greatly assist the election efforts of the individual candidates. National ad campaigns can benefit all candidates and the centralized production of campaign literature saves local teams precious time and money. How much support the central organization gives to its candidates, therefore, must also be taken into account when assessing election resources.

Table 3.4 shows that the level of spending by the Natural Law and National parties eclipsed the rest of the small party field and even that of the Bloc Québécois or Reform. The Natural Law Party spent \$3.4 million and the National Party \$2.1 million, while the Bloc and Reform spent \$1.9 million and \$1.4 million respectively. In the case of both new small parties (the Natural Law Party of Canada was established in July 1992 and the National Party in December 1992), this was made possible by the generous financial support of one wealthy patron. Multimillionaire Bill Loewen of Winnipeg gave the National Party \$4 million in May 1993, and the Natural Law Party is headed by billionaire guru of Transcendental Meditation, Maharishi Mehes Yogi.

Surprisingly, the central committee of the Christian Heritage Party spent very little compared to the outlay by its candidates. This is the opposite trend displayed by all other parties except the Canada Party and the Marxist-Leninist Party. As a general rule, the central party had more money at its disposal than its constituent parts. All three exceptions could be explained by the fact that in each case, no money was invested by the central party to raise funds for itself

The allocation of party funds varied greatly from organization to organization (seen in Table 3.6). The national offices of the Abolitionist Party, the Libertarian Party and the Party for the Commonwealth of Canada were the most costly enterprises in those three cases. The Christian Heritage Party spent 56.2 percent of its budget on salaries and benefits, a far greater portion than any other party devoted to paying its staff. Few parties invested heavily in their leader's tour. Natural Law spent \$91,364 on its leader, Dr. Neil Paterson, but this accounted for only 2.7 percent of total expenses. The Canada Party and the Marxist-Leninist Party had virtually no money to spend at all.

Table 3.6

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES BY PARTY: 1993 ELECTION

Party	Advertis- ing %†	Broad- casting - radio %	Broad- casting - TV %	Salaries %	Profes- sional Services %	Leader's Tour %	Admin- istration %	National Office %	Fund- Raising %	Other†† %	Total Party Expend- itures \$
Abol.	17.9	7.2	—	15.1	2	8.8	6.0	36.3	1.3	7.5	72 176
CHP	—	6.8	—	56.2	—	4.6	2.0	23.0	—	23.0	37 022
CP	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	100.0	173
Com'lth.	10.5	0.4	6.2	8.7	2.3	2.4	7.5	38.8	4.3	19.1	21 456
Libert.	—	—	—	12.5	—	7.4	—	79.9	—	1.1	20 963
M.-L.	100.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1 000
NLP	59.6	1.6	20.8	1.6	2.9	2.7	<0.1	<0.1	0.2	10.6	3 398 888
Nat.	63.0	1.8	5.0	7.5	4.3	—	1.0	17.5	—	—	2 092 689

Source: CEO Canada 1993.

† Percentage of total party expenses; percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

†† Other includes heat/light/rent; travel/rental of vehicles (other than leader's tour); misc..

From the candidate's perspective, the most beneficial way for the central party to spend its dollars is on advertising. Ads on television and in high circulation newspapers are important to party visibility and can bolster the campaigns of all candidates. Broadcasting restrictions limit access to the airwaves, but there are no comparable restrictions on how much printed ad space may be purchased. Given the high cost of advertising in major dailies, most parties could not capitalize on their unfettered access to the print medium. To demonstrate just how costly advertising can be, a half page ad in a Saturday edition of the national *Globe and Mail* costs \$21,783.08. A similar ad in a weekend *Vancouver Sun* or *Province* runs about half the cost at \$11,272.80. In other words, if the six smallest parties (excluding the Green Party) pooled their resources they could almost afford six half-page ads in the *Globe* and two half pages in a provincial daily. As a result of the expense of advertising, only the comparatively wealthy National and Natural Law parties were able to spend their election dollars in this way. Natural Law spent 82 percent of its election budget, or \$2.8 million, on various types of advertising (radio / TV and other) and the National Party spent 70 percent representing almost \$1.5 million.

Not only did the Natural Law and the National Parties support their candidates through advertising, they also centrally produced most of the campaign material used in the constituencies.¹⁷ The Natural Law Party was the most zealous in this, investing \$1 million at the start of the election to get its 44 page tabloid platform into four million homes across Canada (*Globe and Mail* Nov. 27 1993, D3).

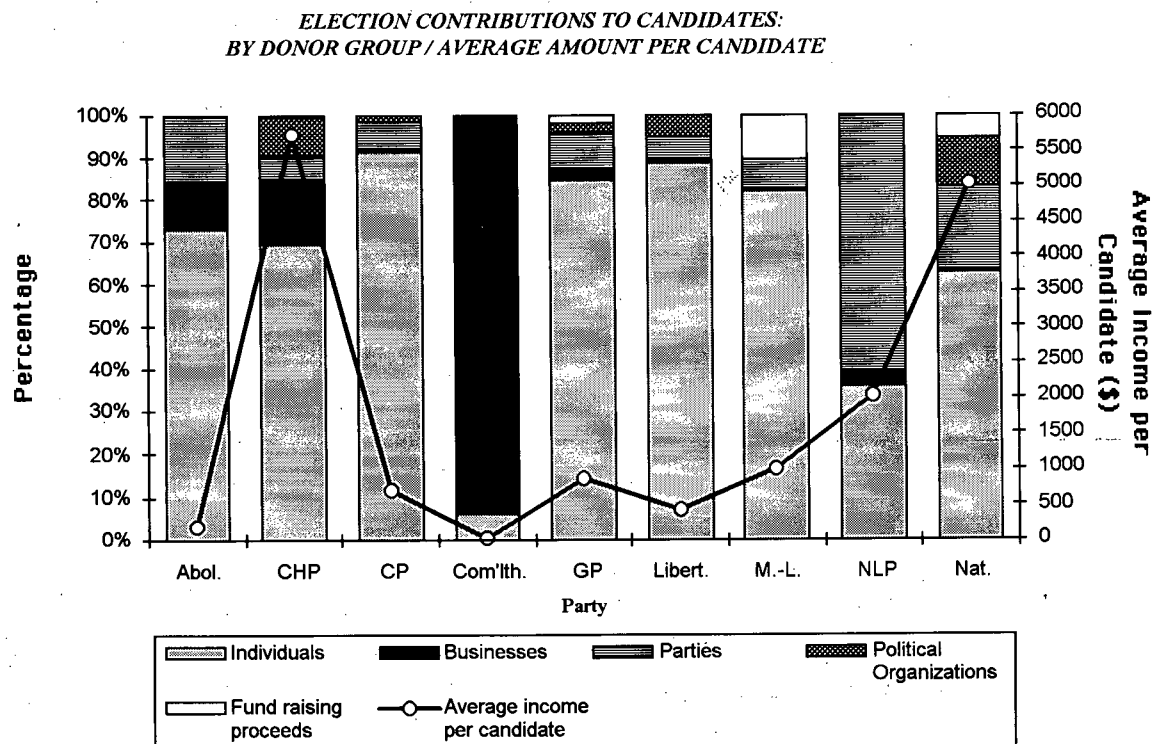
¹⁷ QC3 of the survey asked candidates about the origins of the promotional materials used in the campaign. The only respondent from the Canada Party and the lone one from the Marxist-Leninist Party both reported that it was "all produced by the national or regional office"; there was no consensus on where the materials came from in the Christian Heritage Party or the Green Party; all Natural Law Party candidates and all but one National Party candidate reported that the campaign material was either all produced nationally or mostly produced nationally; the remaining National Party candidate reported that it was mostly local in origin.

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS:

The amount of money a candidate has in his or her election purse depends to a large degree on the contributions he or she receives. When average candidate incomes, seen in Figure 3.1, are compared against average expenditures (Table 3.4) the amounts are roughly the same.

Candidates spend about as much as they receive. Peeking behind the scenes at the sources of campaign dollars improves our understanding of candidates' financial positions.

Figure 3.1



Individuals constituted the largest donor group for almost every party. The two exceptions were the Natural Law Party and the Party for the Commonwealth of Canada. In the former case, individuals accounted for 35.7 percent of donations which was second to the 60.4 percent that came from the central party's ample war chest. In the case of the Party for

the Commonwealth of Canada, its 59 candidates only received three contributions altogether: one personal donation of \$100 and two business donations totaling \$1,455. The amount that any individual donated to candidates was relatively stable across all parties; the average donation was \$178. This is comparable to the major parties who received \$120 on average. There is a substantial difference, however, in the actual number of donors per party. Major parties had an average of 24,456 individual donors, with a median of 25,460, whereas minor parties averaged a mere 683 donors. The median for minor parties was even lower at 163 because National and Christian Heritage Party candidates were far more successful at attracting contributors than their colleagues, receiving 2898 and 1677 donations respectively. Factoring out those two parties, the small party candidate average falls to 224 donations, with a median of 123. A Green Party candidate describes a typical fundraising experience to illustrate how part of the difficulty of attracting more contributors has to do with the nature of the party's support base.

I laugh every time I get one of these fundraising letters from the Green Party in my mail. I don't give you guys money, I give you my time and my energy, that's my contribution... So they do fundraising but they're targeting their members and the people who have phoned up and expressed an interest. Quite frankly, a lot of those people are young people, they're teens. I did some telephone campaigning from our list and I get people saying, "well I'm not really old enough to vote yet." If those are the people they're sending their letters out to chances are they're not going to get it.

Donations from businesses, commercial organizations and unions do not figure prominently in the life of minor party candidates. Overall, there were only 293 business or commercial donations made, 81 percent of which went to the Christian Heritage Party (67 %) and the Natural Law Party (14 %). Not a single trade union contributed to a minor party. The lack of support from these traditionally lucrative sources is easily explicable in the case of the National Party and the Canada Party: each has a policy explicitly prohibiting contributions

from corporations or unions. A member of the Canada Party explains the reason this policy was adopted.

We've discussed [the policy] a lot but we're sticking to our guns. It is a nail in our coffin in a way. If we weren't so weak as human beings and couldn't be bought then we could take them. The party believes that we can all be influenced.

Green Party candidates argue that they miss out on business donations because the philosophical nature of their environmental platform is inimical to the interests of most large corporations.

The people who support Green principles do not support corporate principles... I'm not saying that all money has come through environmentally destructive practices, but a lot of it does.

Candidates in other parties claimed that donations from business and unions were not forthcoming because donors are reluctant to support parties that do not form governments. It was not clear from the interviews whether this was a matter of perception, or whether it was based on actual experience.

The only other category of donor that made an impact was the central party itself. This is another important way (aside from advertising and producing campaign literature) that the party can assist constituency campaigns. As already noted, transfers from the Natural Law Party provided the lion's share (60.4 %) of what their candidates had to spend. The National and Abolitionist parties made transfers to candidate campaigns representing 19.5 and 15.9 percent of campaign funds respectively. Contributions made by the other parties to their constituencies accounted for less than ten percent of candidates' total incomes.

Candidates from two parties also received backing from political organizations other than their own party. Christian Heritage Party candidates received 8.8 percent of their revenue from political organizations such as Right to Life groups and National Party candidates collected 11.9 percent of funds from organizations such as the anti-Free Trade lobby.

Proceeds from fund raising efforts were minimal in every party except the Marxist-Leninists, and to a lesser degree the National Party. This is likely a result of the scant effort made by candidates to raise their own funds. In the survey, 21 candidates reported either putting "no effort" or "very little effort" into fund raising. Those who did try to improve their financial fortunes, did not find it easy. Of the eight candidates who made a "moderate effort" to raise capital, six found it to be "very difficult" or "somewhat difficult." Only two candidates could report that they made a "considerable effort" to solicit funds; neither one claimed that it had been easy.

Campaign Activities

The character of a campaign can be assessed by looking at the nature and scope of a candidate's election activities. Three related factors determined what campaign activities were undertaken: money, time and people. The data presented in this section comes almost exclusively from the surveys with some anecdotal evidence from the interviews. The survey provided a list of 11 possible election activities (there was space for "other") and asked candidates which ones they had employed to publicize their candidacy.¹⁸ Because of the small sample size, the reader should keep in mind that these findings are indicative of possible trends only, and should not be considered representative of all minor party candidates.

MONEY:

¹⁸ The election activities listed to chose from were as follows: direct mailings, random mailings, door-to-door canvassing, putting up posters, placing lawn signs, TV advertising, radio advertising, newspaper advertising, holding publicity events, holding press conferences, giving public speeches and other. See Appendix A, question B8 for exact wording.

The relative financial situations of minor party candidates have already been discussed. To recap, Natural Law, National and Christian Heritage Party candidates were better off than most, yet were still outspent by major party candidates by large margins. Small party campaigns, in general, were described by candidates as part-time, shoestring operations utterly dependent on a small core of volunteer workers. Fund-raisers could not be hired, there were no staffs of researchers or speech writers, visible store front campaign offices were usually foregone, as were advertisements and flashy publicity events. Even long distance phone calls were made sparingly. Also, small parties with concentrated memberships were often forced to ask their candidates to run in constituencies outside of their own. Without funds for travel, reaching voters far from home can be burdensome. One Vancouver area candidate lived in the Okanagan and only made it to the city for a few all-candidates meetings. Even National Party candidates, who were better funded than most, had to do without. One former candidate explains:

I could have been doing a heck of a lot more door-knocking but most of the time I was writing my speeches and reading all the stuff. Our policies were coming out as the campaign was going on... I had anticipated that people would be doing the research and feeding me the information. It would have helped.

From an empirical standpoint, there was a discernible relationship between the number of campaign activities undertaken by candidates and the amount they spent. Table 3.7 lists the average number of activities by party. The ranking of parties in this table is almost identical to the ordering found in Table 3.4, average candidate expenditures; i.e. the parties with the wealthiest candidates, engaged in the greatest number of activities. The only discrepancies between the two rankings are the Marxist-Leninist and the Canada parties, but with only one respondent each there is no way of telling if this is a trend or not.

Table 3.7***AVERAGE NUMBER OF CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES BY PARTY***

Party (# of respondents)	Average # of Activities
Nat. (8)	7.1
CHP (5)	5.8
NLP (4)	5.8
GP (6)	3.2
Libert. (5)	1.2
M.-L. (1)	1.0
CP (1)	1.0

The relationship between high levels of spending and number of campaign activities holds when individual candidates are considered separate from party affiliations. In Figure 3.2, candidates are broken down into five spending groups with the median number of activities per group represented. Although the number of activities is not directly proportional to expenditures, the two are clearly related: as spending increases, so does the number of activities.

Not all election activities are equally expensive. Some activities, such as mailings (targeted or random) or advertising, are very costly while others, such as door-to-door canvassing, holding press conferences or giving speeches, can cost nothing at all. There are also 'low-cost' items such as producing lawn signs or posters and holding publicity events. How frequently candidates mentioned each category of activity — expensive, low-cost and free — is shown in Figure 3.3. As one might expect, National Party, the Christian Heritage and Natural Law Party candidates used 'expensive' activities more than their colleagues. The trend in most parties, Natural Law excepted (and the lone Marxist-Leninist), was to marginally

Figure 3.2

Figure 3.2

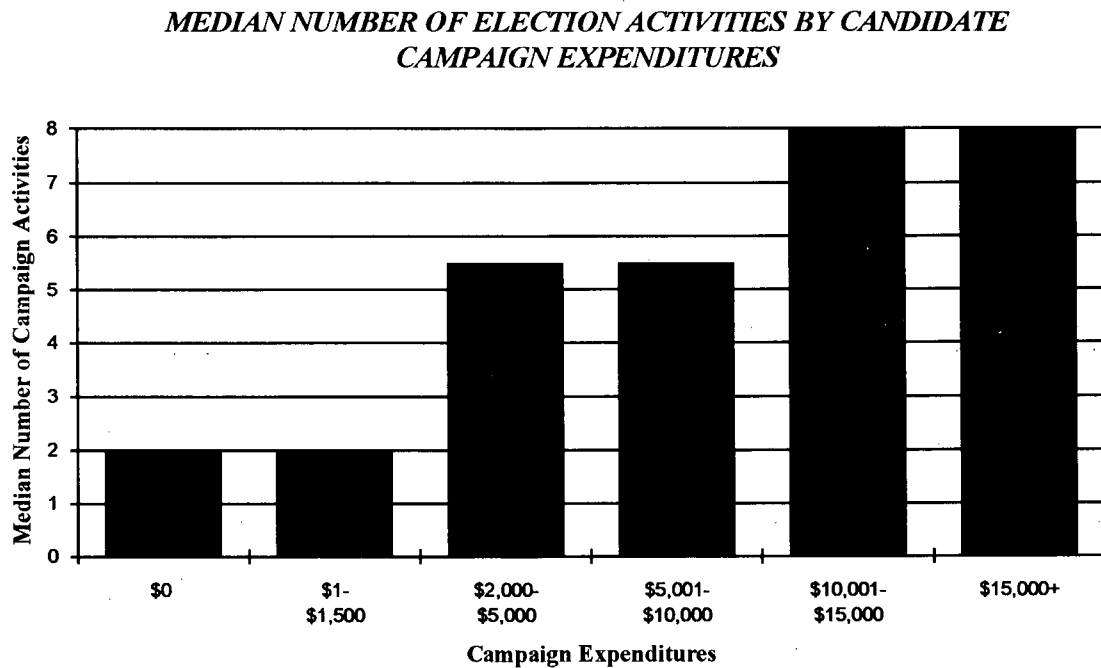
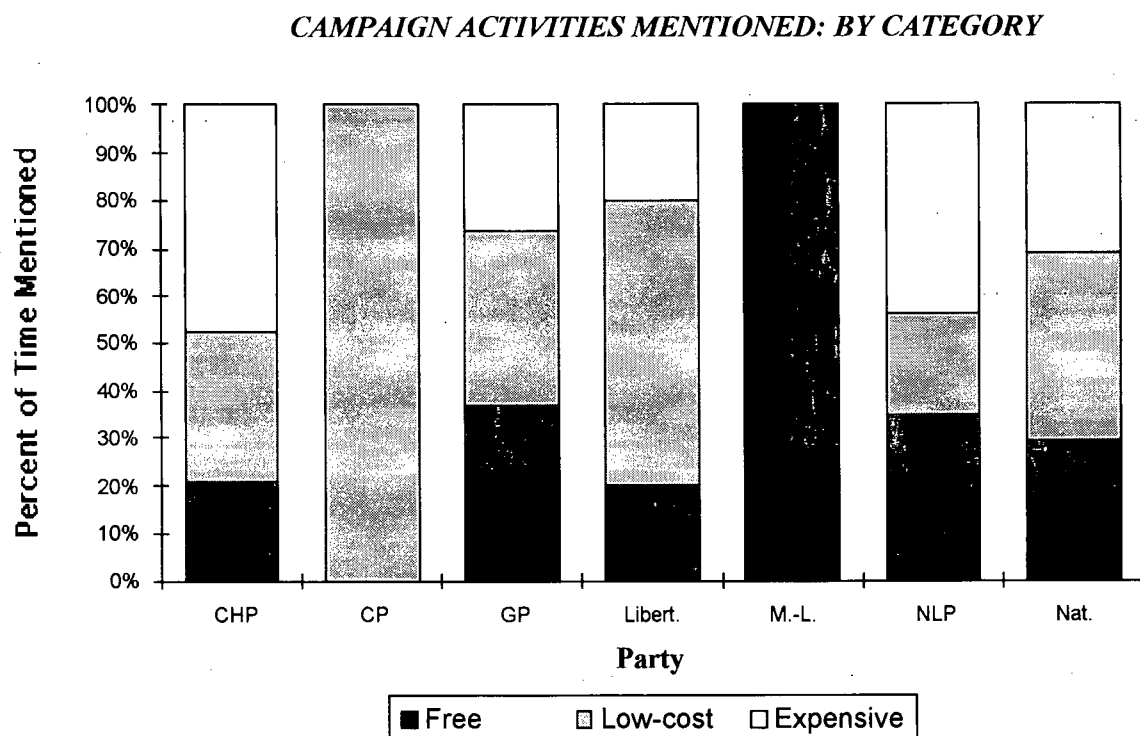


Figure 3.3



favour 'low-cost' forms of publicity over other types. Out of a total of 136 activities, 'low-cost' ones were mentioned 36.8 percent of the time, 'expensive' 33 percent of the time and 'free' 30.2 percent.

It is perhaps surprising that financially strapped candidates would not employ free activities more often. Door-to-door canvassing, in particular, is seen as the most effective tool that all candidates have at their disposal to influence voters. There is a motivational tale told to National Party candidates about a man up north who got elected precisely because he spent four years diligently knocking on every door in his constituency. One mitigating factor lessening the popularity of free activities was a shortage of time. Knocking on doors, holding press conferences (which few journalists attend, according to candidates) and giving speeches requires time. This scarce resource is the second factor which helped to shape the character of small party campaigns.

TIME:

Based on the cases used in this study, there appears to be a high incidence of part-time campaigning among minor party candidates. This phenomenon refers to candidates who have not taken a leave from work or school to run for office. Although the survey did not ask directly about the phenomenon of part-time campaigning, from the write-in answers and interviews it is clear that 21 candidates in the sample were unquestionably part-time while five others certainly ran full-time; the remaining five could not be determined.

As a general rule, part-time candidates mount low key campaigns because they do not have the time to do otherwise. For instance, all full-time people canvassed door-to-door, but only nine of the 21 part-time people used this time consuming device. The average number of

campaign activities for part-timers was 3.4, while full-time campaigners averaged 6.6 activities.

It is possible, as the adage tells us, to buy time with money. An election campaign lasts about eight weeks. Unless a candidate has sufficient financial support, running full-time translates into a substantial loss of income. As a result, the candidates who devoted themselves full-time tended to be the best funded. The five full-time campaigners in the sample were in the top ten of election earners. They averaged \$9,948 in election contributions (with a median of \$9,828), while their part-time counterparts had contributions of only \$3,652 on average (with a median of \$1,240). Given what we already know about the relative wealth of candidates, it should be no surprise that four of the five full-timers came from the National Party and the other one represented the Christian Heritage Party.

Type of employment also seems to be a factor in determining a candidate's ability to mount a more serious campaign. Two of the people who ran full-time were self-employed, one was in management, another was a principal in a small firm and the other worked in the home. When the issue of taking a leave from work was raised in the interviews (11 of 13 interview subjects ran part-time), most candidates agreed that it was a luxury they simply could not afford. Not only are there lost wages to consider, but as one teacher pointed out, she would also have to pay for a substitute to take her place. Thus, most candidates were forced to *squeeze 'political' commitments into an already very busy work schedule*. The two are not always compatible as a college instructor explained.

These elections come up at odd times. If your life is at the right stage you can do it. The beginning of the school year [October 1993]—that was a terrible time for me so I didn't do as much as I had hoped to do. I don't even think I got a brochure out that time.

A home support worker complained that his schedule prevented him from taking time out for even the all-candidates debates. Candidates in more flexible professions were better able to accommodate the two responsibilities. An investment advisor explained that he was able to compress his workday into the morning hours so that he could leave for the campaign trail at precisely 1:30 every day.

A few candidates confided in the interviews that they would consider making a more concerted bid for office if there was a hope they might win. But, as one candidate professed, the opportunity cost of missing work is not worthwhile when the chance of going to Ottawa is so slim.

PEOPLE:

The level of campaign activity is also tied to the size of team working behind the candidate. A wider range of initiatives can be undertaken if a support staff is in place and more importantly, the candidate can be relieved of the routine matters that occupy valuable time. A Green candidate, who has run before, discussed the extra burden placed on politicians who are not supported by large teams:

Previously I had been trying to do it all: go to the printers, pick things up, write speeches, do all the background work, drive myself to meetings, drive other candidates to meetings, do neighbourhood mail drops, get signatures — most Greens don't even have cars. In other parties there are committees and workers to do all these things. Most other candidates don't even see their nomination papers. You have to work a lot harder.

Aside from having bodies to run errands, candidates from larger parties often have professionals to work with them. People to write speeches, publish and distribute literature, raise funds, and develop presentation skills. For small parties, bringing specialists on board requires the never-present, money. A first-time candidate from the National Party noticed a marked difference in her Reform opponent from one all-candidates debate to the next.

Certainly she had handlers behind her. She changed almost over night. She was coached beautifully. She was pseudo Preston Manning, somebody had really trained her how to manage herself. I was impressed with that. We were just a little group of ten people.

A little group of ten people is just about the norm for the candidates in this sample.

The average size of a campaign team was 9.1 with a median of 5. Once again, National Party members were found at the high end of the scale with teams ranging from 15 to 30 people, thus indicating more organized and earnest bids for office. The rest of the field averaged a mere 4.3 volunteers per team with only Christian Heritage respondents reporting double digit figures.¹⁹ To give some perspective to these totals, in the 1988 election the number of volunteers working in for a Progressive Conservative candidate was 150, a Liberal candidate had 100 volunteers and an NDP 140 (Carty 1991, 168).²⁰

Two interpretations emerged to explain why only a tiny nucleus of volunteers surround these candidates. The first is that usually party rank and file are there to offer their assistance at election time. For very small and /or new parties, such as the Marxist-Leninists, the Canada Party, Libertarians or the Party for the Commonwealth of Canada, virtually all of their members are themselves running for office leaving no one to help out. The fact that only four nominations were contested in the entire sample, three in the National Party and one in the Christian Heritage, bears witness to this predicament. The second interpretation relates to the character of marginal political players. Candidates' reasons for running for Parliament usually have little to do with winning, as seen in the previous chapter. However, in order to keep motivation and energy levels high during the contest, campaigners suspend their disbelief

¹⁹ It should be noted that for the smaller teams it is unclear whether candidates were counting themselves when reporting the size of campaign team. For instance, some wrote *one plus myself, just myself* or simply *1* or *2*. Moreover, some candidates were very precise with the higher figures, i.e. *17 people*, while others noted they were only estimating. In general, since the survey was conducted two years after the election, figures should be considered indications of trends rather than known quantities.

²⁰ These numbers represent median riding associations. The figure given for the NDP corresponds to the median 'real' constituency association; the median for a 'paper' constituency was 70.

and aim for the Ottawa dream. To have a sizable team behind you, requires of those volunteers the same sort of psychological commitment. A Libertarian candidate explains the powerful legitimizing effect of this type of psychological inertia.

The real thing to do [to run an effective campaign] is you really have to get organized. It means you need a real organization, but to get a real organization means there's got to be a lot of other people who are willing also to suspend disbelief. If enough people do it, of course then you're no longer suspending disbelief. People don't want to support you if they feel they're the only person supporting you. Everyone likes to feel they're part of a, if not the majority, at least a big, solid chunk... You need people out there working for the candidate, that's the real level. That's what the Reform Party did right. They organized grassroots organization to get out there and legitimize their party in the eyes of the general public. I don't think any of the other fringe parties have legitimized themselves in that way of engaging ordinary citizens to work part time on their campaigns.

CONCLUSION:

Small parties are often stereotyped as fringe organizations not serious about electoral involvement (Hackett 1991). Observers look to their meager campaign efforts and then draw what seems like a reasonable conclusion. What this chapter reveals is that many factors work together to shape the nature of a minor party campaign. It is not simply a question of forming a party and then making the decision to mount sparse campaign after sparse campaign. The interplay of internal and external forces exert their pressure and the campaign takes shape.

Money is the single most important factor in determining the type of campaign that a party and candidate can run. At every step of the way, this was the factor that divided minor party from major, and 'serious' small parties from the 'non-serious.' Based on the level of campaign organization, the National and Natural Law Parties (and the Christian Heritage Party to some degree) were the most serious. They had constituency offices, impressive looking campaign literature, advertisements in national newspapers and were able to field far more candidates than the 50 person minimum. None of this had anything to do with their level

of popular support, and had everything to do with overflowing campaign coffers. Coasters filled not by diligent fund raising, but by a single wealthy individual.

For the rest of the parties and their candidates, the situation was less ideal. In most cases, the \$1000 deposit candidates had to put up, was more than they would spend throughout the entire campaign. What money they did have, was mostly expended on advertising in small community papers since their central parties could ill afford to do the publicity for them. And for a candidate whose main election goal is 'getting the message out', advertising is an essential expense. If this means that a campaign phone line must be forgone to place a few ads, so be it. Less money also meant that fewer activities could be undertaken to promote the campaign. This is because most activities cost money, and because activities take time. Time is a scarce commodity among politicians who have to combine their political life with a full work week.

Candidates could clearly make use of more money, but there are certain difficulties involved in procuring more financial capital. First of all, fund raising takes time which we have already seen is at a premium. Money is also needed to begot money (i.e. standing on a street corner with a Canada Party collection plate is unlikely to meet with great success). Secondly, the perennial cash cows for political parties, businesses and trade unions, are not in the habit of donating to the multitude of marginal parties that have no hope of political influence. Third, the major parties have election machines that perpetually raise money for the next election. Minor parties rarely have fund raising teams at all, let alone ones that work full-time. The last, but most significant reason for the perpetuation of small party poverty, is that they are generally excluded from the government funding scheme for political parties.²¹ Ostensibly fair

²¹ All registered political parties can issue tax receipts for donations which is another way that a minor party can receive government funds.

rules for reimbursing election expenses to candidates and parties systematically prevent small parties from feeding from the public trough.

The success of any party depends upon its visibility with voters. The best way we have of accessing the electorate is over the airwaves and predominantly through television.

The distribution of broadcasting time, free and paid for, is overseen by government of Canada authorities because "fairness in electoral competition requires that the contenders be given reasonable access to those media channels that are likely to be the most effective in carrying their arguments to voters" (Lortie 1991a, 375). But as we have seen, "reasonable access" has not been given very generous interpretation for small parties. There is no way of telling what effect greater access to radio and TV would have had for small parties, but given the potency of the medium, it could only have been beneficial. If small parties had reached more voters, they could have earned more votes and maybe even have earned one or two reimbursements. At the very least, voters would have been given a reasonable opportunity to examine the alternatives to their steady diet of mainstream parties.

From the evidence examined in this chapter we can conclude that marginal campaigns are not necessarily a choice for smaller players. Just because a minor party has goals other than winning majority in Parliament, does not mean that has no stake in an election. Most of the candidates interviewed, admitted that they would eagerly seize an opportunity to run a more serious campaign if they had the means. Thus, if circumstances were different, and the political system did not stack the odds so heavily against small parties, it is possible that they would set their sights on higher political goals.

Chapter IV: (NOT) GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

Part of the logic behind any political campaign is to communicate a particular set of ideas. We saw in chapter two that small party candidates participate in elections primarily to disseminate their political beliefs. These beliefs can be communicated through three types of channels: those that are unmediated, partially mediated or mediated (Lortie 1991a, 375).

Forms of campaign communication:

Unmediated

Paid time advertising
Free time advertising
Mailings
Canvassing
Posting signs
Speeches

Partially Mediated

Leaders debates
All-candidates debates
Interview shows

Mediated

News coverage

The previous chapter described the legal and financial constraints faced by small parties and candidates in trying to deliver their message directly to the public. The forms of communication examined in that chapter can all be classified as 'unmediated.' They include paid-time and free-time advertising, distribution of literature (through the mail or otherwise), door-to-door canvassing, putting up lawn signs and posters and giving speeches. This chapter examines the types of campaign communication that rely on third parties; they are classified as

'partially mediated' and 'mediated' communications. The former refers to leaders debates, all-candidates debates and interview shows and the latter is principally concerned with news coverage. These forms of communication are especially important to small party candidates because they do not deplete precious financial resources. A capital poor campaign can still reach significant numbers of voters if these channels of communication are open to the candidate and party; and a capital rich campaign still needs to be given media exposure to be taken seriously by the public.

Based primarily on what candidates said in the interviews, it appears that very little of their message is being communicated through mediated and partially mediated means. Small party leaders were not invited to the televised leaders debates, which according to candidates, did *irreparable harm* to their individual election bids. All-candidates debates were portrayed as self-serving exercises in political posturing, minor party candidate interviews were virtually unknown and candidates repeatedly complained of being treated as fringe elements and *political nutcases* by the press and debate organizers. The overall feeling amongst interview participants was that they had been unduly fettered in their efforts at 'getting the message out.' These claims are explored in the course of this chapter.

Partially Mediated Campaign Communication

LEADERS DEBATES:

Televised leaders debates are now recognized as pivotal events in Canadian election campaigns (Bernier and Monière 1991). They are successful at stimulating public interest because they provide voters with the only opportunity "to compare the positions, personalities and abilities of the [leaders] at the same time and in the same place" (Bernier and Monière 1991, 159). That is to say, they permit voters to compare the performances and policies of the

major party leaders, but they have no way of assessing the minor parties because they are not included.

In 1993, the exclusion of the minor parties from the leaders debates erupted into legal controversy. Prior to the election, a consortium of networks banded together to agree on which parties would be included in the debates. The consortium decided to invite those parties sitting in Parliament, parties scoring at least five percent in current opinion polls, and parties who played a discernible role the recent constitutional and economic debates (CEO Canada 1994). Based on these considerations, Lucien Bouchard, leader of the Bloc Québécois, a new party not currently sitting in Parliament, and Preston Manning, leader of the Reform Party holding one seat in the House, were invited. Mel Hurtig of the National Party and Natural Law Party leader, Dr. Neil Paterson, were not. Hurtig contested his exclusion in *National Party v. CBC* making his case on the grounds that the CBC was remiss in its duty to strengthen the political fabric of Canada, thus constituting a breach of sections 2 (fundamental freedoms) and 15 (equality) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Canada 1982). Both the Alberta Court of the Queen's Bench and the Alberta Court of Appeal dismissed Hurtig's application to be included in the debates arguing that the CBC does not constitute a government entity and therefore is not bound by the *Charter*. Similarly, Dr. Paterson launched a case of his own, *Natural Law Party v. CBC*, arguing that his inequitable treatment would do irreparable harm to his party. In this instance, the Federal Court (Trial Division) did not hear the case deeming it to be out of the Court's jurisdiction.

Eventually, the CBC agreed to stage a separate event for the so called 'junior parties,' but this was seen by many candidates as an inferior and even detrimental substitute for real event. The incident exemplified for many candidates the institutionalized nature of their fringe status. A disgruntled candidate observed that although *the electoral laws in Canada don't*

make any distinction between candidates... that's not what happens in practice. To the National Party, it was a devastating blow in their bid to become a serious player. A few supporters, like the one quoted below, felt it was the decisive factor of the campaign.

The fact that Mel Hurtig was unable to participate in the national debate I would say cost us, it's hard to say, but several points in popular vote across the country... People were still just barely discovering the National Party up till the very last minute... The people weren't given an opportunity to consider those ideas. So as far as I'm concerned the media failed very badly in presenting Canadians with their alternatives.

This case is not without merit. Research into the effects of televised debates in Canadian elections suggest that they have a “discernible influence on the Canadian electorate and that this influence is overwhelmingly positive” (Barr 1991, 145). The most important effect found by Barr was that debates supply political information used to make voting decisions (particularly for “low media users”). Barr also found that debates can be a factor in helping some people decide to switch their vote. Further, debates had the effect of enhancing overall evaluations of the leaders who participated.²² Based on these findings, it is fair to conclude that small parties are adversely affected by not being allowed to participate in the leaders debates. In another study of televised leaders debates, Lawrence Le Duc concludes that the favorable effects associated with a leader’s ability to “reach a mass audience in a positive setting” (i.e. the debate) are probably greatest for “smaller parties and political unknowns” (Le Duc 1994, 67-8). The experience of the BC Liberal Party would seem to confirm this view. At the outset of the 1991 provincial election, the BC Liberals were on the margins of provincial politics. Accordingly, they were not invited to participate in the televised leaders debate. After successfully fighting their way into the debate, however, they

²² Barr also found a statistical relationship between voter turnout and debate exposure but the results were inconclusive since both factors were also related to interest level in the campaign.

performed exceedingly well. So well, that the former fringe party became the official opposition in 1991 and the debate was credited with the transformation.²³

ALL-CANDIDATES DEBATES:

Constituency level all-candidates debates are a fixture of Canadian elections. It is not uncommon for an urban riding to hold 10 or 12 debates in the course of one eight week campaign. In the Vancouver sample, all but two candidates, or 93.5 percent, reported participating in one or more all-candidates debates during the 1993 election.²⁴ Given the ubiquity of the experience, one would expect widespread support for the institution, but this was not the case for the majority of respondents. While most participants did enjoy debating and appreciated the opportunity to interact with the other candidates, they tended to take a dim view of the usefulness of the exercise.

Two reasons seemed to lie behind this general perception of futility. The first, iterated over and over by candidates, is that there are seldom any votes to be won at all-candidates meetings because the audience is comprised almost solely of committed voters brought by the candidates themselves. The absurdity created by a situation where every contender brings their own audience, was noted by several candidates. As one said:

There were 11 candidates running in Vancouver East, each with an entourage of between two and ten people. So that tells you who's in the audience. At every all-candidates meeting there were maybe one or two people that could be persuaded. The others were already in another camp.

²³ The importance of leadership debates to small parties is illustrated by another incident that happened in the 1991 BC provincial election. The Green Party does not traditionally have a leader because it is not a hierarchical organization. However, in the last BC election, the CBC blocked Valerie Jerome from representing her party at the leadership debate because she was not legally the leader. As a result of the incident, the Green Party has felt forced, even if just nominally, to select a leader for its provincial and federal branches.

²⁴ Of the two who did not attend any all-candidates meetings, one was because he could not get the time off work and the other because he said he did not find them useful.

The farce continues into question period when the microphone alternates between party workers. From the point of view of marginal candidates, stacking the audience is a necessary evil to ensure at least one question is asked of them following their brief three minute opening statement. Campaigners who did not bring supporters with them typically found that no questions were directed to them during the open-mike sessions.

I have spoken at all-candidates debates where I haven't been asked a single question. That's not just our party; that comes from this whole business of major and minor.

The second reason candidates expressed displeasure with all-candidates debates relates to the format. The consensus opinion was that little of substance could be communicated in a three minute speech (the most common amount) followed by rehearsed answers to planted questions. Moreover, the format precludes *free discussion* or any semblance of genuine debating, settling instead for *superficial platitudes and three minute sound bites*. Some indictments of the format were even more scathing.

If this is the closest we come to democracy in practice, in terms of truth seeking and presenting concepts to the public... then it is probably the greatest indication of how weak is our democracy.

The regrettable state of the all-candidates debate can be regarded as a by-product of the proliferation of parties and candidates. Simply stated, the number of participants outgrew the format. One perennial candidate has seen the problem developing.

The trouble is... all of a sudden organizers of all-candidates meetings were faced with a problem. You couldn't have ten people there, and how fair is it for everyone to have opening statements; it just became a little bit harder to work with. That hasn't really resolved itself.

One way it has been resolving itself, to the detriment of marginal players, is for debate organizers to selectively invite only those candidates deemed to be the serious contenders.

Exclusion from debates and round table-type discussions emerged as a dominant theme in the

interviews. Each candidate I spoke with had either been a victim of exclusion themselves, or knew a colleague who had been. Only National Party and Christian Heritage Party members seemed to fare better than the others on this point. Often they were counted among the candidates who had a chance. To be fair to debate organizers, the pruning down of numbers is a matter of convenience not insidiousness. For the most part, if a candidate did find out about an event, usually through the newspaper, and requested to come, they were permitted to do so. Occasionally, however, the situation was less amicable. One Marxist-Leninist candidate was told by a debate organizer that there was not enough room on the stage for him but that he was free to come and raise questions from the audience. When he showed up and began to read his prepared statement, which would have been acceptable had he been on stage, he was physically ejected from the hall for causing a disruption.

The preceding discussion of the flaws of constituency-level debates gives rise to the question of why candidates feel the need to participate at all. Why do they fight for a chance to speak for three minutes to partisan ears? One answer they gave is the hope of influencing the few undecided voters that may be present. Another reason was the possibility of getting some ink in the local press. The prospects of both were greatly augmented when debates were televised on Rogers or Shaw Cable or broadcast on the radio. The televised meetings, in particular, were highly praised as the most effective way to capture audiences beyond the reach of door-to-door canvassing. But not every constituency was awarded the privilege of a TV soapbox and the format of these debates was rarely better than what has already been described. The format could even be worse. In one radio debate, after hurried opening statements candidates were asked questions by an in-studio panel. The candidate to whom the question was directed had one minute to respond; the rest of the group had one minute to share for their rebuttals. To divide the 60 seconds, debaters were told to interrupt the previous

speaker once 20 seconds had been used up. Not surprisingly, the debate quickly degenerated into an aggressive shouting match, no doubt entertaining radio audiences, but doing little to advance democracy.

The reason most often extolled as the prime benefit of attending was the opportunity to capture the ear of potential winning politicians. Many candidates were utterly devoted to their role as educators, as illustrated below.

I must say I went to every single all-candidates meeting that came along because I knew that I didn't have a hope of being elected but what I wanted to do was put some ideas forward to the people who potentially would be elected to office. I think it's really important for people to hear the message no matter what.

Over the course of several debates, a rapport tends to develop between candidates. One woman told me how gratified she felt when another candidate approached her to find out about a book she had been quoting from. In another instance following a debate, a Tory contender confessed to his Libertarian counterpart, *I guess I'm a libertarian*. A Natural Law Party member felt that over the whole election, *the people that heard the message of the Natural Law Party the most, and heard it the most clearly, were the other candidates... and they realised we have a genuine platform*. Since an explicit goal of many of these parties is policy appropriation, these exchanges represent an invaluable means of disseminating their ideas to potential decision makers. Of course it is impossible to measure the extent to which this happens, but it is reasonable to assume if anyone has learned about a fledgling party's platform by the end of an election it is the other candidates.

On the down side, not all candidates established a bond with their colleagues. Several times major party representatives were criticized for their *aloofness, rude and dismissive behaviour* or their absence from debates altogether. Moreover, the bulk of debaters I heard from emerged from the experience with a strong sense that the candidate does not matter to

election outcomes. They felt that by the end of an intense campaign, they were in a good position to judge, and that there appeared to be no relationship between the quality of performance and the eventual winner. The sentiment below perfectly sums up the how many in the sample perceived the debating experience.

In the end I think it just makes the candidates feel better. I don't think they have that much influence on the outcome of elections. You can know yourself how you have performed, how other candidates have performed at the all-candidates meetings and by the time you finish an election you've seen everybody in action. The results bear no resemblance whatsoever to the performance.

In the end, all-candidates debates are a poor channel of communication for small parties not because they are shut out (as they are in the case of leaders debates), but because all-candidates debates themselves represent a missed opportunity to enhance political communication at the constituency level.

INTERVIEW SHOWS:

Few words can be written on the subject of interview shows because most candidates did not have experience with them. Only two candidates in the sample received this type of individual attention and both were from the National Party. One was very pleased with a 20 minute interview given on CBC Radio's *Almanac*, and the other had what he *felt was a good interview with Rogers Cable*. The only other person to mention this format was a Libertarian candidate whose efforts to have his party featured were refused:

We kept thinking, "they're devoting all this time to these other parties, we can at least get one Libertarian candidate on a talk show." No, we didn't. We sure tried.

Clearly, then, the interview show can not generally be considered an available channel of communication for small parties.

Mediated Campaign Communication

NEWS COVERAGE:

For the majority of Canadians, the news media is their primary source of political information (MacDermid 1991). During elections the press becomes the gatekeeper for the national debate and the main link that Canadians have to federal campaign proceedings. As for local campaigns, there is virtually no mention of them in the major press — television and the national and provincial daily newspapers — and as a result voters tend to be ill-informed about them. R. H. MacDermid, writing for the 1991 Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, characterizes the situation in these terms:

Modern political campaigns, unlike their predecessors of as little as thirty years ago, are waged almost entirely through television, radio, newspapers and magazines... Only a small percentage of voters ever see local candidates in the flesh, and many will never see them on television, hear about them on the radio, or read about them in newspapers, for all of those media tend to feature reports about national campaigns rather than local campaigns and local candidates (45).²⁵

Community level journalists pay more attention to constituency campaigns, but they reach comparatively fewer people than do the larger media (Hackett 1991).

In spite of the obvious potency of news coverage, smaller parties are rarely included in the daily digest of election reporting. Our Vancouver area candidates reported feeling slighted by the established press who relegated them to *fringe* status, and accused the major media of *close-mindedness* and utterly ignoring alternative voices. In general they felt that the *Vancouver media tend to operate as though there are only three or four parties at most in this country*. What's more, the situation seems unlikely to change. When questioned about this issue, "[j]ournalists almost unanimously agree that the smaller parties received the coverage they deserved — proportional to their perceived popular appeal" (Gilsdorf and Bernier 1991,

²⁵ For more information about this see Yum and Kendall 1988 and Fletcher 1987.

24). Community based papers received praise by candidates, but were not entirely beyond reproach. It should be noted at this point that despite the small sample size used in this study, research conducted in the field of Canadian election coverage has met with similar findings.²⁶

Many complaints of a major media depicted as *brutally neglectful to the alternate parties* sprang from the mouths of the candidates. Television was singled out by many as the most difficult, but most important medium to penetrate.

You think, why is it that the fringe candidates basically have about three or four per cent of the vote to carve up amongst all of them? Surely some of their ideas must strike a chord occasionally? But, if they don't get exposure on television it's extremely difficult to be taken seriously because people think that's where everything real happens. It's a perception thing.

This perception is valid since studies show that television news has a decisive agenda-setting effect on the public (Iyengar and Kinder 1987). The priorities that news producers attach to various news items, i.e. where they are placed and if they are placed at all, influence what viewers identify as important issues. Thus, when minor parties are excluded from TV coverage, they are denied the opportunity to earn a place on the public agenda. The problem of minor party invisibility on television is so acute, according to candidates, that party names are not even mentioned, let alone policies. One Marxist-Leninist candidate pointed out that in terms of television coverage, it is as if his party does not even exist.

Once the nominations are in, some papers don't even announce all the candidates, some do and some don't. Now television doesn't. They don't even give riding by riding results, they just give elected so we were even blanked out on election night. We had to phone back east if we wanted to find out how many votes we were getting.

Accounts from other candidates indicate that the situation in the major printed press is not much better. Here the party name may be listed, but usually little else.

The newspaper articles in the major papers, which would talk about whose running in the different ridings, would cover all the biographies of the major

²⁶ See Hackett 1991 and Frizzell et al 1989.

candidates and there at the bottom would say, "also running is the Libertarian candidate,-----"

In the experience of many candidates, those newspaper articles that did acknowledge their existence, usually give them only perfunctory coverage or condescended to them. A

Libertarian explains:

The real problem with the small party candidates is they're not taken seriously by the major media or the major metropolitan press unless they're looking for a little human interest sideline. They're never taken seriously politically.

Even when journalists were directly supplied with press releases about policy platforms or upcoming events, rarely did they reach the pages of a major daily let alone the airwaves. This frustration is exemplified by a Christian Heritage Party spokesperson:

Our party sends out every other week a fax to hundreds and hundreds of media across Canada. Maybe three or four mention it once in a while. It's tough to break through.

The press was also blamed by candidates for promoting the notion of the 'wasted vote,' i.e. that a vote given to a party with no hope of winning is a vote wasted.

What they say is that you're throwing away your vote if you're voting for somebody that hasn't a chance of being elected. The media is dictating that you only have a choice of voting for the Liberals, Conservatives or NDP... the media is saying that there are only a certain number of serious candidates and everybody else is fringe; don't vote for a fringe candidate or you'll lose your vote.

Every candidate interviewed, without exception, had the experience of being repeatedly told by voters that in spite of being the best candidate, they would not be rewarded with a vote until the party proved itself. Proving oneself translates in to garnering a substantial vote share, leaving them in a catch-22 situation. The outright anger felt by candidates was evident.

That really gets to me after a while. You can take it from one or two people, but you think, if everybody agreed with me it wouldn't be a wasted vote! Why people think their one vote counts more if it's one of 25,000 or one of 250, what's the difference? Your vote's still counted.

As suggested earlier, media bias not only encompasses ignoring smaller parties, it also refers to the *close-mindedness* of the forth estate. This complaint was specifically voiced by Christian Heritage and Natural Law Party members:

... some of the press told us they wouldn't interview us because we carry the name Christian. So you talk about bias of the media, there it is. In fact, they said if you drop the name Christian and just call yourselves the Heritage Party maybe we'll talk to you.

Q: What was the most negative aspect of running as [Natural Law Party] a candidate?

A: The closed-minded, unprofessional, unobjective media.

Fortunately, the media was found to be equally negligent towards small parties when it came to bad publicity. When asked whether they had received negative press, apart from a few candidates who spoke vaguely about a *propensity to misquote* or of type setting errors appearing in paid advertisements, most respondents seemed to agree that *the negativity was not in slamming us, but in ignoring us*. This concurs with Hackett's content analysis the media's treatment of smaller parties during the 1988 general election (1991). He found that only 4.1 percent of news items about minor parties were unfavourable compared with 27.2 percent for major parties (209). Hackett attributes the lower rate of negative coverage, as well as a higher rate of dismissive coverage, to a general reluctance by the media to scrutinize parties with scant chance of forming a government.

Candidates were generally more pleased with the coverage they received from the community press than from the major newspapers and TV. Most respondents felt that the local media gave the same attention to all parties, and that specific pieces on them were accurate and fair. This is compatible with Hackett's finding that community papers devote considerably more attention to local campaigns than do the mainstream dailies — 68.5 percent the time compared with 17.6 percent for the dailies (211). Presumably, when less attention is

paid to the national leadership race, more time can be apportioned by journalists to each local contender.

Press releases, on the other hand, were largely ignored by community papers as were inter-election activities such as conventions and leadership races, even when held in that paper's locality. A Canada Party candidate describes how he tried in vain to secure some local coverage for their national convention.

We had a big national convention in Kelowna in October. We had a little news release, about half a page, a third of a page, I took it into all the papers personally and asked them to print it. I waited 2 weeks, it didn't go in. This was our national meeting held in Kelowna. I'm on the executive as well and our leader is from Vernon, so it's all local types. After two weeks I went back and said, how come you wouldn't put us in? They said every reason they had, it could have been valid but I'm saying to get things in the media is very, very difficult.

There was also some concern that the *smaller papers take their cue from the bigger ones and they go by the polls. If you're not in the polls then they assume it's not their job to put you in the polls.* Nonetheless, election coverage at the community level was usually favourably appraised, with only one or two notable exceptions. The most glaring exception was related by a Canada Party representative: At first elated that a press release was actually to be printed, he was later shocked when the headline in the paper read, "Woman Leads Party." The leader of the Canada Party, obvious from the submitted copy, is **Mr. Claire Foss**.

All told, it seems that media at the local level is a far more accessible means of communication for small parties than the larger press. However, in terms of getting the message out, no matter how accommodating community journalists may be, they can never claim to influence voters' opinions to the same extent as their larger colleagues.

CONCLUSION:

How easy or difficult it is for minor parties to get their message out is vital to the achievement of their goals. Given most parties' meager resources, they are forced to rely increasingly on cost-free mediated and partially mediated forms of communication. Unfortunately, parties have little control over how or if their message is delivered through these means. From what we have learned in the preceding discussion, it appears that voters are, on the whole, not being informed about minor parties via these channels. The implications of this conclusion are twofold: it is a blight on our democracy and it threatens the survival of marginal parties altogether.

The Canadian government has seen fit to enact laws, such as limits on election spending and broadcasting restrictions, to mitigate the influence of money on the ability of parties to communicate with the electorate. This is done because our democracy values freedom of expression (demonstrated in 1982 when it was entrenched in the *Charter*), and because freedom of expression in the electoral process "cannot be meaningfully achieved unless the laws that govern this process explicitly seek to promote fairness in the exercise of this freedom" (Lortie 1991a, 324). However, due to the "enormous legal obstacles" that would be encountered, no similar regulations exist for editorial news policy or news coverage (Hackett 1991, 264). As a result, small parties are grossly underrepresented in most forms of mediated and partially mediated communication. Hence, there is no genuine guarantee of freedom of expression since there are no provisions to guarantee equality of access.

The neglect of small parties by the media (including leaders debates, interview programs and news coverage) endangers their existence because of what Noelle-Neumann, a public opinion researcher, terms "the spiral of silence" effect (1974). Noelle-Neumann asserts that public opinion about politics is created by the mass media because politics is outside of

most people's "immediate personal sphere."²⁷ When the mass media displays indifference toward minor parties, this attitude is transferred to the public mind as the dominant opinion about small parties. The dominant opinion is constantly reinforced, the theory continues, because individuals are disinclined to express opinions that differ from dominant ones. This aversion stems from a fear of self-isolation, or "separation," and from doubts "about one's own capacity for judgment" (43). Therefore, people will not risk publicly advocating, or even privately supporting, a party that lacks media visibility owing to the danger of self-isolation and self-doubt. "Thus the tendency of the one [opinion] to speak up" and others to be silent, "starts off a spiraling process which increasingly establishes one opinion as the prevailing one" (44). In this case, the prevailing opinion is that minor parties are not worth considering. The ultimate fate of the neglected party is political irrelevance and eventually its demise. This outcome is well-appreciated by small party members who are working towards reforming the regime of media neglect.

²⁷ Public opinion about social or moral issues, i.e. fashion trends or abortion, is formed through the interaction of individuals with their immediate social environment.

Chapter V: WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO WIN

The underlying assumption throughout this paper has been that minor parties are entitled to participate in electoral politics. Moreover, as legitimate participants, they deserve to be treated fairly by the system. However, the point has been made several times that this is often not the experience of minor party candidates. Instead they are discriminated against by the press and debate organizers, financial resources are very limited and electoral laws concerning registration thresholds, broadcasting time and campaign reimbursements unduly fetter small parties and their candidates. A common perception among the candidates involved in this study is that they are not competing on a level playing field with the established parties and candidates. To a large extent, this is the central message that many in the sample wished to convey through this research project. The following comment by a Christian Heritage candidate could well refer to all small parties candidates, not just those from his own party.

What we're saying is that we need a level playing field for every party... There should be a level playing field for everybody to take part in. And nobody should be ostracized for size or intent if we are saying that Canada is truly democratic.

More precisely, several candidates are of the opinion that the situation of inequality is legislated into existence.

Some of the attempts to make elections fair — it looks to me like they've created inequities instead of dealing with them. There may be inequities that ought to be dealt with by statute, but the way in which they've intervened in the system, it

exacerbates the situation, it doesn't mitigate it. It makes it harder for the small parties... I just wish they wouldn't legislate us out of having a shot.

Professor Jenson (1991), in a study for the 1991 Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing, concurs with this assessment arguing that “the principle of equality of opportunity — or the so-called level playing field — does not appear to have provided inspiration for the present mechanisms of public funding” (148). Hackett (1991), also writing for the Commission, comments on the significant advantages enjoyed by the major parties over smaller ones:

... large and established parties already enjoy overwhelming advantages through incumbency, funding, news coverage, and the permitted allocation of resources to use paid advertising on television... (262)

This chapter examines what candidates perceived would be necessary in order to enjoy electoral success. Electoral reform as a strategy was mentioned by most interview participants and suggestions for reform were solicited in the written surveys. But whereas candidates generally had well thought-out views regarding the problems they perceived in the electoral process, they were considerably less thorough with respect to potential solutions. In fact, apart from specific reforms to the electoral system, or ideas about changing the behaviour of MPs and parties in Parliament, candidates had fairly unstructured opinions about the improvements they hoped to see. More commonly, candidates took a sociological approach to their future success, discussing the social conditions that would be necessary in order to gain public acceptance. Conditions of critical mass, crisis and credibility were all cited during the interview process and are discussed in the second part of this chapter. The final section concerns what the future holds for minor parties in terms of possible reforms — made by candidates and the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform — and the meaning of the 1993

election. The chapter concludes with some parting observations and suggestions for the direction of further research.

Electoral Reform

The aspect of electoral politics most frequently cited by candidates as needing reform was the electoral system itself. Thirteen candidates, representing six of the parties, endorsed some variation of proportional representation (PR); two parties, Christian Heritage and the Green Party, include it as an official policy objective. Indeed, many small parties are reportedly becoming involved in the Committee for Electoral Reform, which was established explicitly to mobilize support for proportional representation.²⁸ A few of the candidates were clear about the precise form of PR we should adopt, but most others merely expressed support for the concept. For instance, this type of reform was seen by one candidate as *a good stepping stone for smaller parties*, and a healthy move away from the counterproductive idea that *whoever gets the most votes wins*, by another. The benefit of PR, according to a Green candidate, is the increased media exposure it would invite:

I would really like to see proportional representation. I think then the media would have to pay attention to the fact that smaller parties do have a possibility. With five percent of the vote you can actually have five percent of the seats.

The only unambiguous dissenters of PR were from the Libertarian Party, citing an aversion to giving the leadership of any party the power to determine candidate lists. At the same time, they also rejected the current 'first-past-the-post' electoral system. One Libertarian preferred a preferential ballot that would allow the electorate to vote for the candidate and

²⁸ Founded by members of the Christian Heritage Party, and strongly supported by that party, the Committee for Electoral Reform is a pro-PR lobby group. Their aim is to gain support for PR from parties, influential people and the public, to develop proposals for reform and then pressure Ottawa to adopt their recommendations.

party independent of each other. The lone Marxist-Leninist candidate rejected our 'first-past-the-post' system too, but did not view PR as a desirable alternative.

I'm not going to comment on proportional representation one way or another. We don't believe that any political party should have power in that sense; the power should be in the hands of the electorate, the citizens.

The same candidate continued by describing a system of all-party government where all elected MPs would select the cabinet, where party names do not appear on the ballot and where initiative and recall are used to empower the citizenry. Initiative, recall and binding referendums were also listed as policy goals of the Canada Party, in order to give people greater control over their own lives.

Decreasing or eliminating the partisanship in Canadian politics was an issue for about a third of candidates in the sample, although some were more moderate than others in their views. For instance, a few simply called for *more free votes* in Parliament or for greater consultation on important issues in the constituencies. One Green candidate objected to party discipline because it precludes our elected representatives from *using their own intelligence, their own compassion, their own ability to weigh what needs to be*.

Others candidates want to eliminate opposition politics altogether. The case was stated most strongly by Natural Law adherents.

We believe in an all-party government. The very structure of democracy is skewed towards confrontation. It's a waste, because you have one party which is the party in power and then you have another party which is called the official opposition. Their job is not to support the government, it's not to move things along smoothly and to help them implement their programs and to give them a good chance to show what they can do, it's to oppose. And in many cases it, of course, is simply for the sake of opposing just to get rid of the people and just to stop the flow of government.

... If you were going to consider starting a company or a corporation and you said OK, I'm going to set it up so that the board, the leaders, are running the corporation. Then I'm going to set up this other entity whose sole job is just to criticize and to oppose everything that this company is doing. You'd be laughed out of business, it's ridiculous.

Another Natural Law Party candidate suggested including a box on the ballot asking voters if they *want any government at all*.

The numerous complaints issued by candidates regarding their poor media coverage and meager broadcasting allotments have been duly noted. In terms of how to ameliorate the situation, two broad types of remedy were offered by candidates. The first, supported by Christian Heritage, National and Green Party candidates, is to wipe the slate clean for each new election and *let everybody have equal opportunity to disseminate their views*. In terms of news coverage there were no legislative suggestions, but *equal press coverage* and a *fair and unbiased media* were called for by three candidates. A fourth candidate, on the other hand, wanted to severely limit the *role of mass commercial media in political debate and information*. The second type of remedy, receiving Libertarian endorsement, is to do away with broadcasting restrictions altogether.

The fewest practical suggestions for reform were made with respect to party financing. The complaints about reimbursements and spending limits were many, but creative alternatives were uncommon. One candidate proposed that Ottawa pay for one standardized brochure to be published by each party and distributed to every Canadian voter (as is done in Britain). Several candidates felt that all candidates and parties should be reimbursed at the same rate, regardless of performance or spending levels. But most participants merely pointed out the unfairness of the current regime without offering alternatives.

Social Conditions for Success

Hope springs eternal was how one five-time contender explained his perennial candidacy. *When the election comes around*, he continued, *you have this hope that this time...* This time what? *This time*, voiced another candidate, *the voters will say, I'll give those people a try*.

Every candidate who was interviewed had in common a faith that one day their cause would triumph over the ills that beset our country. The obvious question, then, is what will it take for the nation to come around? What would be required to persuade citizens of a better way of thinking and governing? Three non-mutually exclusive social conditions were offered: critical mass, crisis and credibility.

CRITICAL MASS:

The notion of a critical mass came in many forms, but the underlying message remained the same: increasing numbers of people are collecting around my way of thinking and eventually their very mass will be enough to start a spontaneous movement towards the improvement of life and government. To be clear, "movement" is precisely how many party activists conceive of their work. One Green supporter made the word choice quite deliberately. *You'll notice I didn't say "party" because the Greens are a movement, a philosophy, we have to pretend we're a party to fit in.* Likewise, a Christian Heritage candidate saw his party as part of a growing right-wing movement along with budding organizations such as the Christian Coalitions of BC and Canada. The federal leader of the Natural Law Party, Dr. Neil Peterson, has listed among his credentials in party literature "Governor-general of the Age of Enlightenment for North America, the leader of Maharishi's **movement** of consciousness for the North American continent" (emphasis added). Marxist-Leninism has always considered itself a political movement depending upon awakening the self-consciousness of the proletariat. The point being, that when the idea of the critical mass is raised, it does not merely relate to the support for the party, but for the movement as a whole.

The concept of critical mass is captured most literally by Natural Law adherents. They assert that beneficial results will occur when a scientifically determined portion of the earth's population become yogic flyers, as explained by one practitioner:

I think it will require a major shift in the collective consciousness for us to actually win... It will come about by having large numbers of people, large groups of people, practicing yogic flying. And that alone is the solution to creating more coherence in the quality of government and especially, in the collective consciousness as a whole... If you have a group of yogic flyers practicing it together, this effect becomes extremely powerful such that just the square root of one percent of the world's population is sufficient to increase the coherence and the harmony in the world today.

A Green candidate envisions the environmental movement also in critical mass terms. She invoked the classic allegory of one hundred monkeys²⁹ to illustrate her hope for the spontaneous diffusion of Green beliefs.

If I can hold faith in that, that there's a point when people are just going to wake up and say, "wow" and not necessarily know why. And I think that just requires getting in touch with the still, quiet wisdom within ourselves and also within the nature that we've managed to slaughter.

Right-wing thinkers in the Christian Heritage Party tended to view the adoption of their principles as more of a steady pendulum swing to the right.

I think there is a swing, a pendulum swing coming back to the right. People are getting tired of what they are seeing. It's happening slowly, but it's happening.

The feeling expressed by one person was that people will collectively get *miserable enough* with the current deplorable state of government and suddenly say, *I've had it* and vote Christian Heritage. A Libertarian movement may also be afoot according to another: *people*

²⁹ The allegory was told in this way: "There's a monkey on an island and she finds a potato and she's going to eat the potato and it falls out of her hand and lands in a pool of water. And she retrieves it and eats it and finds it's a lot better washed off, all the grit and dirt. And so she starts washing her potatoes and the next monkeys see that and another monkey sees it and they all start washing their potatoes. And after 100 monkeys have washed their potatoes, all the monkeys on the island start and then the idea moves to the next island. It's the idea of a critical mass."

are more receptive to libertarian ideas but its nothing we've done. Nonetheless, libertarian ideas are cropping up.

A couple of candidates invoked the idea that the critical mass, will not *come from politics, it will come from culture*. A former National Party candidate holds the view that a political party in and of itself is unlikely to effect the degree of change that is necessary to bring about *true democracy*. For him, there must be a movement towards the establishment of true democracy not the *phony bill of goods* we are currently being sold. But, he asserts that *we have to establish concepts and visions outside of the electoral process* to bring about a *grassroots movement that captures peoples' attention and imagination...* If and only if a party has this *groundswell of public opinion behind them*, will it be electable and effective. For example, he feels that the Reform Party was so successful because it found fertile ground; the seeds of a right-wing movement had been sown over the last ten or twenty years. The National Party did not follow in Reform's footsteps, another National Party candidate surmised, because people simply were not yet ready for the party's sweeping change. *my personal feeling is that there's a right time, you can't force this*. The critical mass needs time to congeal.

CRISIS:

A significant problem of the theory of critical mass arises from the above discussion. Namely, is it possible for each of the competing movements to reach their critical mass and come to fruition? In other words, does the very fact that each movement believes it will be successful cancel the possibility that any will be successful? One way to answer this dilemma by looking to the second condition for change — crisis. Advocates of the philosophy of critical mass in the sample tended to agree that we are headed down a disastrous path which will ultimately

climax in crisis. The nature of the crisis takes several different forms, but in each case the threat of crisis, or its arrival, was seen as a condition that would lead to the adoption of a new political course. Thus, the nature of the impending crisis may help make one vision, or movement more salient than the next.

The failure of democracy is one version of how the crisis will manifest itself. At least half of the candidates interviewed returned from the campaign trail commenting on the *huge public cynicism* out there towards politicians and political institutions. One candidate observed:

[Voters] don't know exactly where things are going wrong but they understand voting doesn't hold great prospects for changing their lives.

If this sentiment is sufficiently wide-spread, it could easily lead to a crisis in confidence in the political system and a call for a new way of governing.

A second source of threat identified by some candidates is the economy. This type of forecast is exemplified by a Canada Party candidate.

There's not a lot of people yet that really want to change. They haven't really suffered enough yet. When people start losing more: their houses, their pensions; say in four or five years there could be an economic collapse... When they've suffered enough they'll wonder about what we can do and how we can change... If we do have a collapse, a lot of people are predicting it, then we'll have to go through the suffering stage, but hopefully we won't have to. We just have to get this information out over the next couple of years to stop an economic collapse in Canada. We're heading the same way we did in '29. Exactly the same way.

Green politicians hypothesized that it might take a severe environmental disaster to open peoples' minds enough for them to examine the destructive way we are living. Only then might they say, *maybe this philosophy, this movement does have some wisdom* and give Green policies a chance. In general, then, the theory is that when people have suffered enough, they will demand political change and minor parties / movements will be there to guide that change.

CREDIBILITY:

One way to conceive of the link between crisis and support for a movement or party is an elusive quality called credibility — the third condition for electoral success. Several candidates felt that they could not sell their vision because their party lacked credibility. However, if a crisis they predicted occurred, then the party would instantly have purchase. For instance, if Whistler Mountain becomes unskiable due to global warming or if surgical masks become the norm when breathing out of doors, Green pundits will achieve credibility and the party may get elected.

However, crisis is only the most extreme way that a movement can gain credibility. The theme arose most often in the context of the Reform Party's remarkable success in the 1993 general election. To many observers, the party's appearance of credibility was the deciding factor in distancing Reform from the rest of the field. One theory advanced by a couple of candidates on how the transformation from fringe to favourite took place has to do with the attitude of the press. Being taken seriously by one sector of the media was postulated as a sure route to public acceptability.

[The Reform Party] got organized and had credibility. They had real constituency associations in a number of ridings and it was enough to get the attention of at least one sector of the media. I think they got the attention of the Alberta press who took them seriously. Once they were taken seriously by major media outlets then they had to be taken seriously in general. Even if they had never won a seat outside Alberta, that wouldn't have mattered to Albertans. So if a fringe party can break through at a provincial level, if you're in the hinterland of a particular metropolis, if the metropolitan press does pay attention to one of the minor parties, that party immediately has credibility with people.

Credibility, according to others, can also be imported to a party via the enlistment of a high profile public figure. Three candidates, one quoted below, cited Preston Manning's and / or Mel Hurtig's status as enhancing their party's potential.

[The Reform Party] did attract a big name person like Preston Manning. It's hard to think back but Preston Manning did have a constituency even back then. So we keep thinking if some name was attracted to us maybe there's a chance of moving up a step in stature. And of course attracting some multimillionaire who wants to get involved in politics could help too. In a way the National Party did it that way too. Mel Hurtig had national standing and they did have a fair bit of money, they were definitely more credible than we were in the last election... It's the perception of seriousness that holds us back. If we were perceived as being serious it might be very different... It often takes people who have credibility somewhere else in life already, to walk in and say I want to run as a Libertarian. Then it's quite different.

That a party must seem as credible in order to win elections seems to be a truth accepted by small parties regardless of their political stripe. It harks back to the catch-22 of strategic voting — I will only give you my vote when you have proven yourselves to be a credible option — but is sufficiently attainable for candidates to keep striving towards. In a sense, credibility is the culmination of the other two conditions for public acceptance. A movement can gain credibility if it is adhered to by a significant portion of the population and / or when its dictums appear the most socially germane.

The perception of credibility, or legitimacy, also has much to do with the treatment of small parties by the political system. A system that brands parties representing alternative positions as “frivolous” (the rationale behind restricting public funding), robs those parties of legitimacy in the eyes of the public and other politicians (Jenson 1991). Credibility also requires media exposure, as several candidates commented, so that small parties may be perceived as serious options by voters. But when small parties are impeded in their efforts to reach the public, there is little likelihood that they will be entertained as a credible option by the electorate. Thus, even though proposals for reform may be vague or in conflict with each other, all candidates wish to change those conditions that limit their opportunities to communicate with the electorate.

Prospects for the Future of Minor Parties

In 1989 the Government of Canada established the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing to conduct a "comprehensive examination of Canada's electoral system" (Lortie 1991c, i). The impressive undertaking employed the services of over 250 of "the foremost scholars" from 28 Canadian universities, the private sector and various universities and institutes abroad. After two years, 900 submissions and 42 days of hearings in 27 cities, 23 volumes of research and a four- volume final report were completed (Lortie 1991a, 4-5).

The Lortie Commission made many recommendations as to how to promote 'fairness in the electoral process,' often with specific reference to the plight of small and emerging parties. Some of these reforms appear more helpful than others. With respect to paid advertising time, the Lortie Commission makes only a few recommendations that would improve the ability of minor parties to communicate with the public. The Commission prescribes that advertising rates offered to parties should be set at "50 percent of the most favoured rate at which comparable time is sold to other advertisers" (Lortie 1991a, 395). This would help ease the burden of high advertising costs for the poorest parties. It also recommends that no party shall receive more than 100 minutes of advertising time which presumably would increase the allotments to small parties (see Table 3.2). There is also a vague reference to the "fair distribution" of paid time among parties, but no actual guidelines are issued (396).

The proposed replacement to the free time regime, on the other hand, recognizes the disadvantages faced by small parties and is designed to improve their situation. The objective of the new free time system is to provide "enhanced access to national broadcast media" and to improve voter information by ensuring programs are "informative and appealing" (Lortie

1991a, 403). The new system would consist of ten 30-minute shows in magazine format, during prime time, on each television and radio network. Every registered party would be able to participate, each receiving one or more four-minute segments to program, which could be combined but not divided. The number of segments would be allocated based on the following formula: one to each registered party; an additional segment if the party was registered in the previous election but received less than five percent of the vote; an additional segment to any party nominating candidates in more than half of constituencies; an additional segment to any party newly sitting in the House³⁰; the remaining segments to be divided among parties that received more than five percent of the vote in the previous election and proportional to the votes received. No one show could feature less than two parties or more than 12 minutes from any one party. The Commission sees these reforms as directly benefiting emerging and smaller parties.

The smaller parties, lacking the resources for extensive paid time and generally receiving little news coverage, need such direct access to a national audience. In addition, free-time broadcasts provide an alternative to requiring access for the leaders of the smaller parties to televised leaders debates or to news coverage, with all the difficulties that would accompany those options. Free time is needed, in summation, as a supplement to paid time, news and public affairs coverage to provide at least some access to national broadcasting for all registered parties (404).

However, as Commissioners' words suggest, there would be little alteration to the current structure of leaders debates or news coverage. The difficulty and resultant undesirability of regulating either structure was noted by the Commission. The final report suggests that the networks "consider the option" of holding round-table type discussions for the non-primary parties in the "interests of fairness," but goes not further on this point (414).

³⁰ I.e., the party was not registered in the previous election or did not receive more than five percent of the vote in the previous election, but gained a seat in the interim period.

The Lortie Commission spends some time discussing changes to party and candidate spending limits, but the recommendations that have the greatest potential to impact on the financing of small parties concern reimbursement levels. Any political party receiving at least one percent of valid votes cast would be reimbursed at a rate of \$0.60 per vote received, but not to exceed 50 percent of election expenses. This is an improvement for small parties because public funding would now be tied to performance not wealth, but one percent is still a high figure for parties running barely 50 candidates. A party with 50 candidates would have to earn, on average, approximately six times more votes per riding than a party running a full slate of 295 candidates. Of the small parties, only the National Party would have received a refund in 1993, instead of both the National Party and the Natural Law. Moreover, the National Party would have been reimbursed for only \$112,351 under the proposed regime, whereas it received \$470,855 under the current system.

The reimbursement level preferred by the Commission for candidates would be set at \$1.00 per vote if the candidate received at least one percent of the valid votes in his or her riding.³¹ As seen in Table 5.1, if this had been the law in 1993, 264 candidates would have received reimbursements, or one third of all minor party candidates, instead of zero; 144 National Party candidates, or 84 percent of them, would have been entitled to public funding. This would be a dramatic improvement over the current situation.

On the issue of proportional representation, the Lortie Commission has little to say because they "decided at the outset to retain the single-member constituency, plurality voting system" (Lortie 1991a, 19). Referendums and initiative are only discussed to the extent that

³¹ Candidates in 'remote' constituencies would be reimbursed \$1.50 for each vote received; and candidates in constituencies with fewer than 30,000 voters would be reimbursed the amount obtained by multiplying their share of the vote by 30,000 times the amount per vote that would otherwise apply. In no case would a candidate receive a refund of more than 50 percent of election expenses (Lortie 1991a, 372).

Table 5.1

***NUMBER OF CANDIDATES WHO WOULD HAVE RECEIVED A REFUND IN 1993
UNDER THE LORTIE COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL***

Party	Total Number of Candidates	Number Entitled to a Refund
Nat.	171	144
NLP	231	55
CHP	59	29
GP	79	28
Libert.	52	3
CP	56	3
Abol.	80	2
M.-L.	51	0
TOTAL	782	264

they might be held on election day in keeping with the Commissions' mandate to look at **electoral** reform. Simultaneous elections and referendums were disapproved of by the Commission because they determined that this would "strip elections of their meaning and value" (Lortie 1991b, 242).

Elections must be about voters who trust their own ability to pick governors who can judge, reflect, deliberate, compromise, lead and respond. And elections must be about accepting the need for governance (242).

Recall is likewise rejected primarily because the Commissioners felt that it would lead to conflicting democratic principles.

Under Canadian parliamentary government, the prime minister and almost all cabinet ministers seek election to the House of Commons as individual MPs from single-member constituencies. Even so, the prime minister and elected cabinet ministers have special responsibilities beyond those of their constituents. These responsibilities require them to consider the national interest when formulating public policies (Lortie 1991b, 246).

Hence, the Commissioners felt it would be against the public interest to permit statutory recall.

In spite of the efforts of the high profile Lortie Commission, very little has changed since the report was issued in the fall of 1991. None of the Commission's major recommendations have been adopted by Parliament and the situation for minor parties has not altered perceptibly. It would appear that there is little hope that the plight of minor parties will be improved through statutory reform, at least in the near future. In particular, there seems to be little chance that PR will be implemented, the reform receiving the widest support from small party candidates. It is possible that improvements in broadcasting allocations may continue to come at the hands of sympathetic broadcasting arbitrators.

What may help the situations of minor parties more than anything is the recent success of two new parties, the Reform and the Bloc Québécois. The 1993 election proved that it is possible for a previously unknown party to attract sufficient support to have a presence in Parliament. The Bloc is less of a role model having stolen its first MPs from the Conservative Party. Moreover, the strength of the provincial Parti Québécois supplied a tailor-made support base for the new nationalist party. Reform, on the other hand, can be considered a true small party success story. In the 1988 election, it ran just 59 candidates and received 2.09 percent of the vote. In 1993, Reform ran 207 candidates, 52 of which were elected to the House.

The victory of Reformer Deborah Grey in a by-election in March 1989 (Alberta - Beaver River), was a significant turning point for the party that was so successful in 1993. Several minor party candidates felt that if, like Reform, they could elect just one MP, their electoral fortunes would improve from that point on. One candidate commented that minor parties could learn from Reform's ability to organize at the grassroots level.

They were already getting several times the vote of the other minor parties in '88, with their first kick at the cat. They had believers. They had car loads of people come to meetings, people who would pay for publication and see to the distribution of campaign materials. They were really well organized. None of the other fringe parties have been that way.

Credible leadership and media attention, have already been mentioned as reasons given by candidates for why Reform performed so well. More skeptical candidates concluded from Reform's example that money is needed to win; another credited a lack of commitment to specific principles as the secret to their victory.

The lesson of 1993 is that it is possible for a minor party to break through if it has the right combination of money, a concentrated and firmly planted support base, high profile leadership, endorsement from at least one segment of the major press, a foot in the door of Parliament and inclination. None of this mitigates the immense difficulties faced by small parties, but it does provide an ounce of hope and an example to follow.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

The goal of this thesis was to make a first attempt at systematically investigating the state of minor parties in Canadian federal politics. Since contesting elections is the most visible, and the most important activity of a political party, the 1993 general election, and those who contested it, were selected as the focus for this study. A small sample size was deliberately employed because the project was designed to gather qualitative rather than quantitative data. The intent was to gain as much firsthand insight into the practical existence of minor parties as possible. The findings, therefore, represent only the experiences of a handful of candidates from one city in one province and should be treated as provisional. Nonetheless, the themes that arose were so similar that they provide an excellent basis for further research.

The central theme has been iterated over and over in the preceding chapters: owing to a combination of factors — a scarcity of political resources, disadvantages legislated through the *Canada Elections Act* and subtle biases on the part of the press, debate organizers and potential donors — minor party candidates are seriously handicapped in their ability to

effectively compete in elections and communicate with the public. Of all of these factors, money recurs as the most important. In the modern era, geodemographic targeting, instant polling, professional marketing techniques, focus group tested ad campaigns and image consultants are required to be electorally competitive. Minor parties and candidates, challenged to front the \$1000 per candidate deposits, cannot hope to compete for public attention in such a world, particularly when they are ignored by the only free means of publicity, the media. Media exposure, then, is a close rival to money in terms of determining competitiveness. Even when parties such as the National Party or the Natural Law Party have the funds to mount serious campaigns, they cannot buy their way into leaders debates, talk shows or feature stories in the major press. The National Party is a perfect illustration of this fact. It made every attempt to behave like a major player in 1993, but it was treated like any other small party by the media and thus remained a marginal player.

Although comparing major and minor parties has not been a primary concern of this paper, some intuitive observations can be made to guide future inquiry. In terms of goals, it appears that minor parties are less power oriented than the major parties (at least in the short term). Minor parties are interested in educating the public and other parties of their programs so that they might be adopted. They do not engage in mainstream brokerage politics of bending to the varied interests in a cleavaged society in order to maximize support across the electorate (Clarke et al. 1984). For one thing, they do not have the means to do so. But for another, most minor parties perceive themselves as more ideologically driven, or more *principled*, than the mainstream parties. A Christian Heritage Party candidate explains that this leads to a different way of conducting politics.

I think because we're very principle-focused it's a different approach... We're saying, 'this is where we're coming from' and from that then you can predict probably what we would do as government. So I think if people would start

thinking that way it would challenge the other parties and maybe stop a little of this moving with the moment.

The NDP may also perceive themselves in this way, but they have certainly incurred a fair share of criticism in recent years for deviating from their stated principles (particularly in BC and Ontario where they have formed provincial governments). It may be too early to judge the Reform Party, but clearly they are becoming increasingly conscious of public sensitivities as they seek to widen their support base.

It could be argued that the ideological predisposition of many of these parties is because they are in the early stages of development. 'Early' does not necessarily refer to the age of a party (since the Marxist-Leninist party has run candidates in Canada since 1972), but rather to its organizational maturity. The theory is that as a party seeks to expand its electoral following, it inevitably enters into a process of "de-ideologization" (Kirchheimer 1966). Any further discussion along these lines will require much closer study of minor party organization in the tradition of Duverger (1954) and Michels (1958). However, preliminary findings suggest that minor parties are much less organizationally complex than their established counterparts.³² They have low levels of bureaucratization, informal decision-making and policy setting structures, few active constituency associations and virtually no permanent staffs. The extent to which each holds true in the various small parties will certainly differ and should be studied further.

From a party-centred perspective there appears to be three classes of difference between major and minor parties: resources (including media exposure), goals and platforms, and organization. The first difference has received considerable attention in this paper. Some of the nuances of minor party goals have also been discussed, but how a party's platform

³² For instance, see discussion of "Party Structures and Decision-Making" in McMenemy et al. (1976).

influences its fortunes remains under-investigated. In terms of the last difference — internal party organization — very little is known. During the course of this research some information was gathered regarding how candidates are nominated, levels of hierarchy and whether or not parties hold conventions. Already, considerable variation between parties could be identified which would be interesting to pursue further. All three areas, as a starting point, need to be investigated if we are to develop a clearer picture of how minor parties relate to the political system. Only through looking at the differences between major and minor parties, can we learn how the transition from the latter to the former occurs. Finally, if we are a society that genuinely values pluralism, then we should know more about how to enhance it in our electoral politics.

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Appendix A
CANDIDATE SURVEY: THE RECORD OF THE 1993 GENERAL ELECTION

SECTION A: POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The first set of questions is about your political background.

1. What party were you a candidate for in the 1993 federal election?

Canada Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Christian Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/>
Green Party	<input type="checkbox"/>
Libertarian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marxist-Leninist	<input type="checkbox"/>
Natural Law	<input type="checkbox"/>
National	<input type="checkbox"/>
Party for the Commonwealth of Canada	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What was your **most important reason for joining** that political party?
Please write in.

3. When did you first join the party of your candidacy?
19 _____

4. Has your membership been continuous since then?
☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, please go to question 7.

5. Please specify dates when your membership lapsed.

6. Why did you discontinue your membership? *Please write in.*

7. Have you ever been a member of another Canadian political party?

☐ Yes (please specify) _____ 19____ to 19____
☐ No

8. Had you run for the House of Commons in any elections prior to the 1993 election?

☐ Yes Party: _____ Year: 19____
Party: _____ Year: 19____
☐ No

9. Were you active in your party before running as a candidate in 1993 election?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. **Before** you decided to run for your party in this election, how much time did you usually devote to party activities in the average month?

☐ I wasn't involved with the party
☐ Up to 5 hours
☐ From 5 to 10 hours
☐ From 10 to 15 hours
☐ From 15 to 20 hours
☐ More than 20 hours

11. In addition to running for election, what other party activities do you participate in?
Please tick all that apply.
- ☐ Door-to-door canvassing
 - ☐ Telephone canvassing
 - ☐ Distribute leaflets
 - ☐ Attend local party meetings
 - ☐ Attend provincial party meetings
 - ☐ Attend national party meetings
 - ☐ Organize local party meetings
 - ☐ Hold a party office
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____
12. Please tick if you have **ever done** the following:
- ☐ Run for a local government office
 - ☐ Been elected to local government office
 - ☐ Run for a provincial legislature
 - ☐ Been elected to a provincial legislature

 - ☐ Held office in a local interest group
 - ☐ Held office in a provincial interest group
 - ☐ Held office in a national interest group

 - ☐ Held office in a professional body
 - ☐ Held office in a student organization
 - ☐ Held office in a church group
 - ☐ Held office in an ethnic organization
 - ☐ Held office in a trade union
 - ☐ Held office in a women's organization
 - ☐ Held office in another community group (please specify)

13. Are you **currently involved in** any of the following? *Please tick all that apply.*
- ☐ Community Service organization
 - ☐ Business association
 - ☐ Professional association
 - ☐ Religious organization
 - ☐ Environmental group
 - ☐ Women's organization
 - ☐ Church group
 - ☐ Labour union
 - ☐ Other (please specify) _____

SECTION B: YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A CANDIDATE

These questions concern your decision to run and your experiences during the campaign.

1. When did you first decide to seek your party nomination for the 1993 election?
Please write in.

2. Thinking about your **decision** to run in the 1993 election, how would you describe the influence of the following people? *Please tick one box on each line.*

	Very Influential	Somewhat Influential	Not at all Influential	Not Applicable
Your spouse / partner	[]	[]	[]	[]
Other family members	[]	[]	[]	[]
Party leader	[]	[]	[]	[]
Party members	[]	[]	[]	[]
Friends	[]	[]	[]	[]
Business associates	[]	[]	[]	[]
Women's groups	[]	[]	[]	[]
Church groups	[]	[]	[]	[]
Community groups	[]	[]	[]	[]
Ethnic groups	[]	[]	[]	[]
Labour groups	[]	[]	[]	[]
Other (please specify)	[]	[]	[]	[]

3. Did a **local party member or official** approach you and ask you to run for election?

[] Yes [] No

If YES, what position did that person(s) hold (please specify)?

4. Was your nomination contested?

[] Yes [] No

5. What was the **most important reason** why you wanted to run for Parliament?
Please write in.

6. Would you run again as a candidate in a federal election?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If NO, why not? *Please write in.*

7. Did you participate in an all candidates debate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If YES, do feel that you were treated equally to the other candidates?

☐ Yes ☐ No

8. In the course of the election campaign, how your team publicize your candidacy?
Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ Mail campaign material to targeted groups in riding
☐ General mailings of campaign material to all, or randomly selected voters
☐ Canvass door to door
☐ Put up posters (not lawn signs)
☐ Put up lawn signs
☐ Advertise on television
☐ Advertise on radio
☐ Advertise in newspapers (please specify dailies, weeklies, community, etc.)

☐ Hold publicity events (please specify)

-
- ☐ Hold press conferences
☐ Give public speeches (please specify location(s))

☐ Other (please specify) _____

9. Did you experience any difficulties in finding an official agent / campaign manager?

- ☐ No, I had one selected from the start
☐ I experienced some difficulties
☐ I experienced considerable difficulties

10. How did you select your official agent / campaign manager? *Please write in.*

11. How many people did you have in your campaign team?

12. Did you rent office space specifically for your campaign?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. How was your campaign financed?

Please tick all that apply and estimate each as a percentage to total expenditures.

	Percent of total Expenditures
Own finances	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Party funds.....	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Donations from business	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Donations from individuals.....	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Fundraising events (please specify).....	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Women's groups	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Church groups	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Community groups.....	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Ethnic groups.....	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Labour groups	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
Other (please specify)	
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

14. How much effort did your team put into fund raising?
- ☐ No or virtually no effort
 - ☐ Very little effort
 - ☐ Moderate effort
 - ☐ A considerable amount of effort
15. How difficult was it to raise funds?
- ☐ Very difficult
 - ☐ Somewhat difficult
 - ☐ Somewhat easy
 - ☐ Very easy
16. What was the **most positive** aspect of running as a candidate? *Please write in.*
-
-
-
17. What was the **most negative** aspect of running as a candidate? *Please write in.*
-
-
-
18. How would you describe the overall experience of standing for election?
- ☐ Very rewarding
 - ☐ Somewhat rewarding
 - ☐ Somewhat disappointing
 - ☐ Very disappointing
 - ☐ In retrospect, I would not have run
19. How did the number of votes you received compare to your expectations?
- ☐ I got many fewer votes than I expected
 - ☐ I got few less votes than I expected
 - ☐ I got about as many votes as expected
 - ☐ I got a few more votes than I expected
 - ☐ I got many more votes than I expected

20. Irrespective of the number of votes you received, how successful do you feel you were at making your party known to new voters during the course of the campaign?

☐ Very successful
☐ Somewhat successful
☐ Not very successful
☐ Not at all successful

21. Being a candidate is an experience for which little can prepare you. What surprised you the most about being a candidate? *Please write in.*

22. In terms of running your **campaign**, what would you do differently if you could do it again? *Please write in.*

23. Have you remained active in your party since the 1993 election?

☐ Yes ☐ No

24. Based on your experience as a candidate, what feature of the electoral system, if any, would you like to see changed? *Please write in.*

25. There are many different opinions about where an MP's **first** responsibility should lie. Which of the following comes closest to your view? *Please tick one.*

An MP's first responsibility is to:

- ☐ Those who voted for him/her
- ☐ All the people in his/her constituency
- ☐ The party leader
- ☐ Local party members
- ☐ National party conventions
- ☐ His/her best judgment
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

SECTION C: YOUR NATIONAL PARTY ORGANIZATION

These questions concern your national party organization and its role during the election campaign.

1. Are you currently or have you been the leader of your party?
- ☐ Yes (please specify dates) _____ to _____
 - ☐ No

*If you were the leader **during** the election, please go to **question 4**.*

2. How much contact did you and your team have with your national party leader during the course of the campaign?
- ☐ Contact was rare or nonexistent
 - ☐ There was occasional contact
 - ☐ Contact was somewhat regularly
 - ☐ Contact was very regular

3. In some parties, every local campaign is independent while other parties centrally organize all election efforts. In terms of your campaign material (e.g. literature, signs, other paraphernalia), which of the following best describes where it was produced?

Please circle either "national" or "regional" office if applicable.

- ☐ It was produced entirely by the local constituency
- ☐ It was mostly local but some came from the national or regional office
- ☐ Some was local but most came from the national or regional office
- ☐ It was all produced by the national or regional office
- ☐ Don't know

4. Which of the following best describes your party's ability to field the 50 candidates required to register for the 1993 election.

- ☐ Very easy, there were more than enough willing candidates
- ☐ Somewhat easy, it took work but was never a serious concern
- ☐ Somewhat difficult, candidates were actively recruited
- ☐ Very difficult, it was a struggle to recruit enough candidates
- ☐ Don't know

5. How long has your **current** party leader held that position? _____

6. Has your party leader changed since the 1993 federal election?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If NO, please proceed to Section D.

7. How long after the election did your leader step down? *Please specify.*

8. Which of the following **best** describes how your leader left his/her position?

- ☐ He/she resigned as leader but remains in party
- ☐ He/she quit the party
- ☐ There was a leadership review and he/she lost
- ☐ He/she was asked to step down by the party
- ☐ His/her specified term was over
- ☐ He/she stepped down suddenly for non-political reasons (e.g. illness)
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

SECTION D: YOUR PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1. In what year were you born? 19_____

2. Are you: ☐ male ☐ female

3. What is your present marital status?

- ☐ Married ☐ Separated
- ☐ Living with a partner ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Divorced ☐ Never married

4. Do you have any children in your care?

- ☐ Yes How many? _____
 What age(s)? _____

☐ No

5. Which of the following best describes your current work situation?

- ☐ Full-time student
- ☐ In paid work
- ☐ Self-employed
- ☐ Looking after the home
- ☐ Retired
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Other (please specify) _____

6. How much formal schooling have you completed?
- ☐ Some elementary school
 - ☐ Some high school
 - ☐ High school diploma
 - ☐ Some college or technical school
 - ☐ College or technical school diploma
 - ☐ Some university
 - ☐ University degree
 - ☐ Post graduate degree
7. If you are currently employed, please describe your occupation. *Please write in.*
- _____
8. Do you have a religious affiliation?
- ☐ Yes ☐ No
- If YES, please specify: _____
9. In what country were you born?
- ☐ Canada ☐ Other (please specify) _____
10. To what ethnic or cultural group do you belong? *Please write in.*
- _____
11. How important is your ethnic background to you?
- ☐ Very important
 - ☐ Somewhat important
 - ☐ Not very important
 - ☐ Not at all important

12. What language(s) do you speak at home? *Please write in.*

13. What is the first language you learned and still understand? *Please write in.*

If you have any further observations you wish to make about your experience as a candidate or about this survey, I welcome your comments below.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. All replies will be treated as strictly confidential.

Please return as soon as possible to: Cindy Drukier, University of British Columbia,
C472 - 1866 Main Mall, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z1
Tel: (604) 730-8552 Fax: (604) 732-4982.

Survey Number: _____

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

PARTY

1. Tell me about how you became involved with your party.
2. What do you see as the main goal/s of your party? -electoral success; education; protest...?
3. How important is electoral success to your party — e.g. it is the *raison d'être* for traditional parties — compared to other party functions/goals?
4. In what ways do you see your party as different from the traditional parties?
5. Who are your supporters? i.e. can you identify a constituency of supporters?
Are there groups, or certain constituencies that your party specifically targets?
6. Do you think that there is a natural ceiling on the number of supporters that your party can attract, based on your platform or perhaps the nature of your political organization, or anything else?
7. What factors can you identify that may inhibit wider support for your party?
(i.e. to what extent is the electoral system compared to your party's platform, or something else?)
8. What do you see as the future of your party?
9. You may or may not feel qualified to answer this but, why do you think that the Reform Party was able to break out of minor party status to become a major political player so quickly? — answer with reference to your own party.
10. Was there a nomination meeting for your candidacy? Can you describe it (i.e. how many people were there, how was it publicized, how formal, did a vote take place, if so how...?)
11. Tell me about your contact with your party leader during the campaign? How centrally organized were campaign efforts? How much contact, if any, did you have with your party's candidates from other ridings?
12. What do you think is required for you and / or your party to actually win a seat / an election?

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

1. Tell me about your decision to run. What did you hope to get out of the experience?
2. What do you believe the electoral process holds for a candidate such as yourself? What have you learned about the electoral / political system from your experience as a candidate?
3. Did you ever think realistically about winning; about what it would be like to commute to Ottawa...?
4. What factors can you identify that may have prevented or inhibited you from greater electoral success?
5. When asked what part of the electoral system they would like to see changed, the vast majority of candidates who responded advocated some variation of proportional representation. Is this a personal goal? Is this an explicit goal of your party? How, if at all, do you think this can be achieved?
6. Do you think our electoral system works? In what ways...
7. I heard from many candidates about voters who said that they agreed with a candidate's / party's platform but, nonetheless, would not vote for them because it would be a vote wasted (wasted vote theory). Was this part of your experience?
8. In your view, how useful are the all-candidates debates? Should they remain? What should / not be changed? Tell me about your experiences with them.
9. From your observations during the campaign, how would you say your experience may have differed from that of a candidate from a major party? How do you feel being from a minor party affected your candidacy, if at all?
10. If you ran again, do you think you could earn more votes? How and why?
11. What do you think is required to win a seat?
12. What would have to change for you to win a seat?
13. If you had won your seat, what would you liked to have accomplished as an MP?
14. It appears from your survey responses that you were / not a "full time candidate," i.e. you were / not also working or attending school full time during the course of the campaign. Did most members of your party run full or part time campaigns?
If ran part time: Would you like to run a full time campaign?
15. How much preparation did you do in terms of learning about the issues, etc.?
How much time did you spend on the campaign?

16. Do you feel that you ran the most effective campaign possible given your means?
17. Have a look at your financial return. Can you comment on it?
18. What do you think about the \$1000 deposit? Should it remain? Be reformed?
19. If the candidate is experienced: What changes have you seen over the years, with respect to campaigning, candidates, the process, etc.?
20. -Ask about financial arrangements, fundraising, etc..
 - Probe more about would / not run again.
 - Ask about things wrote that would do differently (if not already covered).