Looking for Populism in Northwest British Columbia:  
the inter-war and post-war years  

by  

Anthony Daio Price  

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  

MASTER OF ARTS  

in  

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  

(Department of History)  

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard  

The University of British Columbia  

August 2000  

© Anthony Daio Price, 2000
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of History

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Aug. 29, 00
Abstract

The previous scholarship on British Columbia politics has mentioned but not adequately explained that province's populist culture. My paper responds to this deficiency by exploring the history of British Columbia populism. It examines the northwest (where populist culture was especially strong) as a case study of provincial politics and employs a political discourse analysis that compares language in the inter-war years with that of the post-war years. It also correlates voting and occupational statistics in polling districts in an effort to position language within a socio-economic context. The findings of this study emphasize the neighbouring northwest constituencies of Skeena and Omineca as representative of the dynamic nature of British Columbia political culture in the 1950s: in Skeena, a culture of class polarization dominated politics and led to an initial CCF provincial victory while Omineca had a culture of protest politics that supported Social Credit provincially and the CCF federally. These two differing kinds of politics (i.e. class versus populist politics) came from the same pro-development ethos that, while always dominating British Columbia culture, was especially significant in the post-war period. In Skeena, post-war corporate development attracted numerous unionized workers to the region and contributed to the CCF's class politics. The populism of Omineca was also a function of post-war development. It was not (like other populist traditions) connected to localistic or co-operative inclinations but in fact, was almost exclusively anti-elitist. This populism integrated the anti-elite labeling of "the People" with a language that promoted the elite-controlled development of the 1950s, for the integration alleviated anxieties over that elite-control without actually threatening the existing pattern of development. The northwest's populist language was a function of a "non-populist" culture.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................... ii
Table of Contents ........................ iii
List of Tables ........................... iv
List of Figures ........................... v
Acknowledgements ........................ vi
Introduction ............................. 1
Section 1: Localistic Populism .............. 7
Section 2: Co-operative Populism ............ 14
Section 3: Anti-elite Populism ............ 24
Conclusion .............................. 42
Appendix 1 Note on Sources ............... 44
Appendix 2 Method for Comparing Social Composition with Voting, 1933 and 1952 .... 46
Appendix 3 Federal versus Provincial Voting Statistics .................. 47
Appendix 4 Voting History in the Northwest versus British Columbia ............ 48
Bibliography ............................ 49
List of Tables

Table 1  CCF Vote % in Farming Communities Vs. Entire Constituencies · · · · 18
Table 2  Labour Community Voting Vs. Constituency Voting: Skeena · · · · · 22
Table 3  Omineca Vs. Skeena, Based on % Increase in Voters and on Social Composition · 32
Table 4  1949 and 1952 Vote Share for Polls where the CCF Won or Tied in 1949 · · · 34
Table 5  1952 and 1953 Distribution of Alternate Votes for 2nd and 3rd Counts: Omineca · 34
Table 6  1952 and 1953 Distribution of Alternate Votes in for 2nd and 3rd Counts: Skeena · 37
List of Figures

Illustration 1 Progress: The Result of Co-operation .................................................. 15
Illustration 2 Young Smithers .................................................................................. 16
Illustration 3 Columbia Cellulose ........................................................................ 21
Illustration 4 Anti-Provincial Party Cartoon ......................................................... 28
Illustration 5 Social Credit Gets Things Done ....................................................... 40
Acknowledgements

Considering the indefinite nature of my future academic plans, this thesis may be my only contribution to the preserved world of thought and, therefore, my sole opportunity in an official and forever sort of way, to thank those people who have helped me arrive at this juncture. The following list will not be short. To my brother Frank, who I incessantly tortured as a child with obscure debates on politics and the minutia of television control but who somehow turned out to be a good guy, my step-dad Les, who bribed me to read non-fantasy books as a child, my high school history teacher Mr. Littler, who first inspired my love of history, my long-time friend Matt, who always seems to be there when I think of my best memories as a teenager, and my other friends, who proof-read my thesis and, more importantly, were always there to consumed beer with me. Thank-you all. To Prof. Krause, who brought me back to a history that was about people. To Paul Tennant, who showed me that my home was interesting. To my supervisor Bob, who was equally a friend and a critic and who gives all grad students some hope that academics can be about community. Thank-you all. To Pearl, who was the best dog a young boy could hope for, to Clem, who kept me sane (I think) with his never-ending love of tummy rubs, and to beer, in all of its forms (both ale and lager) for always being there when I needed you. And last, but also most, my mother, who took out a loan to pay for my first trip to Europe, who never told me to get a real job (though sometimes I wish that she had), and whose political career (though a failure in those meaningless terms of getting elected) was a profound success in shaping forever my own political consciousness. Thank-you for everything.
British Columbia politics are distinctive. Its voters have a long tradition of rejecting Canada's establishment parties in both provincial and federal elections. British Columbia's governing parties have emerged from protest movements and emphasize the role of grass-roots memberships. British Columbia political culture consistently glorifies ordinary people in opposition to elites. In short, British Columbia politics are populist.1 Academics, however, have not examined the historical source of this populist tradition. They have generally limited themselves to current opinion polls or have drawn parallels with other types of populism.2 This paper, then, will investigate the history of British Columbia populism.

One way to examine populism is to approach it as a kind of political discourse. Political discourse is the framework of rules, values, and significance that give meaning to political language. Political language, that is, is not a neutral instrument that describes an objective political reality but an "institutionalized structure of meanings that channels political thought and actions in certain directions."3 In fact, discourse formulates political consciousness as it endows certain labels and images with meaning. The examination of language and discourse challenges interest-based analyses as the only instruments of historical inquiry; it is not as much concerned with economic interests (i.e. class) as it is with how people articulated what they considered to be their interests.4 This paper will explore populism as a form of political language: how people talked about and understood politics.

4 For a discussion of the rejection of interest-based analysis, see Connolly, p. 48 – 52.
A problem with discourse analyses is that they tend to be self-referential by only understanding language in terms of language. They argue that since language does not describe but constitutes reality, the correlation of “objective data” and categories, through statistics, can never verify the inter-subjective nature of discourse meaning (i.e. the meaning that is shared between subjects). In addition, by focusing exclusively on language, discourse analyses often exclude who is speaking and why they are speaking. They rarely examine the socio-economic context of cultural interpretation or consider voting to be a quantifiable form of self-understanding. However, people understand themselves and their intentions through certain occupational and political categories. For example, if farmers vote for a farmer party and understand their vote as a farmer vote, the designation of “farmer” is a useful interpretive category. Empirical correlations with categorical principles can articulate the act of self-interpretation, so the categorical and the inter-subjective are not mutually exclusive; if historians are to comprehend inter-subjective understandings, they must articulate relevant categories. This paper, therefore, will also correlate voting statistics with occupations included in voters lists, not to use “objective” numbers to avoid the inescapable problem of explaining words with words but to understand who is speaking and why they are speaking.

Another problem with political discourse analyses is that they usually concentrate on national or international trends over extended periods of time; they examine the role of prominent leaders and intellectuals in the shaping of meaning without acknowledging (and sometimes explicitly rejecting) the role of local political understandings. J.G.A Pocock, for example, argues that "the mentalité of the silent and inarticulate majority should indeed be

---

5 For an example relevant to populism, see Edward Bell, “Class Voting in the First Alberta Social Credit Election,” Canadian Journal of Political Science 23 (1990), p. 519 – 530. Bell proves, with empirical evidence, that urban workers supported Social Credit and, thereby, challenges the traditional agrarian interpretations of Social Credit.  
sought after...but the history of mentalités is not identical with the history of discourse.\textsuperscript{7}

Michael Kazin examines populist language in the United States but restricts himself to the rhetoric of political leaders without examining “…the language of the common people themselves…”\textsuperscript{8} Populism, however, has particular qualities, such as a distrust of an outside elite, that are most strongly situated within a local place. Although populism is not exclusively a local phenomenon, an analysis of local political language can contribute to a better understanding of populist language in general. This paper will examine local political culture in northwest British Columbia as a case study of populism for the entire province.\textsuperscript{9}

The northwest is the area between but not including Prince George and Prince Rupert. It included most of the federal riding of Skeena, the provincial constituency of Omineca in its eastern section, and the provincial constituency of Skeena that stretched west to the Pacific Ocean. In the inter-war years, a sparse, isolated population was mainly scattered in farms and small towns along the Grand Trunk Pacific railway. This was a world of “stump farms and broadaxes”\textsuperscript{10} where transient tie industry workers and modest self-sufficient farmers (who also worked in the tie industry) populated much of the region. The society had a diverse ethnic mix with only a limited social hierarchy, and settlers survived a difficult subsistence lifestyle that was often dependent on hunting, barter, and informal rationing. They had limited access to consumer products, lived in rudimentary log cabins, and traversed a poor and almost impassable road system.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{9} For a discussion of case studies of local political culture, see Stephen Welch, \textit{The Concept of Political Culture} (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), p. 147 – 158.
The post-war years changed the northwest. The older towns became more established and, while a frontier-feeling remained, post-war development quickly modernized this pioneer society. Development meant new technology, improved communications systems, extensive and reliable roads, access to larger markets, and a professional civil service. Local residents remembered these years as the “small sawmill era” as numerous independent logging and sawmill contractors shaped the northwest economy. However, the period also heralded the end for these small contractors because it introduced to the northwest the beginning of massive corporate investment, such as Columbia Cellulose’s pulp production and Alcan’s aluminum factory. The post-war years also brought the populist politics of Social Credit and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) to the northwest. The following paper will examine the source of this post-war populism in this region by comparing the political language of the inter-war years with that of the post-war years (see Appendix 1 for a note on sources).

Historians who have written extensively on Canadian Prairie and American populism have emphasized (in differing degrees) three characteristics within the same populist phenomena. Localistic populism was a “regressive” cultural inclination that stressed local identity, traditional values, and parochial understandings in contrast to the modern cosmopolitan world; it was often associated with conservative, anti-immigrant, anti-intellectual, and moralistic

---


13 Fraser Lake and District Historical Society, Deeper Roots and Greener Valleys (Fraser Lake: The Society, 1986), p. 100 for the phrase “small sawmill era” while The Interior News, December 1, 1955, states that there were 90 sawmill operations and 3 planer mills between Quick and Hazelton.

14 For an outsider’s view of the post-war years, see George Woodcock, Ravens and Prophets (London: William Clowes and Sons, Ltd., 1952) and John Kendrick, People of the Snow (Toronto: New Canada Press Ltd., 1987).


movements. Co-operative populism, on the other hand, was more of a “progressive” inclination based on the class interests of the agrarian petit-bourgeois; it was an economic and political response to corporate capitalism that, while supporting private property, questioned individualism, promoted co-operative endeavors, and sometimes advocated public collective effort. Finally, anti-elite populism was specifically concerned with status and power rather than culture or the economy; it situated legitimate political authority in the hands of ordinary people and, thereby, challenged established party structures and traditional systems of representative democracy.

These three inclinations often conflicted with one another but (depending on circumstances) also integrated in various ways to create a variety of distinct but synthetic populist traditions. This integration was facilitated by the mutable nature of populist political language. For example, although the economic ends of co-operative populism often required state-controlled collective action, its proponents still used a language of local autonomy and anti-elitism. More importantly, localistic and co-operative inclinations frequently converged in the anti-elite populist labeling of “the People”, and this convergence created the unity needed

19 For more political populism, see David Laycock, Populism and Democratic Thought in the Canadian Prairies, 1910 to 1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) and John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt: A History of the Farmers’ Alliance and the People’s Party (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1931). For a co-operative movement leading to politicization, see Lawrence Goodwyn, Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).
for the promotion of populist agendas. Language, that is, created synthetic belief systems out of distinct inclinations; it was the foundation of successful integrated populist movements.

In contrast to these other traditions of populist integration, populism in northwest British Columbia did not follow a synthetic pattern that combined localistic, co-operative, and anti-elite understandings. First, northwest populism was not localistic, for the population consisted of newcomers who never expressed parochial or anti-development sentiments. Second, northwest populism was not co-operative, despite the prevalence of a certain kind of inter-war co-operative language. This early language was not populist because (although it was political in the sense that it re-configured more subtle types of economic power), it was not political in the populist sense of shaping election rhetoric or of challenging the capitalist status-quo. In the years following the Second World War, a new dominant discourse of large corporate capital eventually eliminated the northwest’s “apolitical” language of co-operation. Third, northwest populism was anti-elite but only in a complex way. It came from a specific time (the 1950s), was restricted to a particular place in the eastern section (the constituency of Omineca), and promoted “non-populist” inclinations with rhetoric that obscured conflicts in northwest political culture. This culture supported large-scale resource development but had anxieties concerning the elite-controlled aspects of that development. Social Credit rhetoric, by combining “pro-development” and “anti-elite” labels, obscured those elite-controlled aspects by connecting development with “the People”. Social Credit succeeded because its language harmonized discordant beliefs that resented elite control but supported development. Northwest populism was an inextricable part of a non-populist culture.

Localistic Populism

Localistic populism did not exist in northwest British Columbia in either the inter-war or the post-war periods. In the inter-war years, this frontier society consisted of new settlers who wanted local development. They based their perspectives on an active engagement with the outside world that overcame any “new-society” parochialism of “geographic isolation and locally bounded patterns of interaction and influence.” In the post-war years, a massive influx of newcomers and a dominant pro-development ethos overshadowed any nostalgia for a previous independent lifestyle. Post-war populism was not localistic.

The northwest was a frontier society, so its people came from the outside world, had traveled extensively, and had close family members living far abroad. In 1931, approximately 60% of people in Central British Columbia were born outside of the province and most of those were from outside of Canada. This predominance of outsiders was reflected in the region’s political representatives. Alexander Manson (Omineca MLA 1916-1936) was born in Missouri, Olof Hanson (Skeena MP 1930-1946) was born in Sweden, Harold Wrinch (Skeena MLA 1924-1933) was born in England, and E.T. Kenney (Skeena MLA 1933-1953) was born in Nova Scotia. The northwest, then, was not a region of traditional ties to place but one where people with experience in the larger world came together in a specific locality.

---

21 R. Jeremy Wilson, “The Impact of Communications Developments on British Columbia Electoral Patterns, 1903 – 1975,” Canadian Journal of Political Science, XIII: 3 (September, 1980), p. 512. Wilson examines swing – “the percentage point shift in a party’s support between two successive elections” – and finds that non-uniform swings characterized the pre-1952 period compared to the post-1952 period. Wilson offers subtle and careful explanations for his findings and suggests a variety of possible alternatives, but he especially emphasizes the development of a communications infrastructure that neutralized “the effects of the geographical factors which had hindered the establishment of locality-arching patterns of political interaction.” Also see R. Jeremy Wilson, “Geography, Politics and Culture: Electoral Insularity in British Columbia,” Canadian Journal of Political Science, XIII: 4 (December, 1980).

22 See Canada, Seventh Census of Canada, 1931 (Volume 2, Table 46 and Volume 8, Table 24).


24 Also see Black, p. 293.
The northwest’s foreign-born settler society, not surprisingly, often exhibited quite international perspectives. Prominent socialists within the region stressed the need to think beyond the local by arguing that “the international method is the Twentieth Century Method.” Travelling speakers discussed Swedish Schools, international monetary reforms, and European politics. Cyril Shelford lived in one of the most isolated parts of the northwest but remembered his family subscribing to an international newspaper, arguing about world politics over the dinner table, and wanting to volunteer in the Spanish Civil War.

Local newspapers reflected this interest in the larger world. Since these newspapers were the primary source for all news coverage, they had stories on local, provincial, national, and international events. The news was not differentiated into separate sections. Readers received their information as a whole: international events were positioned directly next to curling scores, reports from the Farmer’s Institutes, federal legislation, and bake sale notices. This positioning of news items (even with limited information) promoted a comprehensive understanding of a world that included but stretched far beyond the northwest.

The settlers in this region were not conservatives who rejected the intrusions of a modern world. An early “anti-south” editorial, for instance, complained that customs laws limiting tourist car travel to a few weeks prevented American tourists from coming to the northwest. Indeed, most of the criticisms of the south were part of the articulation of development arguments that the south should invest more in the north and the government needed “...to make it possible for those here to make a living.” These protests were not against outside interests

28 “Debate on German Grab of Austria,” The Interior News, April 13, 1938 or The Interior News, June 27, 1934.
30 “Customs Discriminates Against the North,” The Interior News, November 7, 1923.
31 “Population or Prosperity, Which?” The Interior News, March 29, 1922.
forcing themselves into their locale but against outside interests preventing development. Local people wanted more progress, not less progress.

Residents of the northwest also promoted local interests by voicing grievances towards “the South” and “the East” in election campaigns. When L. B. Warner, the Liberal editor of The Interior News, critiqued a “carpetbagger” Conservative candidate, he reminded the readers that “for twenty years the people of the north have been struggling against the domination of British Columbia by Vancouver…” Warner assumed that his readership already understood this “struggle” and, indeed, many of his editorials between 1916 and 1936 had complained about the disproportionate political power of the south. The defense of local interests also crossed partisan lines. In the 1926 Federal Election, local Liberals voted against Fred Stork, the Liberal incumbent, when he “failed in his duty” to represent Skeena. Local needs sometimes surpassed partisan loyalty.

This promotion of local interest, however, did not constitute localistic populism. First, local residents often voiced their grievances by identifying with two larger communities: “the North” and “the West”. In 1934, for example, local Liberals voted for Western Canada to separate from the East. This vote was a function of a western rather than an exclusively local identity. Second, northwest settlers frequently promoted community interests by using arguments that required an active engagement with the outside world of politics. This engagement, ironically, was a function of the northwest’s geographic isolation: politicians, especially Premiers and Cabinet Ministers, had to travel laboriously along the railway and actually visit small towns where the entire community of all political persuasions could

33 “Province In North,” The Interior News, March 30, 1921.
34 “Hanson, Brady…or Skeena,” The Interior News, July 23, 1930 and The Omineca Herald, October 23, 1925.
35 The Interior News, May 23, 1934.
participate in debates. The utility of the northwest’s connection to the larger political world was especially evident in two editorials. In “Is Our Fight With The East?”, Warner complained that Vancouver interests prevented the sale of timber in Vancouver for no reason but their own vanity. Warner used this acute awareness of Vancouver events to understand the North’s “true enemy”. In “Bulkley Valley and Quebec”, Warner quoted a speech by the Quebec Minister of Agriculture. Although the speech promoted the purchase of Quebec products, Warner used its argument to encourage people to buy agricultural products from the Bulkley Valley: local people quoted outsiders to advance local needs.

By the mid-1930s, the evocation of the local began to have more rhetorical resonance as many people developed a stronger allegiance to their local world. This strength was a function of a developing sense of the legitimacy of local understandings and ordinary people. A 1937 pro-Liberal editorial, for instance, emphasized the simple eloquence of the Liberal candidate (M. M. Connelly) because he spoke in the language of a “John Smith” and because a long residence in Omineca legitimized his worth over outsiders who preferred to live in Vancouver. By the end of the 1930s, localistic sentiments began to resonate, but this trend would not survive post-war development.

Localistic populism was as absent from the northwest after the Second World War as it had been before the war. Although some local people now shared a long-standing connection to their region, these connections did not resonate politically, for northwest culture was enamoured with a vision of development that promised that capital investment, technology, and efficient resource extraction would bring continual progress to the region. Northwest inhabitants wanted

36 See Walter Wicks, Memories of the Skeena (Saanichton: Hancock House Publishers Ltd., 1976), pp. 102 – 103.  
37 “Is Our Fight With The East?” The Interior News, October 1, 1924.  
38 “Bulkley Valley and Quebec,” The Interior News, October 7, 1931.  
development more than local autonomy, and that development attracted newcomers who did not have localistic sentiments.

Local people continued to promote local interests in the post-war years. The media frequently reprimanded MLAs and MPs for not representing their entire constituencies and lamented the general lack of government involvement in the district. A 1948 editorial, for example, complained that the government had forgotten the north and was, thereby, preventing northern development. In later times, local pioneers remembered this desire for development after World War Two. David Bunting wrote forty years later that "BC elected a good Government in the fifties; the first in our history to extend its vision beyond the lower mainland. Paved highways, electric power, railways and industry were extended to the vast interior. Our isolation was ended."

Despite these pro-development sentiments, a certain anxiety existed among long-time northerners regarding outside encroachment on their lives. They were concerned about the immediate effects of development. Some local pioneers, for instance, protested the loss of their homesteads to the flooding of Ootsa Lake, which was needed to supply hydro-power to Alcan for its aluminum development in Kitimat. These protests, however, were for fair compensation and were not a localistic critique of the government's development strategy. Many locals also felt they were losing some of their former autonomy. The newspaper remembered the independence of their pioneer forefathers:

They viewed with wary eye the paternalism of senior governments. They held that true democracy required rigid adherence to the principle of untrammeled local autonomy...But the fast pace of modern living has brought vast changes which too many of us appear to accept with little study and with calm.


complacency. Municipal councils now accept and even demand more and more handouts from senior authority to finance local needs.\textsuperscript{44}

This nostalgia for local autonomy, however, rarely factored into politics. Longtime Skeena MLA E. T. Kenney was victorious in the 1952 election (despite a provincial-wide Liberal defeat) because of his status as a northern developer rather than as a protector of the north. Liberal ads emphasized this development by declaring that “Mr. Kenney is the man who personally brought great prosperity to our district.”\textsuperscript{45} Political rhetoric that emphasized a candidate’s lack of local ties was also ineffective. Liberals, for instance, stressed in the 1953 election that the CCF candidate in Skeena (Frank Howard) was an outsider who was registering transient labourers to vote.\textsuperscript{46} Howard won that election and received much of his support from the new boomtowns of Terrace and Kitimat, but he was also popular in older communities such as Kispiox, Evelyn, and Glentanna.\textsuperscript{47} The northwest had too many newcomers and its pro-development ethos was too dominant for localistic sentiments to resonate at the ballot box.

The way in which local politics was connected to the larger world was also changing in the post-war period. In the 1920s and 1930s, politics had been a community event. Candidates and visiting leaders gave speeches to the entire community and these speeches would often be followed by free dances where people argued about the upcoming election. The local patronage system also meant that election choices had a direct impact on people’s lives, as election results determined jobs both in the tie industry and in road construction.\textsuperscript{48} By the 1950s, this was changing. The impact of radio broadcasts, and then television, reduced the face-to-face campaigning of political leaders. Instead of politics as a community event, people stayed home with their families to listen to the radio or to watch television. Voter turnout dropped

\textsuperscript{44} The Interior News, April 6, 1950.
\textsuperscript{45} For Liberal ad, see The Interior News, June 5, 1952.
\textsuperscript{46} “Kenney and Applewhaite Speak in Support of Skeena Liberal Candidate,” The Omineca Herald, June 5, 1953.
\textsuperscript{47} See Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, Statement of Votes for General Election, 1953.
considerably as locals were less involved in politics. In the inter-war years, elections often had
close to a 90% voter turnout, but by 1956, this had dropped to its lowest level ever at around
64%. Therefore, while improved communications to the outside world appeared to bring
people closer to politics, it represented a different kind of political isolation. Communications
developments may have helped political leaders “override the particularistic inclinations of local
communities,” but this change produced large influence markets that detached local people
from a tangible political process. Politics in the northwest became a spectator sport with
symbols made more abstract through their remoteness, for the new communications created “not
close contact but a semblance of close contact.” The 1950s was the beginning of a political
process in which local people were no longer engaged within a participatory community event.

To sum up, localistic populism did not exist in northwest British Columbia. People
articulated a local identity but one that was connected to a larger pro-development discourse.
They did not privilege rural conservative values in reaction to an emerging cosmopolitan culture
because they were part of that cosmopolitan culture. In addition, modern post-war
communications increased the distance between people and the political process. Because of
this distance, politics became more laden with abstract symbols, and more easily categorized
into a debate of “individualism” versus “socialism”. This debate would undermine the
northwest’s “Spirit of Co-operation”.

48 For an account of past patronage systems and political dances, see Rudland, pp. 169 and 204.
50 For an example, The Interior News, April 28, 1949 advises people to listen to the radio for Premier Johnson and
February 10, 1955 advises people to listen to Social Credit on the radio.
51 Wilson, pp. 533 – 534.
– 9. For 1952 as the start of this symbolic laden remoteness, see W. Lance Bennet, “The Postmodern Election,” in
Co-operative Populism

Co-operative populism never existed in northwest British Columbia. In the inter-war years, most people spoke a common language of co-operation, but this language did not constitute co-operative populism because people rarely used it within a context of electoral conflict or to question the existing economic system. Even the “radical” co-operative language that was used during the depression easily co-existed with the long-term pattern in the northwest of the Liberal party dominating politics. In the years following World War Two, this extensive but “apolitical” co-operative language was replaced by a language of free-enterprise and of large capital investment. Post-war populism, then, was not connected to a co-operative tradition.

In the inter-war period, co-operative language was prevalent because this frontier society was fairly egalitarian. Most residents occupied the same status group, and local people - ranging from professionals to skilled workers - believed that they needed to co-operate towards common goals to achieve community prosperity. In 1922 a visiting doctor summed up this inclination in a letter to the editor. He wrote, “Co-operation is the watchword for your district, whether it be doctor, hospital, creamery, or good roads. Any friction might mean disaster to you all.” Local people agreed with the doctor. Farmers organized the Northern Interior Co-operative Association (NICA) to pool credit, market their products, and secure cash. Most people, regardless of their political persuasion, participated in picnics, dances, sporting events, and various clubs. In addition, many people used co-operative language and calls for government intervention within the same arguments. They argued that “closer co-operation and

---


54 The Interior News, April 26, 1922.

55 The Interior News, April 28, 1919 pg. 6, Letter to the Editor from NICA and “Smithers Farmers Form Second Unit of Northern Interior Co-Operative Co.,” The Interior News, March 3, 1919.
Government assistance (is) necessary for dairymen," and that everyone should co-operate for public medicine and local hospitals. As early as 1919, Harold Wrinch, the doctor from Hazelton and Skeena's first Liberal MLA, campaigned with widespread community support for state medicine.57

Co-operation, however, was understood to be more than an instrument for economic gain. It was connected to how people understood progress, community, morality, and their Western identity. The Interior News published an article insisting that "The one Message which should dominate Western Canada is Unity! – Unity!! – Unity!!!...co-operation between buyer and seller means progress, unity and peace."58 It also ran an ad called "Progress: The Result of Co-operation" declaring that co-operation would bring "...the dawn of greater era of civic, moral, and religious advancement in Smithers" (see Illustration 1).

Since most people shared the same co-operative understanding, they rarely used co-operative language in political disputes throughout the inter-war period. Indeed, candidates for competing political parties frequently shared membership in local co-operative organizations and when MLA Alexander Manson declared, “Let us unite as men and women of the north to work for the development of our

---

56 The Interior News, February 6, 1924.
57 The Interior News, June 28, 1919.
"heritage," he was referring (after the election) to the need to move beyond politics. Co-operative language was also apolitical because (unlike other co-operative traditions) people in the northwest rarely used the language to challenge the established parties, to critique specific economic interests, or to reform the existing capitalist economic system. In the northwest of the 1920s, the promotion of capital investment did not conflict with co-operative language. For example, only two weeks before the “Progress: The Result of Co-operation” ad, The Interior News had printed a cartoon arguing that the cure for the ailments of “young Smithers” was “more capital” (see Illustration 2).

The Depression intensified but did not really politicize pre-existing support for co-operation and public action. Most residents agreed (without substantial political debate) on the need for increased public co-operative action and for a re-assessment of the existing capitalist system. Their call for government intervention meant demands for increased roadwork and railway tie contracts regardless of the actual need for roads or ties. People also called for local solutions. They fundraised for local charities, promoted the hiring of local workers, and advocated the buying of local goods. For half a year, Warner ran an ad entitled “The Organized Community” that called for all community clubs,

Illustration 2:
The Interior News February 20, 1929.

---

60 See Lipset and Goodwyn.
farmer’s institutes, and businesses to unite and promote “a sense of public duty, not only as it affects public matters, but also as it pertains to the welfare of the individuals in a community.”

Warner also demanded government aid to help industry and finance. He supported his argument by describing how, in the economic crisis of 33 AD, the Roman Emperor Tiberius saved the economy by withdrawing 100,000,000 sesterces from the imperial treasury to loan without interest to debtors. Warner, in 1929, was arguing for a kind of Keynesian counter-cyclical deficit financing.

In 1933, a more extreme form of co-operative language emerged with the formation of a new political party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. CCFers were more strident than the Liberals in rejecting the capitalist system and individualism as they declared that “all the rugged individualism of by-gone days had been crushed between the millstones of the present system,” and that “its time to sink all selfishness for the common good.” The CCF critique of individualism, however, was not only a critique of capitalism. In part, it was a defense of progress and male gender values. CCFers argued, “Let us have collective effort to put big machines to work and take control of the necessaries of life at the point of production; then you guys will be real men instead of the poor degraded victims of charity that you are today.” More importantly, local CCFers’ were part of a pre-existing moderate co-operative discourse. They advocated constructive parliamentary action while using the co-operative labels of “progress”, “morality”, and “liberty” to support their socialist program. This critique of capitalism was especially not a critique of private property. Indeed, the CCF found its largest

Fisher concludes that Patullo’s cooperative-interventionist response to the Depression “represented a western tradition of government activism”.

63 The Interior News. November 27, 1929.
65 The Observer. March 30, 1933.
66 The Observer. March 2, 1933.
support base amongst farmers (see Table 1). In farming communities in Omineca and Skeena, the CCF received between 5% and 18% more support than it did for the entire constituency; the CCF in the northwest was an agrarian petit-bourgeois movement, but one sympathetic to the needs of labour. Indeed, many farmers had often been workers at some point in their lives and many continued to work in the tie industry during the winter season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Composition</th>
<th>% CCF Vote by Election Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omineca</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming Communities</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for Omineca</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming Communities</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for Skeena</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many local Liberals were unsure how to deal with the CCF as they initially supported this new Party before accusing it of stealing the Liberal platform. Liberals were contesting the CCF’s right to use a co-operative language because both their rhetoric and their policies were similar to one another. By the mid-1930s, the CCF and Liberals together drew between 90% and 100% of the vote in the northwest, and they both advocated co-operation and government intervention. Indeed, almost 70% of voters in Skeena and 80% of those in Omineca supported the 1937 Plebiscite on Health Insurance. This was about 20% more than the provincial average and illustrated the northwest’s general inclination towards public action.

68 *The Observer*, September 21, 1933, quotes a CCF supporter as saying that the capitalist state “is now detrimental to progress, unethical and destructive of life and liberty.”
69 See Hak for an explanation of leftist impulses in small communities: these agrarian societies promoted public action, a producer ethos, community development, and co-operative solutions. He argues that “farmers with populist inclinations were active in leftist organizations, there were close ties with the Liberal party in the 1910s and 1920s, and there were no obvious changes in philosophy with the arrival of the CCF” (p. 542).
Despite the strength of the co-operative discourse, new types of labels began to emerge in response to the CCF’s language. Although the Liberal government continued to advertise with exclusively co-operative language up to 1935, by 1937 Liberals qualified the rhetoric of progressive government with such adjectives as “sane” and “stable.” These labels implied that a government could be progressive (i.e. adopting the theories of co-operation and public action) while also being insane and unstable. The Liberal Party could no longer define itself only as progressive, for it needed to attract old Conservative voters while attacking the CCF’s co-operative platform. As co-operative language was qualified, it became less important and in the years following the Second World War, it would be replaced by a new discourse of “free-enterprise versus socialism”.

The northwest’s co-operative consensus weakened in the late 1930s and was then eliminated in the post-war period: co-operative populism would never be a northwest phenomenon. The end of this consensus was articulated in two speeches given by E. T. Kenney, the Skeena MLA. The first, presented to a Laurier Club Luncheon, argued that British Columbia was a forest province, that farming could never succeed, and that rural development for agricultural communities was too expensive. Kenney’s assessment was accurate. The northwest’s population – largely consisting of farm families – had not really grown in 20 years: forestry, not farming, would be the key to development. The forest industry was also changing in this period. The forest service (concerned about conservation and sustainable yield) brought in a system of tenure, Forest Management Licenses (FMLs), that guaranteed massive timber grants to large forest companies to ensure long-term secure investment in a renewable industry. The first of the FMLs heralded the beginning of forest development in the northwest.

74 The Interior News, May 12, 1937.
76 For a description of both the pre-development and post-development northwest, see Kendrick, pp. 71 and 146.
by granting 2.3 million acres of Kenney’s Skeena riding to Columbia Cellulose. Although small logging and sawmill operations actually increased in number in the late 40s and early 50s, the new tenure system inevitably promoted increased capital concentration that pushed out the independent operators. As for farmers, they made up only 9% of voters in the northwest by 1952 compared to 32% in 1933, and the co-operative ethos among these farmers had diminished; editorials in 1954 complained that farmers were now uninterested in co-operative associations. The era of agrarian co-operation in the northwest had been replaced by one of large forest capital.

Kenney’s second speech, given to the Northern Interior Lumberman’s Association, argued that “all that we now have, all that we have ever had, has been attained by private endeavor.” His coupling of “progress” with “private action” challenged the inter-war coupling of “progress” with “co-operation”, and actual economic growth supported his rhetoric. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, private rather than co-operative enterprise achieved massive developments in the northwest. The encroachment of large outside capital, best represented by Columbia Cellulose in the region around Terrace, was promoted within a hegemonic discourse of free-enterprise and progress. Paul Cooper, a Columbia Cellulose representative, gave Kenney a printed version of a 1950 speech by J. D. Zellerbach (the president of the U.S. based Crown Zellerbach Corporation). The speech in its source (a large foreign company) and its argument (a free-enterprise philosophy) synthesized the ethos of the northwest’s development promoters. It argued that progress “inevitably enlarges and emphasizes the importance of the

---

77 The Interior News, March 29, 1951 where speech by MLA Steele reports that farmers have taken up lumbering.
79 See Appendix 2 for method on social composition.
80 The Interior News, May 13 and October 14, 1954.
individual man,” and that socialism was a reactionary “attempt to dam the stream of progress.”

Co-operation, by embracing collective effort and private property, did not fit into this discourse that privileged individualism and attacked socialism.

The replacement of co-operative language with a language of free-enterprise and large capital investment also redefined the meaning of community in the northwest. Columbia Cellulose ran a series of ads that illustrated this new corporate redefinition (see Illustration 3). Rather than just emphasizing employment or economic growth, these ads associated their company with the family, consumer goods, and community. They portrayed new schools, fathers with their children, women in lingerie, and wives confident about the future, as Columbia Cellulose promised to fulfill their responsibilities of citizenship.

They backed up this promise with large contributions to community projects, and these contributions must have surpassed monies attained by more traditional co-operative efforts. In addition, the new town of Kitimat – home of the Aluminum factory – existed “solely because it was chosen in 1951 as the site of an

---

Illustration 3: The Omineca Herald, March 14, 1952.

---

82 See ads in local newspapers in late 40s and early 50s (by the Standard Oil Company of BC and the BC Federation of Trade and Industry) that champion free choice and large corporations while warning about socialism.
84 The Omineca Herald, February 29, 1952.
85 The Omineca Herald January 4, 1952 reports that Columbia Cellulose gave $1000 to the local fire department.
industry. Even Alcan also operated Kitimat’s first medical and education services. Even the Terrace newspaper, The Omineca Herald, literally defined the community in relationship to capital development. Its title read, “Terrace – Supply Centre For Columbia Cellulose – Only 40 Miles from Alcan’s Kitimat Project.” These were company towns defined by corporate language and not by independent, co-operating citizens.

The failing of co-operative language was reflected in post-war politics. Social Credit emphasized the individual as “...the most important factor in society” even though it was popular among the northwest’s remaining farmers. Liberals, instead of positioning themselves between socialism and individualism as they had in the 1930s, now argued that “We believe in the importance of the individual...because there is a spark of the divine in each one of us.” Even the CCF followed these trends against co-operative populism. In Omineca, the CCF MLA, Edward Rowland, did not mention “co-operation” when he talked about the need to fund local hospitals. In Skeena, the CCF was most successful in working-class communities where their candidate, Frank Howard, was a union organizer. The class politics of incoming workers (not the co-operative ethos of a petit-bourgeois) won elections for the CCF (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labour Communities</th>
<th>% Unskilled Labour</th>
<th>% CCF Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals for Skeena</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When people used co-operative language, they did so quite differently from their predecessors in the inter-war years. The languages of co-operation and capital promotion had

---

86 Kendrick, p. 8.
87 For a description of the services provided by Alcan, see Kendrick, pp. 137 – 139.
88 The Omineca Herald, May 23, 1952.
89 In 1949 the CCF received 47% in farming communities; in 1952 that had dropped to 26% with Social Credit getting 31% of the vote (see Appendix 2 for method on social composition of polls).
90 “Kenney and Applewhaite Speak In Support Of Skeena Liberal Candidate,” The Omineca Herald, June 5, 1953, italics added.
been fairly distinct from one another in the 1920s and 1930s. By the 1950s, this distinction was blurring as the dominant language of capital permeated the remaining co-operative rhetoric of the northwest. For example, a confusing 1952 editorial entitled “Co-operation Builds a Community” commended Smithers businessmen for decorating their stores with neon signs and for supporting community projects. The editorial is not clear about what constituted co-operation, community projects, or capital investment in business decoration; it concluded ambiguously that “...by this spirit of co-operation and goodwill the business places of Smithers have grown to the stage where they can satisfactorily meet the needs of the trading area...”

For the post-war years, then, the “spirit of co-operation” was expressed as the means to business development rather than the means to public morality.

Even nostalgic evocations of past co-operative efforts were qualified with the language of individualism. A community response to the Terrace Hospital’s expansion needs warranted the following response in the local newspaper:

> From time to time the lament is heard that the spirit of co-operation which enabled our pioneer fathers to open up this country is dead. But here is an illustration that it still lives...democracy, which provides freedom for the individual, and group effort, has this week doubled bed accommodation of our hospital.  

This article on co-operation emphasizes “freedom for the individual” as much as “group effort”.

In addition, a month later, readers could hardly have missed Columbia Cellulose’s well-advertised $2000 contribution to the hospital.

> Co-operative language was finally reduced to referring to the mundane elements of community life, for compared to the inter-war period, the rhetoric behind co-operative efforts

---

93 The Omineca Herald, February 8, 1952. Italics added.
94 The Omineca Herald, March 21, 1952.
was now more practical than ideological. Instead of promoting morality, people supported the Credit Union as a way for people to pool their savings.\textsuperscript{95} Instead of understanding western identity through a co-operative tradition, households were asked to co-operate for garbage disposal and community sanitation.\textsuperscript{96} Instead of ads declaring "Progress: The Result of Co-operation", newspaper headlines said "Seek Co-operation in Clean-Up Week."\textsuperscript{97}

Co-operative populism, then, did not exist in the post-war period. The growth of the forest industry (compared to slow agricultural development) meant an influx of labour and outside capital, and, thereby, eliminated the social base of independent farmers and redefined community with a modern corporate language. Although co-operation had always been fairly apolitical, the rise of class politics further weakened the CCF's co-operative language, and Cold War free-enterprise rhetoric made co-operative language either nostalgic or insignificant. Northwest populism, as a post-war phenomenon, would be built not on the base of a co-operative tradition but on the ashes of that tradition.

Anti-elitist populism

Anti-elitist populism used the label of "the People" to denote ordinary people in contrast to elite groups. This label was usually defined by designating groups (such as bankers) who were not "the People" rather than groups who were "the People". The term "the People", then, was a rhetorical instrument rather than a political reality.\textsuperscript{98} In the inter-war years, the label of "the People" was not an effective electoral instrument, for local inhabitants preferred to elect influential "elite" representatives who could obtain government money for their district. Even

\textsuperscript{95} The Interior News, March 24; 1949.
\textsuperscript{96} The Interior News, March 12, 1953.
\textsuperscript{97} The Interior News, May 10, 1956.
though this language somewhat resonated during the Depression, it was used as much by the “respectable” established parties as it was by protest parties like the CCF. The years following the Second World War differed from the earlier period as “the People” label became more effective within the rhetoric of Social Credit. However, this effectiveness was mainly situated in the eastern region of Omineca, and since Social Credit used “the People” label in tandem with a pro-development language, the phrase actually promoted elite-controlled development. Anti-elite populism in the northwest, therefore, was limited to the post-war period and embedded with non-populist connections.

The northwest’s political culture opposed anti-elitist inclinations as early as the 1916 election. In this election, the Conservative candidate in Omineca, Frank Dockrill, was a successful local farmer and an original pioneer. He ran against a Liberal newcomer to the region, a lawyer named Alexander Manson, and local Conservatives challenged Manson’s qualifications as a representative of the common person. They called Liberals “tricksters and expert legal bunco steerers,” men who “love the devious word and know how with legalized fraud and specious half-truths to make plausible their own skulduggery.”99 They also reminded voters that “A Vote for Dockrill is a Vote for Yourself.”100 Despite this populist rhetoric, Manson easily won the election with 62% of the vote.101 Local voters were more concerned with problems in the previous scandal-ridden Conservative government than they were with voting for an authentic representative of “the People”.

The career of Alexander Manson (Omineca MLA, 1916-1935) illustrates the typical “non-populist” representative. On one hand, Manson had “populist” tendencies. He was a passionate advocate of local interests, a promoter of progressive reforms, and an informal politician who

100 The Interior News, September 9, 1916.
insisted that people call him “just Alex” even after he was appointed Attorney-General. Indeed, Manson resembled the “crypto-Liberals” of the Liberal Party on the Canadian Prairies. David Laycock argues that “crypto-Liberalism was a western, rurally inclined, more socially progressive and politically experimental version of Ontario Grit Liberalism.”\textsuperscript{102} It was a populist version of Liberalism that promoted “the People” within the confines of respectable machine-politics and supported co-operation without rejecting the ideals of individualism.

Manson’s character and politics, however, were not anti-elite enough even to be labeled “pseudo-populist”. He may have presented an informal personality, but he was first a lawyer concerned about the meticulous details of law and the process of administration. He may have been a strong advocate for local interests, but this was a function of his qualities as a politician and not as a populist. He fought for the rights of all of his constituents regardless of their partisan leanings; even life-long Conservatives swore that they would always support Manson.\textsuperscript{103} He received few criticisms from his political opponents. An opponent on two occasions, Arthur Shelford, remarked that he had little chance against Manson who had kept his political fences well mended in Omineca.\textsuperscript{104} Manson, then, promoted the welfare of his constituents to improve his own election chances,\textsuperscript{105} for as long as Manson was the sole dispenser of resources, he was sure to get re-elected. When fellow Liberals Premier John Oliver and Duff Pattullo campaigned in Omineca, Manson remarked, “I wish they’d keep the hell out of my riding”\textsuperscript{106} Indeed, the success of the Liberal Party in the northwest was also connected to the efficiency of its elite-controlled patronage system, for local bosses seem to have influenced voting behavior. In 1924, for example, the Liberals were most popular in districts where Liberal

\textsuperscript{102} Laycock, p. 21
\textsuperscript{104} Shelford, We Pioneered, p. 182 for a description of Arthur Shelford’s election campaigns.
\textsuperscript{105} For example, see The Interior News, April 14, 1920, which reports that Manson got $81,000 for roads in the region – the largest amount for a region in the province. This figure was carefully reported in the election year.
\textsuperscript{106} Walker, p. 44.
Olof Hanson operated pole camps.\textsuperscript{107} In addition, many local histories emphasize the role of political patronage in hiring for road crews. David Bunting remembers that "Political associations were in full battle. Jobs depended on who won elections; the "ins" got work and the "outs" got fired!"\textsuperscript{108}

In the 1920 election, the failed campaigns of two independents revealed once again the ineffectiveness of "the People" label. First, Alex Prudhomme, President of the Northern Interior Co-operative Association, ran as a Farmer Candidate on an anti-elite platform of independent local representation and the rejection of traditional parties. Although farmers populated most of this region, Prudhomme received only 7% of the vote. Second, Joseph Kelly, President of the Smithers Prospectors Association, ran as a Labour candidate. Kelly’s election rhetoric consisted of applying "non-People" labels to Manson in phrases such as: "he believes in the Power of the Dirty Six ruling the Dystrict."\textsuperscript{109} Despite this populist rhetoric, Kelly received only 4% of the vote. Manson received 61%, 23% above the provincial average for Liberals.\textsuperscript{110}

Prudhomme and Kelly failed mainly because local farmers were not anti-elitist. Farmers wanted a pro-active representative who could work within government and who could guarantee government funds for local development needs. The successful political rhetoric of the Liberal Party certainly did not criticize the elite; even its political advertisements quoted a Seattle banker to prove that it was "A Business Administration".\textsuperscript{111}

The language of "the People" remained unimportant throughout the 1920s. Some editorials discussed monetary reforms while warning of the "...big money devils of New York
and London," but these were rather isolated cases. The 1924 Election was marked by the emergence of the Provincial Party. Although its leader was the wealthy urbanite General A. D. McRae, the Provincial Party in the northwest had some “populist” support. The Skeena candidate was former Conservative and farmer Frank Dockrill. Both Alex Prudhomme and Joseph Kelly, “populist” candidates from the 1920 election, supported Dockrill. In Omineca, the Provincial Party candidate was Arthur Shelford, a farmer and organizer of the local Northern Interior Co-operative Association. The Provincial Party labeled itself as a non-partisan representative of “the People” and argued “that conditions were rotten, and the Provincial party movement was an attempt to clean up the dirty mess created by the old parties.”

The Liberal Party responded with even more intense anti-elite labeling by emphasizing the wealth of McRae. Liberals argued that “…the Provincial party is an open challenge and protest by the financial interests against the tendency of Oliver legislation toward assisting the masses instead of enacting laws to further enrich the plutocrats of Shaughnessy Heights.” Political cartoons portrayed the Provincial Party as a fat wealthy banker compared to ordinary British Columbians (see Illustration 4).

Illustration 4: The Interior News, May 1, 1924.

Despite this intense populist campaigning by the Liberals, the Provincial Party was quite

114 Ibid.
successful in the northwest. It garnered about one-third of the vote (10% more support than their provincial average) and lowered Liberal support to below 50% for the only time between 1916 and 1936.\textsuperscript{116} Provincial Party candidates successfully united popular independents and local farmers without depending on anti-elite credentials.\textsuperscript{117} Its relative success perhaps reflected a sizable but not universal support for elite-controlled alternatives to traditional parties and illustrated the failure of the Liberal Party’s rhetorical use of “the People”.

Anti-elite populism was absent from the rest of the 1920s as the rhetoric of progress and prosperity obscured the most limited expressions of populism.\textsuperscript{118} The 1928 Provincial election was a dull affair, with limited campaigning and continued support for the Liberal Party in the northwest. Local boosters even idealized elite-controlled outside capital when they argued that “…far-sighted optimists such as the Canadian group of financiers who are making possible the creation of a gigantic nickel and copper industry, have a clear perspective of the true potential wealth of the Dominion.”\textsuperscript{119}

The language of “the People” became more evident in the northwest during the Depression, but this language did not constitute prevalent anti-elite populism because it only challenged and did not replace established party structures. Prominent local Liberals demanded monetary reforms, evoked the memory of William Jennings Bryan (the failed leader of the People’s Party in the United States), and complained that “…the big money in Vancouver (is) uninterested in BC mines.”\textsuperscript{120} The Interior News published on its front page the following poem, written by long-time monetary-reform advocate Donald Simpson, to salute a trip to

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{117} The Omineca Herald, June 27, 1924 reports that Provincial Party candidate Frank Dockrill was more popular personally than his party.
\textsuperscript{118} For example, the “anti-elite” candidate for the Progressive Party was soundly defeated in the federal election by the Conservative candidate. See “To the Electors of Skeena,” The Omineca Herald, September 25, 1925.
\textsuperscript{119} The Interior News, February 13, 1929.
\textsuperscript{120} The Interior News, December 17, 1930.
\end{flushleft}
Ottawa by Premier Duff Pattullo in 1934. It connected an image of "the People" versus a
distant elite with the politics of a Liberal Premier:

"Hail! Pattullo – doughty Chieftain
Of the tribes along the Skeena
And the Bulkley, and the Fraser,
And the other mighty rivers
Flowing to the broad Pacific,
In our Province mid the mountains.
What a shame it is, Oh! Chieftain,
That you must go to Ottawa,
To the tribes of the Ottawa,
To get money for your people,
Where they’ll soak you ten per centum,
If they can, Oh! doughty Chieftain
For their flimsy paper dollars,
Costing but one cent to make them,
With a lying promise on them,
Well beloved by the bankers..."\(^\text{121}\)

The emergence of the CCF during the Depression represented latent *anti-elitist populism*. Local CCF activists included unemployed workers, progressive farmers, long-time Socialists, and church leaders, people who had not traditionally controlled politics in this region for the previous twenty years. They used socialist rhetoric but also made anti-elitist promises of getting rid of the old parties, helping the average citizen,\(^\text{122}\) and making MLAs directly responsible to "the People". Omineca candidate Arthur Windle promised that if elected "he would resign from the Legislature if 60% of the electorate of Omineca demanded it, or if four-fifths of the CCF executive in Omineca made this demand."\(^\text{123}\)

Despite their populist language, the CCF initially had difficulty controlling "the People" label, for Liberals were as likely to use this type of labeling. Liberals repeatedly emphasized that CCF candidates had to be approved by the CCF provincial executive. They argued that "Mr. Panter and all other CCF candidates have been humiliated by having to obtain recognition

\(^{122}\) "A. E. Windle Speaks For CCF," *The Observer*, October 12, 1933.  
\(^{123}\) "Arthur Edward Windle CCF Candidate For Omineca," *The Observer*, September 14, 1933.
from a clique of 9 in the south,”

and that this system of candidate approval meant that “…the CCF has lost all connection with the farmer and laborer and has been taken body and soul by a ruthless Soviet.”

In addition, Liberals insisted that they represented the interests of “the People”, for “liberalism in its stand midway between the capitalist and the socialist had the tradition, the record, and the desire to work for an average prosperity for all against the extreme wealth of the financial interests…” They also argued that “capitalism meant the arrogant disregard of the rights of many” and that the money kings “must not attempt to impede the progress of economic evolution.”

Throughout the rest of the 1930s, Liberals continued to win elections using this anti-elite language, but they began to qualify their rhetoric with promises of “sound legislation”. These Liberal promises implied that CCF proposals were “unsound”, but the CCF commanded almost 40% of the popular vote by 1936 while support for the Liberal Party remained constant at 50% to 60%. The latter remained constant because the Conservative Party had disappeared from politics in the northwest, and some former Conservatives were now voting Liberal while some former Liberals were now voting CCF. The local elite, those who had controlled local politics for the last twenty years, united under the Liberal Party while many independents turned to the CCF. Although both contenders used “the People” label, the nature of elections was dividing them on populist lines. The emergence of the CCF, then, resulted in the beginning of a realignment of northwest politics based on anti-elite populism, but established parties still won elections. The CCF captured the 1945 Omineca election (mostly because of the popularity of its candidate at a time before the anti-communism of the Cold War), but anti-elite inclinations

---

124 The Interior News, November 1, 1933, editorial.
125 Ibid.
126 The Interior News, September 27, 1933.
127 The Interior News, March 10, 1934.
128 The Interior News, May 12, 1937.
would not really challenge the northwest's established parties until the 1950s when Social Credit united those inclinations with a pro-development ethos.

In contrast to the inter-war years, *anti-elite populism* was successful in the post-war northwest because the language of "the People" harmonized commonly held but contradictory beliefs regarding economic development. People wanted economic growth, government-promoted development, and more population, but they mistrusted the establishment parties, were concerned about domination by outside capital, and were disturbed with the resulting increase in the number of workers beholden to unions. Jack Mould, for instance, fondly remembers how in the 1920s a tie maker was his own man who "...owed allegiance to no Company or union."\(^{131}\)

Besides these divisions within belief systems, geographic divisions emerged between the constituencies of Omineca and Skeena because of the spatial distribution of class-conscious workers. In Omineca, the population grew less than in Skeena and included a higher percentage of farmers and small logger operators who were more united by anti-elite sentiments than divided by class lines. In Skeena, the new boomtowns of Terrace and Kitimat attracted numerous laborers who worked for the large companies, Columbia Cellulose and Alcan, and who quickly joined large unions (see Table 3). Skeena elected both Social Credit and CCF representatives, but its more dominant class politics meant that these victories were not the result of *anti-elite populism*.

| Table 3: Omineca Vs. Skeena, Based on % Increase in Voters and on Social Composition. |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                               | % Registered Voter Increase: | % Skilled and Unskilled Workers in 1952 |
|                               | 1945 - 1956                  | % Farmers in 1952              |
| Omineca                       | 101%                         | 13%                           |
| Skeena                        | 276%                         | 5%                            |

\(^{130}\) In fact, by 1937 the Liberals barely mentioned the Conservatives.

\(^{131}\) Mould, p. 54.
The class divisions that distinguished Omineca from Skeena in the 1950s were not yet evident in the 1949 provincial election, for the Coalition (the combination of the Liberal and Conservative parties) maintained the status quo by dominating the political landscape. In Omineca, the CCF gained protest votes from people who were angry at the seemingly unresponsive government, but their share of 38% of the vote was not enough for a victory. In Skeena, the popularity of development promoter E. T. Kenney assured a large Coalition majority (for election history see Appendix 4). CCF candidates in these constituencies were not typical socialists cohering to a class-based explanation of CCF politics, for they both had middle-class property and middle-class status. Edward Rowland, the incumbent CCF candidate in Omineca, was a farmer, and J. D. Denicola, the Skeena candidate, was an experienced section foreman.

In the 1950s, however, the anti-elite parties of Social Credit and the CCF soundly defeated the establishment parties. In Omineca, Cyril Shelford, a young local-born farmer, successfully ran as a Social Credit candidate in 1952. The support for Shelford’s victory, which was largely due to a significant protest vote against the coalition government, came from many former CCF voters. In polls where the CCF won or tied in 1949, Social Credit gained a plurality of the vote. The Coalition parties dropped a few percentage points while the CCF lost more than half of its votes, and Social Credit came from nowhere to gain 43% (see Table 4). In addition, a “protest unity” between the new parties and against the establishment parties was reflected in the balloting system of that year: in the 1952 and 1953 elections, British Columbia used a preferential balloting system in which voters ranked the parties, and after each count (until a

---

132 The Interior News March 31, 1948 reports that “The C.C.F. have no real thought of successfully contesting the provincial riding, that is on party lines, but it is well known, and becoming increasingly apparent, that there will be a strong protest vote in the next election, which they hope to get.”

133 For description of Denicola, see The Interior News, November 25, 1948.
candidate had garnered a majority), the ballots of the candidate with the lowest total would be distributed to the other candidates based on people's second or third choices. In Omineca, almost half of CCF voters supported Social Credit as their second choice while many Conservatives supported the Liberals (see Table 5).

| Table 4: 1949 and 1952 Vote Share for Polls where the CCF Won or Tied in 1949. |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                | Coalition | PC | LIB | SC | CCF |
| 1949           | 34%       | --- | --- | --- | 66% |
| 1952           | ---       | 9%  | 16% | 43% | 32% |

| Table 5: 1952 and 1953 Distribution of Alternate Votes for 2nd and 3rd Counts: Omineca. |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Parties Transferring Votes | Liberal | Party Receiving Alternate Votes | No Transfer |
| 1952                        |         |                           |              |
| 1st Transfer: 574 Cons. Votes | 32%   | 14% | 13% | --- | 41% |
| 2nd Transfer: 921 CCF Votes  | 17%   | --- | 43% | --- | 40% |
| 1953                        |         |               |              |
| 1st Transfer: 172 Cons. Votes | 35%   | 5%  | 22% | --- | 38% |
| 2nd Transfer: 960 CCF Votes  | 18%   | --- | 19% | --- | 63% |

This 1952 alignment in Omineca of old parties on one side and "protest" parties on the other side followed provincial-wide vote transfer patterns and supports the observations in memoirs of this period that many people had previously endorsed the CCF not because of socialist inclinations but to protest the existing government. For example, Jack Mould, in

---

134 For examinations of 1952 and 1953 elections at the provincial level see Thomas Michael Sanford, "The Politics of Protest: The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and Social Credit League in British Columbia," (unpub. Ph.D. thesis, Berkley: University of California, 1961) p. 169 -173, David J. Elkins, "Politics Makes Strange Bedfellows: The B.C. Party System in the 1952 and 1953 Provincial Elections," BC Studies, 30, (Summer, 1976), and Black, "British Columbia: The Politics of Exploitation". For a debate on this subject see Mark Sproule Jones, "Social Credit and the British Columbia Electorate," BC Studies, 12 (Winter, 1971-72) and the responses by Edwin R. Black, Martin Robin, and Donald Blake. Robin emphasizes class politics to explain the rise of Social Credit while Black contends that Social Credit was a protest of people of lower status against the social elite. Sproule-Jones disagrees with both of these explanations and, instead, uses the idea of "sponsored ideology" which is that parties themselves shape the ideology of voters in the way that they define issues. This paper disagrees with none of these arguments. Class was important in some places, protest against social elites was important in other places,
Stump Farms and Broadaxes, remembers that the CCF found protest votes among those “...who rationalized that any new political philosophy would be an improvement on one that blandly abandoned the country’s natural resources and rural population to the vagrancies of forest fires.” Shelford himself actually voted CCF twice in his younger days as a protest vote, had considered running as a CCF candidate, and remembered that much of his support came from former CCFers. By 1953 this protest interconnection between CCF and Social Credit voters was declining at the provincial level in Omineca as politics stabilized under a free-enterprise versus socialism arrangement. Indeed, CCF votes that transferred to Social Credit on the third count of the alternate balloting dropped from 43% in 1952 to only 19% by 1953 (see Table 5).

This polarization did not carry over into the federal politics of the Omineca region. In the 1953 federal election, provincial Social Creditors may have voted federally for the old-line free-enterprise parties (the lack of a Social Credit candidate did not increase the CCF share of the vote from the provincial election), but these federal votes had more to do with the weakness of the CCF candidate. Harry Archibald was a fisherman from the coast who spent much of his time in the Queen Charlotte Islands, so he fared poorly among the farmers and loggers in the Omineca-section of the federal Skeena riding. Archibald’s failure was made more evident by the CCF success under Frank Howard in the 1957 and 1958 federal elections. In the Omineca section of the federal Skeena riding, Howard was able to gain a large share of provincial Social Credit votes: when there was no Social Credit candidate, the CCF vote share went from 19% in the 1956 provincial election to 40% in the 1957 federal election even though the CCF lost popularity in British Columbia as a whole between these elections (see Appendix 3). Party

and sometimes these inclinations overlapped. The political language (or ideology) of parties also shaped voter beliefs but within a context of pre-existing class and status understandings.

135 Mould, Stump Farmers and Broadaxes, p. 136.
136 Cyril Shelford, pp. 130 - 158 describes his early campaigns and the Social Credit-CCF unity.
137 The federal riding of Skeena encompassed most of Omineca. I used only those polls that were clearly labeled the same for Omineca provincially and Skeena federally.
support in Omineca, therefore, was polarized between free-enterprise and socialism at the provincial level while, at the federal level, a certain amount of fluidity existed between Social Credit and the CCF. Shelford supports the existence of this trend when he remembers that there was some unity between the non-establishment parties. He writes that it was "common in those days" for a provincial Social Credit constituency secretary to also be the federal CCF constituency secretary.\textsuperscript{139} Omineca, then, followed the model of anti-elite populism. It elected parties of "the People" (Social Credit provincially and the CCF federally) rather than subscribing to the politics of class polarization.

Unlike Omineca, the provincial constituency of Skeena was increasingly influenced by the politics of class. The CCF candidate Frank Howard represented these new politics; he was a union organizer recently moved from Vancouver while, in contrast, Omineca's 1952 CCF candidate, Ward Taylor, was an accountant and vice-president of the Burns Lake Board of Trade.\textsuperscript{140} Howard lost in 1952 to longtime Skeena incumbent E.T. Kenney (who had received much of the credit for northern development),\textsuperscript{141} but Kenney did not contest the 1953 election and Howard was victorious. Howard's success in that election was not based on unity between voters who were against the old-line parties. In the second vote transfer, for instance, he received almost half the number of Social Credit alternate votes received by the Liberal candidate (see Table 6). Howard's 1953 provincial victory especially reflected the increased influences of class in Skeena as much of his support came from strong labour communities.\textsuperscript{142} Howard lost in the 1956 provincial election, but only because the free-enterprise vote had rallied behind the Social Credit candidate: his vote share had dropped only 1% from 1953.

\textsuperscript{138} For description of Archibald's tendency to be away fishing, see \textit{The Interior News}, February 29, 1953.
\textsuperscript{139} Shelford, \textit{From Snowshoes to Politics}, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{The Interior News}, May 29, 1952.
\textsuperscript{141} A month before the 1952 election, a dam (perhaps the greatest symbol of post-war development) was named after Kenney. The man who symbolized progress easily won in Skeena. See \textit{The Interior News}, May 8, 1952.
Table 6: 1952 and 1953 Distribution of Alternate Votes for 2nd and 3rd Counts: Skeena.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parties Transferring Votes</th>
<th>Parties Receiving Alternate Votes</th>
<th>1952</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>1953</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Transfer: 501 SC Votes</td>
<td>CCF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Transfer: 684 Cons. Votes</td>
<td>SC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>---</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cons</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Transfer</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Skeena’s class politics were also reflected in the 1957 and 1958 federal elections. Howard was successful in the part of the Skeena federal riding that overlapped with the provincial constituency of Skeena. His victories in this section of Skeena, however, were mostly because the federal “free-enterprise” vote was split between Liberals and Conservatives; they did not (like in the Omineca-section) depend on a substantial increase in the federal CCF vote share from the provincial CCF vote share. At the federal level, that is, CCFers remained loyal to their party while provincial Social Creditors chose to vote for one of the two established parties (see Appendix 3). In Skeena, Social Credit and the CCF were not connected at the federal level by a shared anti-elite populism.

In Omineca, therefore, Social Credit gained CCF protest votes in 1952 and, although provincially the protest vote mostly stayed with Social Credit, the CCF gained a considerable number of those votes federally in 1957 and 1958. In Skeena, neither party depended on a substantial “anti-elite” vote as incoming workers supported the CCF and a free-enterprise coalition elected the Social Credit candidate. The electoral success of the CCF and Social Credit was a function of the relationship between each party and the northwest’s anti-elite language. What explains the success or the failure of these relationships?

142 For the influx of new workers that boosted the CCF vote share, see The Interior News, May 1, 1952 and Table 2, above, for CCF-labour votes.
First, the old-line parties were not able to use anti-elite language effectively in the 1950s. They tried to capitalize on the concerns of people regarding the survival of small logging operators and regarding increasingly intrusive and bureaucratic governments:\textsuperscript{143} they positioned both independent forestry contractors and a pro-development alliance of large corporations with “the People” and against the possibility of a “despotic” CCF government. Progressive Conservatives, for instance, called themselves “The People’s Party” and asked “Who knows best: Over 500 small operators or our Minister of Government.”\textsuperscript{144} Local Liberals publicly approved of a series of ads by the Standard Oil Company of British Columbia. The ads stated that “LARGE and small businesses are necessary in our free economy;” that “TOM’s power shovel and higher wages are the result of a free system in which men have the incentive to seek better ways of increasing production at lower costs;” and that “I think I can make up my own mind better than any government official can…”\textsuperscript{145} These ads symbolically linked “large business”, “free-enterprise”, and “the ordinary person” with the ideas of “progress” and “freedom”. Some local Liberals even went against their government by demanding a “…quick examination of the position of the small logger,”\textsuperscript{146} but their rhetoric was fairly vague in identifying the enemy of the small operators, for the Liberals themselves were responsible for the new tenure system. In fact, the anti-government and anti-elite language of the old parties failed because those parties consisted of the elite who had always formed government. The history of the old parties prevented them from simultaneously using the language of development and of “the People”.

\textsuperscript{143}For example see, The Interior News, September 23, 1948, letter to the editor, which argues that “Today, instead of putting people in jail for stealing, the government goes about stealing from its taxpayers and property owners and hands the swag over to crooks.”

\textsuperscript{144} For PC ads, see The Interior News May 22 and June 5, 1952.

\textsuperscript{145} The Interior News, August 26, September 2, and November 18, 1948.

\textsuperscript{146} The Omineca Herald, May 2, 1952. Also see The Interior News, February 29, 1952, for an example of Liberal MLA Cecil Steele promising to support the small operators.
Second, the CCF could use anti-elite language to secure non-labour protest votes at the federal level in Omineca and, at the same time, maintain the labour support that they had relied on during provincial elections. This was possible for numerous reasons. Some people, for instance, likely felt that they could vote “socialist” federally without endangering northwest development because the government in Ottawa (compared to the one in Victoria) played such a small role in promoting that development. Moreover, many northwest inhabitants were born on the Prairies and not in British Columbia. These people had a stronger tradition of protest voting against Ottawa than against Victoria and, therefore, were prepared to vote for the only “protest” option in a federal election: the CCF. To achieve this electoral success at the federal level, Frank Howard positioned himself both as a union-man and as an independent representative of “the People”. He proposed regulated elections dates, free votes in the legislature, and a revision of parliamentary procedures to give individual MLA’s greater freedom. He campaigned with such slogans as: “Cast Your Ballot for the Man Who Keeps in Touch With You,” and “Elect a Lumberman for a Lumber District.” Even Cyril Shelford remembers, with some bitterness, that Howard (once he moved into federal politics in 1957) avoided national issues to concentrate on representing the region and getting re-elected. CCF anti-elite language evoked the image of ordinary people (rather than “class”) by positioning “the People” against large monopolies. They argued, for instance, that “while not believing in Monopolies, we do believe the ordinary businessmen, merchants, farmers, small sawmill

---

147 See the Ninth Census of Canada, 1951 (Volume 2, Table 4 and Volume 3, Table 2) where it states that 25% of people in north-central BC were born on the Prairies.
148 For example, Howard states: “I for one, and I feel that there are thousands like me, want as an MLA someone who is going to represent me properly in Parliament. People are not represented by silence,” in The Interior News, February 26, 1953.
149 The Interior News, September 13, 1956.
150 Ibid.
152 Shelford, From Snowshoes to Politics, p. 163.
owners, etc. will have a far better opportunity under a C.C.F. Government." The CCF’s anti-monopoly language of “the People” allowed it to formulate (without losing its more class-based union support) a broader anti-elite persona. The politics of Howard, therefore, represented both the CCF’s working class connections at the provincial-level and its anti-elitist populism in federal elections.

Finally, Social Credit could combine a language of anti-politics, anti-establishment, anti-socialism, and pro-development. It appealed to the ordinary person’s desire to “get things done” by rhetorically rejecting the political for the practical (see Illustration 5). It renounced simultaneously the old parties and socialism while combining “independent-minded” labels with support for development.

Longtime Conservative Wiggs O’Neill, for example, supported Social Credit by writing that “people have begun to think for themselves, and are not influenced any more by the party bosses...I’m not taking any chances of losing a good government that has discovered Northern British Columbia and is doing something about it.”

In addition to this pro-development attitude, Socreds such MLA Cyril Shelford could also rhetorically support the small sawmill operator and attack large corporations. Shelford was himself a former small sawmill operator, concerned about the new tenure system, and a public opponent of oil companies. But despite this “anti-elite” rhetoric, the Social Credit

Illustration 5:
The Omineca Herald, September 6, 1956.

153 The Interior News, June 4, 1953.
154 For SC ad, see “End Old Party Rule and Halt Socialism’s Threat,” The Interior News, August 6, 1953.
155 The Interior News, September 13, 1956.
156 Shelford, From Snowshoes to Politics, pp. 173 and 149.
government refused to institute any substantive policies that would threaten the existing pattern of elite-controlled development.\textsuperscript{157}

The \textit{anti-elite populism} of Social Credit, then, succeeded in northwest British Columbia because its contradictions harmonized the opposing beliefs of local people. Social Credit satisfied the anxieties of pro-development and anti-elite sentiments by defining itself as an anti-political, free enterprise, and ordinary person's party. Local people could vote Social Credit (because it defined itself as a non-establishment party) while also embracing rapid development and increased capital concentration. The Liberals and Conservatives could not quell the anxieties inherent in the development process because they could not use anti-elite labels. The political symbolism of Social Credit, that is, was successful because it synthesized contradictory understandings into a "good" label and then associated itself with that label.\textsuperscript{158}

The presence of these contradictory understandings did not mean that people in the northwest were hypocrites or that they had been manipulated by duplicitous Social Credit propaganda. Political culture is not a rigid and homogenous belief system but a set of fluid relationships between contrasting meanings and values. Political parties, then, must base their electoral support on voting blocks that combine these divergent political understandings. Although parties sometimes consciously use propaganda to create synthetic belief systems, there is no evidence that Social Credit organizers in the northwest expediently combined the "anti-elite" and "pro-development" labels for their own political ends. In fact, Social Credit's unexpected rise to power and its initial "amateurish" rejection of "professional" politics suggest that its early success was due to a "natural" convergence between these understandings.

\textsuperscript{157} For an example of a Social Credit scandal connected to this elite-controlled development, see Betty O'Keefe and Ian Macdonald, \textit{The Sommers Scandal: The Felling of Trees and Tree Lords} (Surrey: Heritage House, 1999).

\textsuperscript{158} See Green, page 10, where he argues that combining contradictions "into a single label, or 'unitary conceptual framework,' overcomes 'psychic resistance' to simultaneous belief in such contradictory expectations, and the resultant 'good' label evokes harmony." Also see Murray Edelman, \textit{Political Language: Words That Succeed and Policies That Fail} (New York: Academic Press, Inc, 1977), pp. 5 – 8.
To sum up, post-war politics in northwest British Columbia were a function of anti-elitist populism, but only in form and not in content. That is, political language consistently evoked the image of "the People" and positioned that image against elite groups, but this language actually obscured a "non-populist" reality: development controlled from the top-down. Neither the CCF nor Social Credit could contest the dominant development discourse, but they needed a way of understanding politics and of speaking about politics that alleviated anxieties about that top-down process. The language that they found was a populist language of anti-elitism.

Conclusion

This paper has been a case study of British Columbia populism and has offered three conclusions that have qualified the meaning of this populism. First, northwest populism was mostly limited to the post-war period (when Social Credit and the CCF defeated the established parties) and was especially concentrated in Omineca (compared to the neighbouring constituency of Skeena where the politics of class polarization were more significant). This duo-pattern suggests that British Columbia political culture was a complicated milieu of both protest and class tendencies, and since these tendencies were dependent on a certain time and on localized socio-economic factors, they should be applied only cautiously to the entire history of the whole province. British Columbia populism, that is, was not very pervasive. Second, northwest populism (as mostly limited to post-war Omineca) was a phenomenon that was exclusively anti-elitist in nature, for it was not connected to the localistic and co-operative inclinations that were present in other types of populism. British Columbia populism may have also followed the northwest's anti-elitist pattern, so broad comparisons between British Columbia populism and other populist traditions should be made with great care. Third, this paper's emphasis on language was able to account for the dynamic and seemingly contradictory nature
of British Columbia populism. Populist rhetoric in the northwest did not resemble other populist patterns because it positioned support for elite-controlled development within an anti-elite label. This positioning illustrates the complexities of political discourse: British Columbia's dominant pro-development language could not control the political landscape by simply excluding a weaker anti-elite language; it needed to co-opt that weaker language within a shared political symbolism. This co-optation of anti-elite language, however, provided the only arena in which anti-elitism could achieve political success, for the language of "the People" was only effective in elections when it contributed to a political dynamic that was undermining the independence of "the People". The history of British Columbia populism, then, suggests that the presence of certain types of political language depend on their ability to embody the opposite of what they signify.
Appendix 1: Note on Sources

Much of the political rhetoric of the inter-war and the post-war years was contained within the editorials of The Interior News, which was located in Smithers but reported on much of the Northwest. The editor for The Interior News, L. B. Warner, was a dedicated but independently-minded Liberal who was active and popular within the community. His opinions, while not universally accepted, were likely representative of this region’s political culture, for Warner’s favourite candidates were always successful. His son, Ken Warner, was editor during the post-war period, but he was not as concerned with politics or as explicitly pro-Liberal as his father. I also read the Burns Lake newspaper, The Observer, as its editor, Sidney Goodwin, was from the left of the political spectrum and offered different but still popular perspectives than from those of The Interior News. A local history of Burns Lake remembers that no one in town ever missed reading Goodwin’s weekly column.¹

Other sources of political rhetoric include campaign literature and political speeches (many of which were quoted verbatim in various local newspapers). Along with editorials from newspaper editors, letters to the editor from both political candidates and the general public were also considered. In addition, memories of local people – the autobiographies of Arthur and Cyril Shelford and local histories – were used when they related to politics. Although the above sources almost exclusively present the views of the local political elite (whether from the left or the right), I have assumed that these views were representative of general local understandings because in this fairly egalitarian society the local elite was not far removed from the larger population.

¹ Turkki, Burns Lake and District: A History formal and Informal, p. 50.
All of these sources are from men as politics in the northwest was an especially masculine enterprise. Indeed, many political understandings were framed by particular male gender values (such as progress and community co-operation). However, due to prescribed space limits and the lack of useful sources, this paper has not examined the place of gender understandings in local politics. In addition, this paper has not included a discussion of the northwest’s First Nations. Although the relationship between native people and the settler society was certainly political, natives were excluded from the electoral politics and the populist discourse that is the focus of this paper.
Appendix 2: Method for Comparing Social Composition with Voting, 1933 and 1952

I used the occupations listed in the voters lists of 1933 and 1952 and added up those occupations (for each poll in the two constituencies of Omineca and Skeena) based on 6 categories:

1. Farmers: farmers, ranchers, dairymen
2. Housewives: Housewives and married women
3. Elite and upper middle-class: clergy, engineer, civil service, inspectors, physicians, merchants, lumberman, mill operator, managers, foreman, accountant
4. Middle-skilled labour (occupations in which the worker has certain skills, is likely to work for oneself, or is likely to own a small amount of capital): machinist, prospector, fisherman, trucker, fireman, blacksmith, barber, electrician, baker, trapper, stenographer
5. Unskilled Labour: labourer, miner, logger, clerk, canneryman, canneryworker, sectionman
6. No occupation: retired, spinster, widow, nothing

The two categories that I employed with my analysis were farmers and unskilled labourers. I calculated the percentages of these occupations in each polling district (e.g. poll district X consisted of 60% farmers while poll district Y consisted of 20% farmers). I then ordered those polls from highest percent to lowest percent, and grouped together the 1/3 highest percentages for the entire constituency (i.e. if a district had 30 polling regions, I separated out and added together the 10 polls with highest percentage of farmers). These groupings were titled either “farmer communities” or “labour communities”. I then added the entire votes for each of these types of communities and compared election results for those types with results for the entire constituency.
Appendix 3: Federal versus Provincial Voting Statistics

The interpretation presented in the following graphs assumes that only a limited number of Liberal and Conservative voters at the provincial level voted CCF federally. Therefore, if the CCF vote share substantially increased when the Social Credit vote share substantially decreased (or there was no Social Credit candidate), a number of those provincial Social Creditors must have voted CCF federally. I corroborate this by comparing the northwest vote share change with the vote share change for the entire province. If the regional change was similar to the provincial change (like it was for Skeena), I assume that they were following the provincial pattern of ideological polarization in which provincial Social Creditors do not vote CCF federally. If there was a rapid CCF increase locally but not provincially (like in Omineca for 1957 and 1958), I assume that local conditions made provincial Social Creditors more likely to vote CCF federally.

### Omineca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in vote share from provincial to federal election, ( ) = change in % for entire province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 Prov. Vs. 1953 Fed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956 Prov. Vs. 1957 Fed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956 Prov. Vs. 1958 Fed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Skeena

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in vote share from provincial to federal election, ( ) = change in % for entire province</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 Prov. Vs. 1953 Fed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956 Prov. Vs. 1957 Fed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956 Prov. Vs. 1958 Fed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


47
### Appendix 4: Voting History in the Northwest versus British Columbia

( ) = results for the entire province

---

#### Omineca

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cons.</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>CCF</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>MLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>38% (40%)</td>
<td>62% (50%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>13% (10%)</td>
<td>Manson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>26% (32%)</td>
<td>61% (38%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>34% (38%)</td>
<td>Manson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>22% (30%)</td>
<td>44% (32%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Manson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>43% (53%)</td>
<td>57% (41%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Manson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>52% (42%)</td>
<td>26% (32%)</td>
<td>22% (26%)</td>
<td>Manson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>10% (29%)</td>
<td>51% (37%)</td>
<td>39% (29%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Connelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>18% (31%)</td>
<td>49% (33%)</td>
<td>33% (33%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Connelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>48% (56%)</td>
<td>52% (38%)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Rowland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>62% (61%)</td>
<td>38% (35%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Steele</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 First</td>
<td>16% (17%)</td>
<td>30% (23%)</td>
<td>23% (31%)</td>
<td>31% (27%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 Final</td>
<td>10% (10%)</td>
<td>47% (25%)</td>
<td>34% (34%)</td>
<td>53% (30%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Shelphord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 First</td>
<td>5% (6%)</td>
<td>31% (24%)</td>
<td>31% (31%)</td>
<td>38% (38%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 Final</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>46% (23%)</td>
<td>29% (29%)</td>
<td>54% (46%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Shelphord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>27% (22%)</td>
<td>19% (28%)</td>
<td>54% (46%)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Shelphord</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

#### Skeena

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cons.</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>CCF</th>
<th>SC</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>MLA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>16% (30%)</td>
<td>50% (32%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>34% (38%)</td>
<td>Wrinch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>46% (53%)</td>
<td>54% (41%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Wrinch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>56% (42%)</td>
<td>28% (32%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>26% (26%)</td>
<td>Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>60% (37%)</td>
<td>40% (29%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>38% (31%)</td>
<td>62% (33%)</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>59% (56%)</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>73% (61%)</td>
<td>27% (35%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 First</td>
<td>16% (17%)</td>
<td>41% (23%)</td>
<td>29% (31%)</td>
<td>4% (27%)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952 Final</td>
<td>10% (10%)</td>
<td>59% (25%)</td>
<td>34% (34%)</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Kenney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 First</td>
<td>5% (6%)</td>
<td>30% (24%)</td>
<td>37% (31%)</td>
<td>29% (38%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953 Final</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>50% (23%)</td>
<td>29% (29%)</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>Howard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>27% (22%)</td>
<td>36% (28%)</td>
<td>37% (46%)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Shirreff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---


4 1924 election contested by the Provincial Party, which received 34% in Omineca.

5 Conservatives did not officially run under the Conservative label.

6 1945 and 1949 elections contested by a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives.

7 Skeena did not become a provincial constituency until 1924 when it was created from Omineca, which was split into Omineca and Skeena.
Bibliography

Government Documents:


Manuscripts:


Newspapers:


*The Observer*, 1933 – 1935.

Memoirs and Local Histories:


Other Primary Sources:


Secondary Sources:


Blake, Donald E. “Another Look at Social Credit and the British Columbia Electorate” BC Studies, 12 (Winter, 1971-72), pp. 53 – 45.


Coates, Ken and William Morrison, eds. The Historiography of the Provincial Norths. Lakehead University: Centre for Northern Studies, 1996.


Heron, Craig. "Labourism and the Canadian Working Class." Labour/Le Travail, 13 (Spring, 1984).


