INCENTIVES FOR ACTIVISM IN A MORIBUND POLITICAL PARTY:

THE CASE OF THE BC LIBERALS

By

ROBYN ANN SO

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Department of **POLITICAL SCIENCE**

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explains why individuals are active in the British Columbia Liberal Party, considering it was finished as a viable force in BC politics following the 1975 election. What are their motivations and incentives, and the factors that govern them, given the party's inability to reward its workers in terms of winning elections? The analysis is conducted using a two-pronged theoretical approach. This approach posits first, that incentives are dependent on, and independent of, the Liberal Party's ends, including its political principles and its goal of being elected. Second, it posits their incentives arise from both personal gain and psychological needs.

Using survey data collected from the BC Liberal Party 1987 leadership convention, I demonstrate that activists are inspired by a variety of motivations that are both dependent on, and independent of, the party's ends. Due to their distinct ideological orientation and purposive concerns, the activists would not fit in any other provincial party. Analysis also reveals that there are two groups of Liberal activists—optimists and realists regarding the future success of the party. Paradoxically, the least optimistic are the most involved in party activity, and the most hopeful are the least involved. I demonstrated that closeness to the federal Liberal party influences the realists' activism in the provincial party.
The existing literature on incentives for political party activism tends to focus on patronage, ideology and party-related concerns, such as policy, issues, leaders and candidates. As such, it diminishes the importance of psychological motivations. This thesis found the latter played an equally powerful role in governing motivations for political party activism. In this regard, this thesis has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of party activism.
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INTRODUCTION

You have to believe. It's not a matter of kidding yourself. You have to believe you're winning. If you can't do that, you can't win.
--Richard Hatfield, after his party's collapse

Prospects for a reversal in the electoral fortunes of the BC Liberal Party are bleak. Since the 1952 debacle, when they lost office to the Social Credit Party, their popularity has steadily declined: their electoral support collapsed in the 1975 election and then disappeared in 1979. Despite this end, the party has gained fully 43 per cent of its current activists since 1979. On the other hand, 40 per cent of active party members joined over 15 years ago when the party could plausibly be perceived as a viable electoral force. In the face of continuing provincial defeats, what underlies the motivations of the Liberals' continuing enthusiasm, reflected in their lengthy party involvement? As for the former, those who have joined more recently, what motivates them to join a party whose experience of governing is beyond the memory and experience of most British Columbians?¹

There are a variety of approaches to the study of political party activism. On the one hand, Rapoport et al. analysed the consequences of various types of incentives on both the organization of political parties and the electoral strategies activists choose to pursue. Sorauf, on the other hand, examined both the utility of incentives to the political party and the effects of the changing nature of incentives on the ability of the political party to control its workers. In contrast, Perlin was concerned with motives that "govern support relationships between a party leader and members of its party," as a possible explanation of the instability of the Conservative Party leadership. Clark and Wilson used an exploratory approach in their paper which essentially classified the various incentives they found, and hypothesized about their relationships to the ends and means of organizations.

This thesis, however, will address questions similar to those raised by Payne and Woshinsky (1972), who asked:

Why are people in politics? A satisfactory understanding of political motivation can provide a powerful analytical tool for explaining why

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different groups of participants behave as they do; ultimately it can suggest why they adopt and sustain different political institutions.

In other words, it seeks to explain the activism of BC Liberals in British Columbia (BC). Stated another way, what are the motivations or incentives for activism in the BC Liberal Party?

This question is particularly interesting because the party is widely perceived to be moribund. Sorauf, among others, maintains that if the party is to continue functioning as an organization it must make 'payments' in an acceptable 'political currency' adequate to motivate and allocate the labors of its workers.\(^7\)

And he continues:

For the party to maintain its reward system and produce payoffs on it, it must win elections...Even those social and psychological rewards depend ultimately on the party's maintaining status, voter clientele, and the exhilaration of victory [emphasis added].\(^8\)

This implies that if a party does not win elections, it cannot reward its workers which, in turn, precludes motivations or incentives for activism in that party.

A pertinent question to ask, therefore, is why does anybody work for the BC Liberal Party, given its inability to reward its workers in terms of winning elections? Why are they not working for the Social Credit Party or the New James L. Payne and Oliver H. Woshinsky, "Incentives for Political Participation," *World Politics*, 24 (1972), p. 518.

\(^7\) Sorauf, *op. cit.*, 81.

\(^8\) *Ibid.*, 89-90.
Democratic Party, both of which are much more likely to win elections and reward their workers? One possible explanation is that winning is not as important to these activists as are other motivations. If this is correct, then Sorauf's assumption is untenable. However, it would be justifiable to posit an alternative explanation: the activists believe, in spite of the present reality, that the party will win in future. This thesis will address both of these explanations, using a two-pronged theoretical approach. The main argument will be that BC Liberal activists are inspired by a variety of motivations that are both dependent on, and independent of, the party's ends. Essentially, their incentives arise from both personal gain and psychological needs. Personal gain is strategic, whereas psychological needs involve the maintenance or enhancement of self-esteem, as well as their beliefs, values and attitudes.

Chapter One highlights the history of the BC Liberal Party and emphasizes its unviability as illustrated in existing literature on political parties. A survey of both the literature on party activism and on cognitive theories of self-knowledge and self-deception is the focus of Chapter Two. Explanations posited for activism are examined in the following two chapters. Chapter Three will explore ideological and evaluative motivations. Chapter Four will analyze federal party activism and optimism in the provincial party's future success as incentives. From this analysis, it will be concluded that activism in the BC Liberal Party is
governed by a variety of affective, evaluative and material incentives.

Undoubtedly, there are a multitude of explanations for activism in general, and for the BC Liberal Party in particular. As Bernstein and Dyer note, "We live in a complex world. Human behavior and the behavior of human institutions is almost never explained by the variation in a single property." Time and other constraints preclude the discovery of all of them. Therefore, any explanation offered by this thesis is inherently incomplete. However, as Bernstein and Dyer also observed, "It is the accumulation of those incomplete explanations that advances our knowledge of human behavior." While many assumptions have been made about motivations for political party activism, empirical research on this aspect of party cadres is comparatively recent. There is a particular dearth of empirical analysis on activists in the BC Liberal Party, an important political force in our province for fifty years. This thesis attempts to fill these gaps.

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10 Ibid., 15.
The data analyzed in this paper is derived from a survey of delegates who attended the leadership convention of the provincial Liberal Party on the 1987 Halloween weekend. The party’s constitution prohibits voting on policy issues at a leadership convention, the delegates being there for the sole purpose of electing a new leader.

Questionnaires were distributed by a group of political scientists as the delegates registered at the convention.¹ The total number of registered delegates at the convention was 224 out of which ninety completed and usable questionnaires were returned by post. Our return rate was, therefore, 40 per cent.

This thesis will focus on the data generated by the survey of the BC Liberal Party’s leadership convention delegates. However, for comparison purposes, the surveys of delegates at the 1986 and 1987 leadership conventions of the

¹ The principal investigators were R.K. Carty, Robyn A. So, Michael A. Mayer, Tony Sayers.
provincial Social Credit and New Democratic Parties respectively will also be used.\(^2\) Comparison of these data is facilitated because the questionnaires distributed to all three parties were identical except for some questions related to policies, candidates and leaders.

It is recognized that in general, party activists are both an elite and atypical stratum of the population in BC. First, activists distinguish themselves from the electorate by virtue of holding active membership in a political party. Second,

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\text{[while] provincial party activists can be expected to reflect many of the same distinguishing socio-economic characteristics as the electoral base of their parties...they also, however, tend to be drawn in part from particular classes of society which possess certain prerequisite political and social resources.}\(^3\)
\]

Thus, we are speaking of a group that has both higher socio-economic status and more education than the general population.

It is also recognized that there is an inherent response bias in survey research because delegates who trouble themselves to complete and return the questionnaires

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\(^2\) These data were made available by Donald Blake of the University of British Columbia. Professor Blake bears no responsibility for the use made of them in this thesis. For details of their surveys, see Donald E. Blake, R.K. Carty and Lynda Erickson, "Ratification or Repudiation: The Social Credit Leadership Convention," a paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Hamilton, Ontario, 1987.

\(^3\) Norman J. Ruff, "A Profile of British Columbia Provincial Party Activists: Preliminary Analysis of Three Conventions, November 1973, unpublished draft, University of Victoria, n.d."
distinguish themselves from the general delegate population by doing so. In addition, activists who choose to attend a leadership convention are a different group than the larger activist pool from which they are drawn. One may speculate that the respondents are either the most committed of the activists or simply have stronger opinions. Because they also represent those most likely to influence political decision-makers and the party's platform, investigating the causes of their activism will improve our understanding of the nature of activists and the parties they work for.
Chapter 1

DECLINE AND FALL

Antagonism toward the Liberal Party in British Columbia is as old as the province. Upon re-election as premier in 1878, George Walkam and his government passed a secessionist resolution displaying their ire against the Liberal government’s intransigence regarding railway construction on Vancouver Island. The provincial government did not follow through with the resolution in the wake of Alexander MacKenzie’s Liberal government defeat in Ottawa. The Conservatives were returned to office and relations between British Columbia and Ottawa improved.

Provincial elections were not fought either with disciplined parties or under party labels until 1903. Rather, the government and its opposition were characterized by the composite principle. That is to say, they were composed of federal Liberals and Conservatives, whether MPs or activists, and of non-partisan supporters. Alignments were personal and temporary as they were dictated by personal and business interests irrespective of party label. According to Robin,
"The members of parliament returned were local lobbyists who attached themselves to the federal bandwagon and received the patronage necessary to assure their further election." Since the federal bandwagon was, with one exception, Conservative during this period, the majority of MLAs were Conservatives.¹

The present provincial party system had its genesis in the growing disenchantment with "Turnerism"² and successive scandal-ridden governments. An additional major factor was the instability of governments. Members crossed the floor at will and dissatisfaction with this system peaked after the province experienced four different governments in four years. Neither instability nor the sectarianism inherent in this system was conducive to the province's economic development.

...industrial promoters, whether in the mining, railway, fishing or lumber industries, were reluctant to invest for fear of changed conditions. Railway contracts were made and unmade, mining laws passed and altered. Investments could not be planned and undertaken where the legal environment was not predictable...The primary function of government, in the eyes of the company owners and their agents, was to protect private property and provide a stable investment climate...³

¹ Martin Robin, The Rush for Spoils (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972), B.

² According to R.E. Gosnell, A History of British Columbia, Part 2, British Columbia Historical Association, Vancouver and Victoria, 1913, 143; quoted in Robin, Ibid., 67-8, Turnerism meant "favoritism, a lax civil service, extravagance in the expenditure of public money, looseness of administration...increasing indebtedness, encouragement of speculators and promoters at the expense of public assets, recklessness in railway charters and subventions, lack of definite and comprehensive policies, non-sympathy with labour aspirations and everything else that might be chargeable against the government which had been for a long time in power."

³ Robin, Ibid., 85.
Also of growing concern to company owners and MLAs alike was
the socialist movement which was increasingly perceived to be
a threat.⁴

In 1901, the Executive of the British Columbia Liberal
Association "declared that the only way to end existing
disturbances and difficulties was to adopt Dominion party
lines frankly in provincial politics."⁵ Joseph Martin, chosen
leader of the Liberals at their 1902 convention, adopted this
principle and the Conservatives followed with a similar
resolution at their convention in the Fall of that year.
Consequently, when E.G. Prior's composite government fell and
Richard McBride, leader of the opposition, was asked to form a
cabinet, he composed it entirely of Conservatives. The House
then adjourned, was dissolved and the ensuing election was the
first to be fought by disciplined parties under federal party
labels.

The next thirty years witnessed the development of a two-
party system and the building of party machines. The parties
during this period, however, were not differentiated by

⁴ See, among others, Edith Dobie, "Party History in
British Columbia," Historical Essays on British Columbia, eds.
J. Friesen and H.K. Ralston, The Carleton Library, No. 96
(Toronto: Gage Publishing, 1980), 72 and Donald Blake, Two
Political Worlds (Vancouver: The Univ. of British Columbia
Press, 1985), ch. 2.

⁵ Canadian Annual Review, 1903, 214; quoted in Robin, op.
cit., 82.
ideology or policy principles. Indeed, Britton Cooke observed that

Those clubs which they are pleased to call Conservative Clubs are as innocent of real Conservative principles as a Siwash brave in liquor. They would not know offhand whether their political ancestors were Round Heads or Cavaliers. They are Tory neither by tradition nor principle—only by practice on polling day. Were McBride Liberal, she would be Liberal, were he Socialist even, British Columbians would return a Socialist M.L.A.

Campaigns were "a battle between ins and outs, with issues relating almost entirely to administrative government." There was no other difference between the parties in the public's mind. Neither party could avoid the taint of scandal or accusations of patronage and corruption. This would have severe consequences for both parties in 1952.

Unlike the public, however, T.D. Pattullo, who was elected as Liberal Premier in 1933, passionately believed there was a difference between the two parties. When the Province first suggested a coalition government as a more effective means of dealing with the crisis brought on by the Depression, he adamantly rejected it. Some reasons were

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* Dobie, op. cit., 70 argued that "An examination of party platforms, resolutions of local and provincial Associations, speeches from the throne, debates in the legislature reveal almost complete agreement between Liberals and Conservatives both in theory and in policies."


strategic. Others, however, were ideological. Pattullo had a progressive, reform-oriented ideology which he believed to be philosophically and fundamentally opposed to the Conservative doctrine. Whereas the Conservatives exclusively represented Eastern wealth and business interests, "Liberals were always on the side of humanity and against the pure dollars and cents viewpoint."  "Truly may it be said," Pattullo declared, that the Liberal Party is a 'no-party' party. It knows of no class distinctions, and its principles invite everyone of every walk of life to their support...Liberalism...stands for the protection of the welfare of all from the misuse of power for any particular group or class and that the welfare of the community as a whole shall predominate.  

In keeping with this ideology, the 1932 Liberal Party Convention endorsed the principle that the party was "a union of all classes and all creeds who can join together on the common ground of fair play, equality and justice."  Pattullo had little sympathy for the plight of the Conservative Party, which had been disowned by both the BC Conservative Association and the leader of the federal party, R.B. Bennett. Associating with the Conservatives, declared Pattullo, "would have been to dilute 'such brains and courage as we may have by mixing it with waste material.'"  

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10 T.D. Pattullo, Victoria Times, July 2, 1932; quoted in Ibid., 250. 

11 Vancouver Sun, October 4, 1932; quoted in Ibid., 251. 

The Liberal platform, "Work and Wages," appealed to an electorate demanding reform in the face of spiralling unemployment, wage reductions, decreasing production levels and little unemployment relief. Pattullo's reassurances that his party was against expropriation and direct management of the economy, worked to place the Liberals between the extremes of reactionary conservatism and radical communism. It undermined the popular appeal of the recently founded CCF and Pattullo's tactic, of denouncing the party while trumpeting the virtues of his own, assured victory for the Liberal Party in 1933. The Liberal platform bridged the gap between socialism and capitalism although the election was ostensibly a contest between the two ideologies.13 In spite of the vitriol against socialism, seven CCF candidates were sent to the legislature, and the party became the official opposition. They gained 32 per cent of the popular vote, signaling the end of a non-ideological party system and an end to debate on a narrow range of minor issues.14

In the ensuing years up to World War II, the Liberal government made good on its promise to alleviate the suffering brought on by the Depression. Subsequent elections affirmed the realignment to the left first seen in 1933, primarily because the CCF re-attained official opposition status and garnered more of the popular vote than did either of the traditional parties in the 1941 election. The Liberal Party, 


14 Ibid., 109.
in contrast, watched their share of the popular vote decrease by 10 per cent over the two elections. Their reform programme, which involved interference in the economy and social welfare of the province, had alienated the business class and industrial promoters, which led to a modest increase in the Tory’s share of the popular vote. The Pattullo government responded by moving closer to the ideological centre. Meanwhile, the Conservative Party itself was pragmatically moving leftward to the centre. The ideological convergence of the two parties was partly a reflection of the genuine fear of socialism among the members and supporters of the traditional parties, and their dawning recognition that its appeal was not a transient phenomenon. Cooperation appeared to be a means of circumventing the tenacious but increasing popularity of the CCF among British Columbians. The final impetus for a coalition government, however, came from the onset of the second World War.

It was deemed important to have a stable government during this period of national crisis. A coalition was initially proposed, therefore, to alleviate problems associated with a minority government. Said the Sun, for example:

The only thing for the Pattullo government to do after yesterday’s election is to seek coalition immediately with the Conservative Party. B.C. does not want, and must not have a weak minority government in wartime. The province cannot afford a new election and the defeat of the government would mean precisely this.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15} Vancouver Sun, October 22, 1941; quoted in Ibid., 194.
Although Pattullo remained adamant in his opposition to the idea, events conspired to defeat him. His colleagues in the caucus were in favour of coalition and some Liberal constituency associations passed resolutions calling for a leadership convention. W.J. Knox, President of the BC Liberal Association, called a general convention of the Association on December 2, and there, a resolution favouring coalition was passed. Pattullo left the convention in disgust and George Pearson got up and nominated John Hart as the party’s new leader. Pearson had refused a portfolio and resigned in protest over Pattullo’s unilateral approach; Pattullo, sensing a conspiracy of coalitionists with Hart as their leader, had fired Hart in a desperate, last attempt to retain control of the party, leading to resignations by MPs and caucus members. After Pearson’s nomination of Hart, someone seconded the motion, “then immediately someone shouted, ‘I move nominations closed,’ and the great convention was past history.” The Liberal caucus subsequently agreed to support Hart, leaving Pattullo no choice but to resign.

Here, it is of interest to note that Pattullo had other reasons aside from his belief that they were ideological enemies for rejecting coalition with the Conservatives. He foresaw “that the Liberal Party would collapse through organizational disruption by opposed interests between the

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federal and provincial wings and that the party's reformed electoral base would be stolen by the CCF."¹⁷

When the coalition was formed the CCF was invited to join, an invitation which Harold Winch, its leader, declined arguing that the exigencies of parliamentary democracy required an official opposition in the legislature. The consequences of this for the fortunes of the Liberal Party were twofold. First, as Blake argues, "the very existence of the CCF as the official, and only, opposition raised the salience of the division between free enterprise and socialism..." in BC politics.¹⁸ Ideological polarization is one factor mitigating against the likelihood of a resurgence of Liberal support in BC, and this feature of BC's political culture may have had its genesis here. Second, Alper asserts that "In surveying press clippings covering the sessions of this period [1942-1945], not a single instance was found where the coalition parties divided on a major issue along anything resembling partisan lines."¹⁹ This is known as the convergence effect and resulted in an erosion of differences between them in the minds of the electorate. The weakening of party identification was exacerbated with the traditional parties together taking one side, and the CCF the other, in policy debates. Thus, when voters registered their protest in

¹⁷ Martin Robin, Pillars of Profit (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), 117.
¹⁸ Blake, Two Political Worlds, op. cit., 17.
¹⁹ Alper, op. cit., 215.
1952 against government corruption, factionalism and intransigence, the Liberal and Conservative Parties were penalized together by the electorate.

The coalition's performance was effective; indeed Winch praised it as "the best government B.C. ever had." Until the end of the war in particular, sessions in the legislature were relatively harmonious. But intra-coalition conflict, engendered by leadership changes and Tory dissatisfaction with alleged Liberal intransigence, led to the disbandment of the coalition in January, 1952. Both parties perceived that the cost of dissolution was potentially high; the CCF had gained their highest share of the popular vote yet, 37.6 per cent in the 1945 election. The Liberal Party, however, believed it would win and that its victory would be at the expense of the Conservatives.

But the election of 1952 did not yield Liberal victory. The coalition, anticipating its breakdown, had adopted the transferable vote in 1951, but the three-party contest required to achieve its intended effect did not occur. The traditional parties expected to attract second choice votes from each other, as well as from those who gave their first choice to the Social Credit Party. However, although the Liberals and Conservatives did exchange support, a large

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number of first choice Social credit ballots gave their second choice to the CCF, and vice versa. On the first count, the Liberals got 23.5 per cent of the vote and six seats while the Conservatives got 16.8 per cent of the vote and four seats. The CCF elected twenty-one members with 30.8 per cent of the vote and Social Credit elected fourteen members with 27.2 per cent of the vote. The third count revealed that the transferable ballot had allowed the Social Credit Party to come out ahead of the CCF. As the numbers illustrate, the old parties' support had significantly declined and would not have been sufficient to win, even if the first-past-the-post system had been used. The transferable voting system served only to increase the magnitude of their defeat.

The results of the 1953 election sounded the death knell for the Conservative Party. They received one per cent of the popular vote, electing one member on the third count who subsequently crossed the floor to sit as an Independent. The Liberal's share of the vote declined by two per cent and they lost two seats. The position of the Social Credit Party, in contrast, was strengthened by the election. This time, CCF and Social credit supporters did not exchange votes. Rather, CCF second choice support tended to go to the Liberals. Liberals and Conservatives tended to give their second choice to the Social credit party. In addition, voters whose first choice in 1952 had been Conservative gave their first choice to the Social Credit Party in 1953. David J. Elkins suggests

that, "As early as 1953, therefore, one can perhaps discern the formation of the 'free enterprise versus socialism' structure which has characterized the B.C. provincial party system in recent years."  

It can be seen, therefore, that the Liberals maintained a degree of credibility. This was partly because their organization was relatively stronger than the Conservative Party's, which had suffered from severe factionalism and a complete break with the federal party. Moreover, Alper suggests that because the Liberal Party dominated the coalition, and with the exception of one five-year period, governed the province since 1916, they still appeared to be a viable free-enterprise alternative. Finally, one could argue that CCF supporters, in giving their second choices to the Liberal Party, saved it from utter electoral collapse. As such, it is ironical considering that "The coalition which had saved the old line parties from the C.C.F. had, in the end, set in motion the forces which led to both of their defeats."  

The forces that led to their defeat were many. As has been discussed, the convergence effect was one of them. An additional force was the ill-will between the federal and provincial wings of each party, stemming from the coalition experience. The Liberal Party did not experience a complete

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23 Alper, op. cit., 383.
24 Ibid., 344.
separation as did the Conservatives. Nevertheless, their relationship with the federal wing deteriorated and the provincial party effectively lost the organizational, administrative, financial and moral support of its federal wing.25 Alienation of party supporters and cadre during the coalition era constituted another factor in their demise. One must bear in mind that the coalition was one of elites. Although the elites' governed together, each party maintained separate organizations and as the coalition's tenure lengthened to a decade, the parties' cadre became increasingly demoralized. Third, Pattullo's progressive liberalism, followed by the coalition's reforms and social welfare legislation accustomed the electorate to the benefits of socialized capitalism. Finally, the rise of the salience of ideological issues affected the nature of electoral politics in BC; no longer could they revolve merely around administrative questions of corruption and scandal. The end of the coalition had ushered in a new party system, one that was polarized between the left and the right, and more importantly, one that could not accommodate more than one free-enterprise alternative.

Appendix I shows that the Liberal Party remained a viable alternative for twenty years. The re-election of a Social Credit government in 1975, however, clearly demonstrated that

the electorate no longer perceived the Liberal Party to be a free-enterprise alternative. Blake et al. argue that the BC electorate underwent a realignment of voter partisanship during the 1970s. Basically, due to the expansion of the public sector under Social Credit rule prior to 1975 and the expansion throughout the province of occupational sectors, the bases of support for both the NDP and the Social Credit Party are now province-wide and comprise 95 per cent of the electorate. These economic factors have had long-term effects on the Liberal Party's ability to build and retain a stable base of support. The entrenchment of a polarized political system is another factor mitigating against building a base of support for the Liberal Party. This is reinforced by the exploitation of the left-right debate by the current major political parties in the province.

A concatenation of circumstances that led to changes in the nature of BC's economy and political culture could open up the possibility for a resurgence of Liberal Party popularity. It is unlikely while BC's economy is based on resource development and primary exports. Edwin Black suggests the nature of BC society precludes this from happening. He argues that the establishmentarianism and traditionalism found in the comparatively older societies of central and eastern Canada never took root along the western coast, and will not in future.

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26 Donald E. Blake et al., "Sources of Change in the BC Party System," *BC Studies*, no. 50 (Summer 1981), 21-6.
Black describes British Columbia as a "continuously evolving frontier," with a population dominated by the highly unionized, the small business person and the recent immigrant. They are attracted to BC because of the nature of its economy. He asserts that this has prevented the two traditional parties from securing a stable base of support in BC. The effect on the Liberal Party is twofold. First, a population which is constantly in flux has a concomitant absence of a shared past. Newcomers to the province will be unfamiliar with its political alignment in general, and with the past role played by the old parties in particular. As Black points out:

Even if the traditional Canadian political parties—the Liberals and Conservatives—had succeeded in becoming firmly established in provincial politics, they could not have relied long on family voting traditions to maintain their place. Such a traditionally-voting population would soon be upset by new waves of citizens without any attachments to the "established parties."

Blake's findings support this contention. His data revealed that federal-only party identifiers tended to be relative newcomers to the province (residents for three years or less). There was a direct correlation between consistent partisanship and length of residence in BC of three years or less. Split partisans, in contrast, tended to have resided in BC for more

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28 Ibid.
than three years, suggesting they had gained a familiarity with the province's political alignment. Second, Black contends that, "An appeal to tradition is almost reactionary for many in British Columbia, for the past they recall may be a time of stagnation, of hardship, or worse..." He continues, "Such people have little respect for the established elites and are intolerant of their institutions. Neither do they have much cause to respect the established parties [or] their traditions..." The result has been the institutionalization of an anti-establishment tradition in BC politics in which, "both Social Credit and NDP serve as focal points for anti-establishment votes of the majority of British Columbians."

The salience of this left-right division for the provincial Liberals is illustrated first, by the fact that federal Liberal supporters in BC who adopt a different provincial loyalty are more likely than consistent partisans to see a wide gap between the provincial NDP and the Social Credit Party. Second, polarization has resulted in the exclusion of the Liberal Party as an alternative choice among voters. Federal Liberal supporters must assess either the NDP

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30 Black, op. cit., 293.

31 Ibid., 294.

or Social Credit favourably on election day, or abstain.\textsuperscript{33} Polarization encourages negative partisanship as well which, in the abstract, augers well for the Liberal Party. But in a two-party system, strategic considerations are paramount to the voter. A vote for the Liberal Party, therefore, is considered to be a lost or wasted vote.

If the Liberal Party’s central position on the ideological continuum is appealing to the BC electorate, it is undermined by the consequences of the contagion effect. William Chandler asserts contagion occurs when the policy positions of the opposition are adopted by the governing party in an effort to "blunt...the popular appeal which is the basis of opposition strength."\textsuperscript{34} Its consequences are outlined by David Elkins:

The ambiguous position of the B.C. Social Credit stems from at least two sources. First, Social Credit rhetoric and policies as well as the personal styles of W.A.C. Bennett and some of his cabinet ministers were characterized by a combination of populist and conservative features. When questioned, an observer of Social Credit could emphasize one or the other element and thereby place the party on the left, on the right, or in the middle. Second, the party formed the government, and governing parties typically moderate their tendencies compared to when they are in opposition.\textsuperscript{35}

Chandler’s analysis of overall expenditure change in potentially redistributive policy areas of Social Credit

\textsuperscript{33} Suggested by \textit{Ibid.}, 693.


\textsuperscript{35} Elkins, \textit{op. cit.}, 4.
budgets revealed that they have been significantly influenced by the presence of the CCF/NDP in opposition.

The Liberal Party is caught between a rock and a hard place because the contagion effect has acted in conjunction with the forces discussed above to create a situation of one-party dominance in BC. Maurice Pinard describes the situation thus:

If the party has met repeatedly with resounding defeats in the past, or if, as a result of internal crises...the party is suddenly in a state of disarray, if (largely as a consequence of these) its organization is in very poor shape, if its cadres have been destroyed and have to be completely reconstituted, if voters find few of their relatives, friends, or acquaintances, at work, in their neighbourhood, or in other areas of participation ready to support that party, then a collective definition of this party as a hopeless contender is likely to develop, and a situation of one-party dominance prevails.34

The consistent decline in provincial Liberal support demonstrates that the party has, to date, been unsuccessful in changing its image as an unviable electoral force. Its lack of recognizable candidates, the comparatively short tenure of its leaders, its lack of financial resources, and its thin organizational base reinforce and maintain the portrait of a party that is unable to win elections. Given that the Liberal Party's potential for attracting voter support is weak at best, why does it continue to attract active party loyalists? Before addressing this question, we turn to an examination of the existing literature on incentives for party activism.

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Chapter 2

THEORY

In the words of Samuel Eldersveld, "The political party unites an agglomeration of people with a rich variety of motivations, drives, and needs."¹ What does the political party literature say about the motivations, drives and needs that foster political party activism?

Political Party Literature

Payne and Woshinsky define incentives as emotional needs that one seeks to satisfy through political participation.² This is in contrast to instrumental goals which, given the above definition, they assert are not incentives to political activity. I contend that this conceptualization of motivations is too narrow. To argue that incentives for political activism are fostered only by emotional drives neither recognizes the multiplicity of motivations inherent in

² James L. Payne and Oliver H. Woshinsky, "Incentives for Political Participation," World Politics, 24 (1972), 519.
a society, nor the important role instrumental goals play in fostering affective motivations. As Frank Sorauf suggests,

Party members and workers may be attracted to the party for any number of reasons, but as they involve themselves even more in the party, they develop ties and loyalties to it, to its norms and goals, and to its leaders. The organization itself achieves a life and a value for them; it ceases to be merely an instrument for achieving their other incentives, becoming an end in itself...Identification with the party reinforces and perhaps even replaces the incentives that initially recruited the individual. 

Resolving such theoretical differences is beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice to recognize that party activists are complex human beings operating in a complex environment. They are, therefore, motivated by a number and variety of incentives, some which overlap, others which are distinct. Moreover, the primary motive varies between and among activists because different motives have different weights for each of them. Furthermore, their motivations may change over time. Finally, the party activist may not be cognizant of all of them.

Typically, it is assumed that "party activists may be motivated by the benefits of patronage, sensations of victory, or the defeat of an enemy party." Specifically, the literature on motivations for party activism suggests three dispositions that stimulate people to be active party members:

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affective, material and evaluative incentives. These dispositions are two-dimensional. First, they lead to either tangible or intangible rewards. Tangible incentives yield those rewards to which one may attach a monetary value, such as political careers, career advancement, patronage appointments, and preferred treatment by the government. Intangible incentives are motivations which, if satisfied, accrue incalculable personal rewards. Second, the fulfillment of these incentives are either dependent on, or occur independent of, the organization’s ends.

Ideology is an intangible incentive thought to act independent of both the party’s ends and specific issue and policy concerns. Affective dispositions are another group of intangible incentives that recruit activity independent of the party’s ends. They are called solidary incentives and include aspirations to social mobility and the status which may come from identification with a powerful group or personality. Fulfillment of a perceived civic duty and desires for excitement, congeniality, fellowship and a sense of belonging also constitute solidary incentives. Evaluative dispositions

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are intangible incentives as well, but tend to be dependent on
the party's ends. Also known as purposive incentives, they
comprise candidate concerns, issue orientations, and the
concomitant desire to influence public policy. Loyalty to the
party itself is distinguished from loyalty to and
identification with the party's goals as the difference
between solidary and purposive incentives. Material
dispositions are tangible incentives that are dependent on the
party's, particularly the goal of getting elected.

Since the Liberal Party does not win elections, this
thesis anticipates that activism is governed by intangible
incentives that are satisfied independent of the party's
ability to win elections. Included in this category is
ideology:

Small numbers of ideologues cling even in the United
States to minor, non-competitive parties that have
no prospect of winning elections. Some within the
major parties feel similarly that they would gladly
sacrifice victory to principle.*

This thesis will, therefore, analyze the salience of ideology
among the activists. Not only is it expected that their
personal beliefs and values will dominate among their
motivations but also that their ideology will be perceived as
different from the ideologies of activists in the NDP and
Social Credit Party. It is predicted that activists who
perceive their personal beliefs and values are congruent with

* Alan I. Abramowitz, John McGlennon, Ronald B. Rapoport,
"Incentives for Activism," The Life of the Parties, eds.
Ronald Rapoport et al. (Lexington: The Univ. of Kentucky
those of the Liberal Party, and incongruent with those of the other two provincial parties, are more likely to work for the Liberal Party than are those whose ideologies parallel the polarization of BC's political culture.

Alan Abramowitz et al. reported that convention delegates rated purposive incentives as the most important motivating factors for their activism. The authors also found that purposive motivations were positively correlated with party loyalty. As such, this thesis expects that Liberal activists will hold distinctive policy and issue positions. It is posited that this reinforces their perception that they do not fit in with the other parties, either ideologically or in terms of issue and policy domains. Ideology and attitudes toward policies germane to BC's political culture are, therefore, variables expected to govern activism in the provincial Liberal Party.

Motivations for activism operate under a number of conditions. First, they can be oriented toward one level, or many, of politics. Edwin Black argues that there are three types of active members:

those whose political interests are primarily oriented in provincial terms, those whose interests find primary expression in central government goals and those whose interests are multi-faceted or else concentrated on some aspects of political life comprehending both spheres of government—such as

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7 Ibid., 63.
8 Ibid., 64.
the attainment of ideological objectives or general governmental power for the party.  

Second, party work is both qualitatively and quantitatively affected by the motivations underlying it. For example, Sorauf asserts that personal incentives such as loyalty to a candidate or the desire for fellowship produce more transitory and less intensive work than do purposive or ideological incentives.  

Third, different incentives attract different kinds of activists. For example, "Those incentives which will attract sign-posting or neighborhood canvassing are not likely to attract large contributors."  

Fourth, sustained activity and the continued support of activists may depend on which motivations are being rewarded by the party, and more importantly, on whether the party is able to reward its active members. That is to say, "the party cannot dangle the incentive without delivering and paying off at least part of the time." The party must also have the capacity to withhold the granting of these incentives as motivation for activity in and of itself. Besides the obvious recruitment value of incentives, a party's viability is, in part, dependent on the facility with which it can manipulate them.

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10 Sorauf, *op. cit.*, 87.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., 88.
Sorauf contends that political parties were best able to manipulate activists' motivations when patronage and preferment were the predominate incentives governing activism. In fact, he maintains that it was "almost the ideal incentive."

Consider its advantages. Its lure was so great, especially in times and places of unemployment, that it produced continuous activity. The machine enjoyed complete control over it; the party could deliver the payment with almost 100 per cent regularity, and it could in many cases freely revoke it...For the party the patronage job not only rewarded a local worthy. If there were no legal or ethical restrictions, the party often 'maced' the patronage payroll for compulsory party contributions...The public treasury thus provided the job for the worker, free labor for the party, and contributions for the party coffers. Through the charity of patronage the party was thrice blessed.

Its value, however, declined for a variety of reasons, among them, its declining respectability in contemporary political culture, and concomitantly, the rise of the merit system in public service. Because parties currently rely on policy and ideological motivations to recruit activists, Sorauf maintains that parties no longer have the means to control and manipulate their active supporters to the degree they once did.

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13 Ibid., 90.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., 91 "To be sure, these incentives attract workers' and activists who relate to the personalities and issues of the day, who are oriented to the changing political functions of the party, and who have the skills and respectability the party needs. But their ties to the party are unilateral ones that they make and break. The party has the carrot, but not the stick, and other political
The lure of material rewards has been displaced by the emergence of extra-parliamentary organizations as the means for fostering party loyalty and identification. These allow the worker more involvement in, and control over, the party's decision-making processes, the formulation of election strategies, and the making of party policy. A consequence of this development stems from the suggestion that patronage corresponds to a particular level of politics. Political parties controlled patronage appointments and preferments at the local level and from this, Sorauf infers that patronage-inspired activists were parochial loyalists. That is to say, their commitment was to the local level of the party. This implies that policy-oriented and ideologically-motivated activists are less parochial, and therefore, desire to influence policy and ideology at the federal level of politics. As discussed previously, ideologues are increasing in number at the same time that materially-inspired activists are decreasing in number among political activists. Consequently, it is inferred that local parties are finding it difficult to foster loyalty and party identification.

If Sorauf and Abramowitz, et al. are correct in suggesting that patronage has been superseded by ideological and policy-inspired motivations, this thesis posits not only organizations have carrots, too." The point is, patronage rewards tied the worker to the party, whereas ideology or a specific policy concern do not oblige one to remain with a given party. This gives the party less scope for manipulation.

Alan I. Abramowitz et al., op. cit., 61.
that ideological and purposive motivations predominate among Liberal Party activists, but also that they consider federal politics to be more important than provincial politics. It is anticipated that they identify with, and are more loyal to the federal Liberal Party. Hence, federal activism is expected to be a variable that leads to activism in the provincial Liberal Party.

Psychology Literature

An explanation for activism that does not include the desire to be associated with a winning party is incomplete. On the face of it, the belief that the party will win in future elections is irrational given its history of defeats. However, with increasing evidence that individuals engage in biased cognitive processes, the rationality of this supposed irrationality is apparent. It is no longer accepted, prima facie, that individuals construct valid representations of events and initiate a given action only after engaging in rational calculation.17

The rational choice paradigm typically assumes that prior to initiating a course of action, the individual delineates and evaluates alternative outcomes, and integrates his or her values by a transitive ordering of preference. He or she then maximizes his or her values by cost/benefit analysis. It is assumed that the individual is sensitive to

pertinent information and, as such, he or she revises his or her assessment of alternative outcomes as new information becomes available.

There are a number of problems with this paradigm, not the least of which is its tendency to be teleological. The infinite complexity of experiences precludes the possibility of engaging in a causal learning process for each action or decision taken. To begin, it is highly impractical to suspend action until all evidence is gathered, if indeed one could do so.

Adages such as 'he who hesitates is lost' and 'the early bird gets the worm' imply it is adaptive to act on best guesses. Early humans who waited until they fully understood the behaviour of potential mates before making their move would have been no more fit than the modern individual who sits at home alone, looking at the telephone.\(^\text{16}\)

Moreover, it is now understood that, of necessity, individuals take pragmatic shortcuts to facilitate the process of making inferences and decisions. The reason for this is twofold: first, it is a means of dealing with the overwhelming amount of information that is attended to; second, the individual naturally engages in these shortcuts—because it serves to positively enhance one's self-concept, which in turn, contributes to a state of optimal health.

A cognitive model of motivation overcomes the shortcomings of the rational choice model. It postulates that

each individual perceives a given stimulus (set of information concerning behaviour, its consequences, and the circumstances under which it occurs). The stimulus is then interpreted by each individual’s belief system in order to give it meaning. The subsequent response to the stimulus is, therefore, mediated by intervening thought processes, resulting in a causal attribution. That is to say, the stimulus is placed in a cause and effect context.

Psychologists and sociobiologists apply cognitive theory to human attributional processes in order to increase their understanding of the phenomenon of optimism in the face of valid evidence to the contrary. This comparatively new research in the fields of self-perception and self-deception provides the foundation for explaining Liberal activism in terms of the emotional processes underlying their motivations.

The psychology literature suggests that information-processing mechanisms, some conscious, others subconscious, perceive and process information in the form of hypotheses, theories and beliefs about the world, ourselves and others. Empirical studies demonstrate that individuals are capable of using these mechanisms to deceive themselves for a given self-serving purpose, namely that it is more adaptive (healthy) to self-deceive than to make valid cause and effect interpretations. That is to say, if perceiving the truth damages one’s self-concept, then it is maladaptive, hence irrational, to do so. Conversely, if distorting reality results in a healthy affective state (i.e. feeling secure,
hopeful, in control and that one’s life has meaning), then it is adaptive, hence rational, to do so. Beliefs that both lend purpose to a particular activity and foster a sense of control induce individuals to maintain their efforts; individuals who persevere are more likely to succeed than those who give up.¹⁰

This thesis hypothesizes, therefore, that in order to justify their involvement with a losing party, activists engage in certain cognitive attributional biases that foster a false sense of hope in its future. From false hope arises the false belief that one is involved with a winning party. This inference on the part of activists is rational because it enables them to feel that their active membership is purposeful and meaningful. In contrast, it would be irrational to work for a political party, yet feel that it is futile and meaningless.

The information-processing mechanisms are called self-serving attributional biases, or vital lies.²⁰ Of those postulated to occur, five are relevant to this thesis: exaggeration; the false consensus effect; the self-fulfilling prophecy; beneffectance; and the illusion of control.²¹


Exaggeration is "the tendency to amplify and exaggerate beneficial outcomes through repeated accounts of an event." The false consensus effect refers to the tendency to overrepresent the commonality of one's beliefs, attitudes and values. As such, individuals tend to overestimate the number of people who share their political beliefs and values, thus overestimating the appeal of their political party. False beliefs, when acted on with conviction, may set up self-fulfilling prophecies, thereby validating them. This occurs when individuals, intending their behaviour to result in a desired outcome, expect the desired outcome to occur. They expect effort to produce success, and when their expectation is not met, they perceive the outcome to have occurred despite their efforts. When their expectation is met, they attribute the positive outcome to a combination of will and effort.

False beliefs are fostered by the illusion of control. This refers to the need for individuals to believe they are in control of their lives. They tend to attribute success to factors over which they have control, and to attribute failure

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23 It may be a reflection of associating primarily with those who support one's opinions and may help to justify one's actions to oneself as appropriate and normal. Suggested by Krebs et al., *Ibid.*, 121-22.

24 This is reflected in superstitious rituals, for example, the belief that blowing on dice increases the probability of rolling the desired numbers, or that choosing one's lottery number, as opposed to a computer doing it, increases the probability of winning the lottery.
factors over which they have control, and to attribute failure to factors over which they have no control. The likelihood of attributing failure to external factors and success to internal factors increases particularly when the situation being interpreted involves a high level of self-esteem.25

Related to the illusion of control is beneffectance, "the tendency to represent ourselves as being beneficial and effective at the same time."26 More importantly, it includes the idea that individuals also perceive they are able to avoid undesired outcomes.27 Beneffectance is two dimensional, comprising the locus of control (internal versus external dispositions) and the direction of stability (fixed versus variable dispositions).28 Individuals tend to credit their success to internal and variable factors, such as effort or effective strategies.29 They tend to blame their failures on


26 Trivers, op. cit., 418; quoted in Krebs et al., op. cit., 117.


29 Craig A. Anderson and Dennis L. Jennings, "When experiences of failure promote expectations of success: The impact of attributing failure to ineffective strategies,"
external and fixed factors, such as task difficulty, lack of ability or bad luck. Individuals who attribute a disappointing outcome to variable, internal factors display "atypical aspiration shifts (increasing aspiration after failure...)." In other words, after failure, they remain optimistic that task achievement will be successful. On the other hand, those who blame failure on fixed or external factors display typical aspiration shifts. That is to say, they expect future outcomes consistent with past ones.

Journal of Personality, 48, (1980), 403 argue that "when people are set to attribute task outcome to strategies, they are likely to monitor how effectively their strategies meet the demands of the task at hand. For these subjects, initial failure indicates that their strategies were ineffective, and that in order to success they must modify those strategies...In contrast, subjects set to attribute task outcome to their abilities [an uncontrollable disposition] do not monitor the demands of the task at hand. They fail to attend to strategic features of their attempts, fail to learn from their experiences, and conclude that they cannot improve their performance." The authors assert that subjects' expectations about the effects of continual monitoring and modification of their strategies enhanced their optimism. The adage, 'practice makes perfect' best describes their finding that subjects who attributed failure to ineffective strategies maintained their optimism, even after many failed attempts at the task.

30 Luck is a special case. In reality it is an external factor beyond our control, but psychologists have found evidence that individuals attempt to assert control over luck by misconstruing it to be dependent on other factors, such as consistency and effort. An example is the well-documented case of "gambler's fallacy:" in games of chance, individuals tend to anticipate an increased probability of success after a loss, and especially after consistent losses. Conversely, individuals anticipate an increased probability of losing after they have won a game of chance.

31 Weiner et al., op. cit., 97.

32 Ibid., 108.
Together, these self-serving attributional biases foster a sense of security that events are predictable and that the individual is able to anticipate outcomes. This sense of security enables the individual to feel in control, and that his or her activity has meaning and purpose. From this arises optimism or hope. Optimism governs the motivation to persist at an activity, whether previous outcomes have been disappointments or successes.

In terms of this thesis' focus, if activist postdiction blames the failure to win an election on internal party factors over which the activists have control, they will predict future success. As such, they will be optimistic activists. Conversely, activists who blame the party's failure on fixed, external variables that are beyond their control will predict failure for the party if it contests an election in the future. As such, they will be unoptimistic activists.

Although the Liberal Party is not a serious electoral force, this thesis posits that because of attributional biases, Liberal activists are hopeful about the party's future. It anticipates, therefore, that Liberal activism is inspired by tangible and intangible incentives that are dependent on the party's goal of winning elections. Their optimism and persistence in the face of consistent failure not only to win elections, but to elect any candidates makes sense when one understands that it is governed by false beliefs.
These hypotheses will be examined in Chapter Four. We now turn to an analysis of ideological and purposive motivations for Liberal activism in BC.
The existing party literature suggests purposive incentives, including issue orientations and policy concerns, are among the most important motivations of party activism. Besides identification with the party's ends, personal ideology and loyalty to the party itself are powerful motivating forces determining activism in a particular party. This chapter will examine the data for evidence of each of these motivations and predicts that these variables will be found to govern activism in the provincial Liberal Party.

A caveat must here be noted. As the delegates were not directly queried on their motivations for activism in the Liberal Party, the questions in our survey do not permit us to test for the presence and relative importance of all the motivations discussed in Chapter Two. Even among the motivations mentioned in the survey, not all of them were addressed by the respondents. For example, only one alluded to fellowship and congeniality as reasons for being a Liberal. This is not to argue that solidary motivations did not govern
BC Liberal Party activism, merely that they were less important than those mentioned more often. This contention is supported by Abramowitz, who reported that "personal benefits received from participation...were rated much lower in importance [than purposive incentives] by delegates in both parties...[Republicans and Democrats]". In contrast, the party's ideological position and its congruence with the respondents' beliefs were mentioned by almost three-quarters of the respondents in our survey.

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1 Alan Abramowitz et al., "Incentives for Activism," in *The Life of the Parties*, eds. Ronald B. Rapoport et al. (Lexington: The Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1986), 64.
Ideological Commitment

Liberal activists perceived that they were ideologically dissimilar from New Democrats and Socreds. Whereas 95 per cent of Liberals defined a range left of centre as the position occupied by the NDP, only 12 per cent of Liberals perceived their own party to be within that range. The Social Credit Party was put within a range right of centre by all the respondents, while less than 2 per cent of them positioned the Liberal Party within it. On the other hand, 87 per cent of the Liberals placed their party either at the centre of the ideological scale or one point to the right, a range on the scale into which no Liberals positioned the Social Credit Party. It is evident that these activists perceived their party to be different from the others.

They also believed their party to be one of moderate ideology. To the question, "Why are you a Liberal?" 50 per cent of them responded that it was a moderate party.

Including both those respondents who were attracted to the

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To the query, "Why are you a Liberal?" respondents underlined their belief that the Liberal Party is non-ideological and that this is congruent with their personal beliefs and values. Adjectives commonly given to describe the party were "moderation," "adaptability," and "flexibility." An example of a typical response was "I like what the Liberal Party stands for—a balance between 'business government' and 'big government.'

We provided the respondents with a 7-point scale on which 1 was demarcated as 'Left' and 7 as 'Right'. The exact question was, "In terms of their ideology, please indicate where you would locate the provincial parties on this scale." Respondents located the three parties as follows: NDP 1-4 range; Liberal Party 3-5.5 range; Social Credit 5.0-7.0 range.
nonideological nature of the party, and those who added that the party's stand was congruent with their beliefs accounted for almost three-quarters of the respondents.

In contrast, New Democratic and Social Credit party activists were less enthusiastic than their Liberal counterparts about moderation in their respective parties. Less than half of the NDP activists (44%) agreed that their party had to be careful not to move too far to the left, and just over half of the Socred activists (53%) agreed that their party must be careful not to move too far to the left. Clearly, one may aver that the Liberal Party is the most appropriate vehicle for those whose orientation is moderate and ideologically neutral.

Loyalty

This conclusion is enhanced when one examines the reasons motivating Liberal activists to defect to other parties during the 1970s. As such, it demonstrates the strength of current party activists' loyalty to the party, regardless of its electoral history. Those activists who were not motivated by a commitment to Liberal values joined other provincial parties during the 1960s and 1970s.

The argument is twofold. First, Liberal activists who switched party identification belonged to the Liberal Party because it was a free-enterprise alternative. As such, they were more likely than current policy-oriented Liberals to see

\* See footnote 2.
BC politics in terms of the individualist/collectivist division. That is to say, their Liberal partisanship was negative, rather than positive. Dislike of socialism motivated them to seek active membership with the Liberal Party. Second, their activism was governed by the desire to be associated with a winning party and its associated perquisites. This incentive was fulfilled only by joining a provincial party that was actually winning elections. As we shall see in the next chapter, this desire governed the activism of current party workers as well. However, they sought satisfaction of this incentive through a different route, one that allowed them to remain loyal to the Liberal Party.

The philosophy of Patrick McGeer, former Liberal MLA and leader of the party, is illustrative of the contention that free-enterprise values and the defeat of the NDP were more salient to previous activists than was loyalty to the Liberal Party. The political equation in British Columbia is basic - and crude. The economy is resource oriented, dependent on a free flow of foreign capital into the province. Expressed in political terms, that means a free-enterprise government. The spectre at the feast is socialism...

* Patrick L. McGeer, Politics in Paradise (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1972), 220 asserts in his autobiography that the Liberal Party lost the contest of the free-enterprise parties in 1969 because the electorate equated the Liberal Party with the NDP.
He continues:

If (and it's the 'if' that haunts the minds of the majority of British Columbians) the free-enterprise vote were ever to divide...It happened twice in Saskatchewan...It happened once in Manitoba...Could it happen in British Columbia? [ellipses his]  

His decision to leave the Liberal Party for the Social Credit Party was predicated in part on strategic reasoning. The Social Credit Party offered the best chance of preventing the return of an NDP government.

The 1975 election clearly established the fact that the Liberal Party was not enough of an electoral force to keep the socialist wolves at bay. Polarization of the electorate had ensured that a Social Credit defeat would be "at the hands of the NDP." Yet, subsequent election results clearly demonstrated the Liberal Party was no longer regarded as a viable free-enterprise alternative by the electorate. First, it was apparent simply because the Social Credit Party won the election, and because the NDP formed the official opposition. The Liberal Party's share of the popular vote not only declined from the previous election, but also reached 7 per cent, their lowest in the party's history up to that time. Another indication was the loss of their stronghold over what was previously considered a safe seat. David Anderson,


then-Liberal leader, hoped that the by-election in February, 1974 would engender confidence in the Liberal Party as a viable alternative. His hope, however, was dashed for Gordon Gibson won the election by a narrow margin of 57 votes. Anderson's hope had been premised on the observation that the Liberal Party consistently polled 20 per cent more of the popular vote than the other parties in the North Vancouver-Capilano riding. In the 1974 by-election, however, it polled 29.3 per cent compared to the Social Credit Party's 28.9 per cent. They lost the riding in 1975, polling 37.4 percent to Social Credit's 44.8 percent. Such a showing did not auger well for a party whose elite members were restlessly casting about for reasons to leave.

Even the victory of David Anderson in 1972 did not depend on the inherent appeal of his party. Rather, it was due to a concatenation of factors: a dual riding and the conjoint opportunity to detach from one's party without requiring a total commitment to another; personal appeal of the candidate; the unpopularity of one of the Social Credit candidates; and the NDP's strategy of aiding Anderson's victory in order to defeat a Social Credit candidate.  

* In 1969, Brousson, the Liberal candidate, polled 46% compared to 34.7% and 19.3% for the Social Credit and New Democratic Parties respectively. In 1972, the Socreds and New Democrats share was 20.7% and 22.2% respectively, whereas Brousson took 35.9% of the riding's popular vote. The figures are reported in T. Patrick Boyle, Elections British Columbia (Vancouver, Lions Gate Press Ltd., 1982), 113, 170-71.

* Norman J. Ruff, "Party Detachment and Voting Patterns in a Provincial Two-Member Constituency: Victoria, 1972," BC Studies, no. 23 (Fall 1974), 23 argues that if the dual-member
After the NDP victory in 1972, most prominent provincial Liberals, including sitting MLAs Patrick McGeer, Alan Williams and Garde Gardom, defected to the Social Credit Party. This thesis argues that besides incongruent personal ideologies governing their lack of commitment to the Liberal Party, self-interest also influenced their decision to leave the Liberal Party. The perquisites of being with a winning party were a stronger incentive than loyalty, an affective motivation governing activism of current Liberals.

The events surrounding the unity movement and exodus of Liberal elites and rank-and-file activists from the party following the NDP victory in 1972 illustrate this argument.\(^\text{10}\) Premised on the belief that the NDP won because of a split in the free-enterprise vote, the Majority Movement for Freedom and Private Enterprise was organized. Its intent was "to restore free-enterprise government in British Columbia" by "unifying the three free-enterprise parties or failing that, the free-enterprise vote."\(^\text{11}\)


The leaders of the free-enterprise parties, Scott Wallace excepted, were uninterested. However, prominent sitting Liberal MLAs and a substantial number of activists agitated for a non-partisan party. It became a divisive issue for the Liberal Party: the faithful were demoralized when their sitting MLAs attended meetings of the Majority Movement and disdained to help Gordon Gibson campaign for the nomination as Liberal candidate in the North Vancouver-Capilano by-election. While McGeer, Williams and Garmom proclaimed their party loyalty after the unity movement died, they continued informal discussion with members of the opposition caucuses regarding the formation of a third party.

No such option was possible without the cooperation of the Social Credit Party. By April, 1975, Socreds were confident enough of success to plan contesting the next election alone. "The three Liberals found themselves in an untenable position." Williams said that he would quit the party unless it united with the other parties. Anderson

12 David Anderson, then leader of the Liberal Party, argued that this was a deliberate attempt to manipulate the electorate, and as such was undemocratic. See G.L. Kristianson, Ibid., 17. Kristianson suggests that Anderson was disinterested because he had reason to believe that his party could win the by-election in 1974 and demonstrate that the Liberal Party was a viable free-enterprise alternative.

13 For example, Williams said, "coalition or everyone joining one of the three parties--are not acceptable [alternatives]," and that he favoured the third option, forming a new party. Alan Williams, Vancouver Province, 8/3/74; quoted in Kristianson, Ibid., 24.

14 Ibid., 27

15 Harris, op. cit., 46.
called Williams "dishonourable," and within days Williams and McGeer resigned to sit as independents. They were joined less than two weeks later by Gardom, who expressed the hope that the three parties could still reach an agreement that would preclude a fracturing of the free-enterprise vote\textsuperscript{11}. Even prominent federal Liberals were unsupportive of Anderson's stand. For example, the Hon. J.V. Clyne appealed to Anderson for "...the non-socialist parties to unite on a temporary basis...to achieve unity of purpose in rescuing BC from becoming a socialistic state..."\textsuperscript{12} In June, 1975, Don Wray, BC Liberal Executive Vice President, resigned, stating that he no longer supported the provincial Liberals and that he concurred with the positions taken by McGeer, Williams and Gardom. His defection to the Social Credit Party occurred the following month. The Liberal ranks were further decimated at the end of August by the conversion to Social Credit of six Vancouver Island Liberal notables. Then Jack Davis, a former cabinet minister, joined the Social Credit Party on September 1st. Barely a month later, McGeer, Williams and Gardom announced that they now judged Social Credit to be the unity party.\textsuperscript{13} Anderson's efforts to hold the party together had failed, and Gordon Gibson became the new leader of the demoralized ranks.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 48.

\textsuperscript{12} J.V. Clyne to David Anderson, 17/5/74; quoted in Kristianson, \textit{op. cit.}, 25.

\textsuperscript{13} See Kristianson, \textit{Ibid.}, 28.
Despite McGeer's presumably honourable justification for joining the Social Credit Party, namely that: "[the situation] requires that people put the over-all good of the province ahead of party politics,"\textsuperscript{19} political opportunism also played a role. To Liberal MLAs McGeer, Williams and Gardom, their political futures must have appeared uncertain. As McGeer told the \textit{Sun}, "I don't want to spend another Parliament in opposition."\textsuperscript{20}

The 1972 victory of the NDP was the last straw. They were profoundly depressed about the Liberal Party's and their own political chances...All were in the midst of successful careers and not eager to spend more time in Victoria except as cabinet ministers.\textsuperscript{21}

As incumbent Socred MLAs contesting the 1975 election, not only was the chance of serving in the governing party significantly improved, but with their experience, they were also prime candidates for ministerial positions.

The gamble paid off for McGeer and Gardom, both of whom were given cabinet positions in the Bennett government. It is apparent "their expressions of desire to defeat the NDP pointed them in the same direction as their self-interest in political survival."\textsuperscript{22} These activists were more concerned with being part of a winning party for strategic and personal reasons. The left-right political division was more salient,

\textsuperscript{19} Pat McGeer to David Anderson, 9/5/75; quoted in \textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{20} Pat McGeer, \textit{Vancouver Sun}, 10/5/75; quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, 28.

\textsuperscript{21} Kristianson, \textit{Ibid.}, 21.

\textsuperscript{22} Harris, \textit{op. cit.}, 53.
in contrast to the importance of ideological neutrality to current activists. If this was not of primary concern, they would have joined the exodus in the 1970s. Loyalty to the party itself, as well as to its ends, therefore, governed motivations of our long-term activists.

Policy Orientation and Opinion Dimensions

Erickson et al. noted that "The British Columbia party system is one of classic two-party polarized competition with a catch-all party of the right (Social Credit) facing a mass party of the left (the New Democratic Party)." Their analysis revealed that while there is limited convergence of opinion on some policy domains between the activists of these two parties, on most issues "a bi-polar distribution of opinion between NDP and Social Credit activists is typical..." We know that Liberal activists have defined their party as ideologically distinct from the Social Credit and New Democratic Parties. Consequently, this thesis expects their opinions on policies will not converge on either polar end of the distribution of opinion between NDP and Social Credit activists. They will have dissimilar views from New Democrats and Socreds on various policy orientations and issue cleavages.

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24 Ibid., 14.
that characterize BC politics. Knowing that Liberal activists have placed their party in the centre of the left-right scale, with the NDP and Socreds firmly to either side, this thesis also expects that their policy attitudes and opinions will fall between those of the NDP and Socreds.

Blake et al.'s examination of Socred activists revealed that although their ranks were swelled with disaffected Liberals during the realignment of the 1970s, the attrition of the Liberal ranks occurred largely at the elite level. It was suggested that the NDP may have benefitted more than the Socreds at the cadre level, given their finding that 67 per cent of provincial Liberals who have worked for another party, have done so for the NDP. Presuming that this indicated some degree of affinity between Liberals and New Democrats, we expect to find not only that they occupy central positions relative to the other parties, but also that they will be weighted in a direction approaching the positions of NDP activists.

As anticipated, the opinions of Liberal activists converged on the middle ground. On the antiregulation dimension, Liberals were closest to the mean for the entire population, occupying a position between those of the NDP and Social Credit. An examination of the frequency

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26 See Table 3.3 for mean scores of activists' attitudes.
distributions revealed that Liberal activists tended to be closer in their views to NDP activists than Socreds. Like the NDP activists, Liberals wanted to see regulation involving environmental protection and human rights extended, but were more likely than the NDP to support the status quo regarding land use. In contrast, Socreds tended to support the status quo or a reduction in regulation on these three issues. On regulation of the sale of alcohol, gambling and shopping hours, the three parties' activists tended to support the status quo, although the substantial minority of Liberals who preferred less regulation resembled Socreds rather than New Democrats.

Consistent with the ideological gap between the NDP and Socreds, Socreds supported the status quo or favoured decreased government spending in the areas of education, welfare rates, health care and daycare. The inverse was true for NDP activists, who tended to support increases in current levels of spending. Liberal activists' attitudes were similar to those of the NDP, but were not of the same magnitude. Most preferred increased spending on education and daycare. They also wanted to see increased spending on welfare rates, health care, job grants, and government salaries. But they were more likely than New Democrats to support current levels of spending in these areas. Liberals

27 See Table 3.1 for a comparison by party of attitudes toward government regulation.

28 See Table 3.2 for a comparison by party of attitudes toward government spending.
tended to agree with Socreds that government spending on highways, tourism, job grants and reforestation should be increased.

Continentalism is a contentious political issue in BC. Support for freer trade with the US, and disagreement that substantial foreign ownership threatens the independence of Canada's economy characterized Social Credit activists. They were divided over whether Canada should maintain its independence even if it means a lower standard of living. In contrast, the NDP were anti-continentalist on each item of the continentalist scale. The Liberals showed much less consensus on these items than did the other two parties. On the one hand, they tended to support freer trade with the US. On the other hand, like the NDP, they agreed that foreign ownership threatens our independence and that Canada should maintain its independence even if it means a lower standard of living.

A breakdown by party of attitudes toward each opinion dimension revealed Liberal opinion consistently fell in between the bipolar distribution of opinion of NDP and Socred activists. The individualist/collectivist dimension parallels the right/left political cleavage in BC politics. The Liberals were closest to the mean and weighted toward the individualist end of the scale. In contrast, the mean scores for the Social Credit and New Democratic Parties were far to the right and left respectively of the mean score for the

See Table 3.3 for a breakdown by party of attitudes toward issues salient to BC politics.
Regarding attitudes toward continentalism, the Liberals fell in between the NDP and Socreds. The Liberals also occupied the centre position on the populist scale. As expected, Socreds were more populist than activists in the other two parties, although the NDP exhibited some elements of populism as well.

These findings support those of Blake et al., who reported that former provincial Liberal activists, now working for the Social Credit Party, displayed distinctive policy positions within it. Like current provincial Liberal activists, they tended to be less populist, more collectivist-oriented, and less anti-regulation than Socreds who had not formerly worked for another party. Former Liberal activists presently within Socred ranks were also more likely than their Socred colleagues (65 per cent versus 55 per cent) to agree that the Social Credit Party should not move its position too far to the right. As such, their orientation to moderation was similar to that found in this study.

The findings reported here reveal that from a Liberal's perspective, Social Credit and New Democratic policy orientations were extreme. As such, it is apparent that their beliefs and attitudes were incongruent with those of Liberal activists. Liberals would not feel comfortable with the legislative ends and policy platforms of either party, even though the parties win elections.

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30 Ibid., 4.
It was posited in the existing literature that ideology and purposive incentives, including issue orientations and policy concerns, would be among the most important motivations of party activism. Other incentives would be the excitement of victory or the defeat of an enemy party. It was also assumed that loyalty to the party itself would be a powerful force motivating individuals to remain with a particular party. The data showed that all these variables fostered party activism. The most important finding that emerged from the analysis was that the choice of political party with which to be involved varied because of the differences in incentives motivating individuals to be activists. Specifically, Liberals were a distinct group within BC's party activist population, in terms of their moderate ideology, lack of populist beliefs, and attitudes toward provincially salient issues such as continentalism, government regulation, and government spending on social welfare programmes. This determined that they would not fit in any other provincial party.

They were committed to the Liberal Party because its values were perceived to be congruent with their personal values. In contrast, former Liberal activists who left the party after the NDP victory in 1972 saw the individualist/collectivist gap between the other two parties as more important. They joined the Liberal Party because it was a free-enterprise alternative, not because of its moderate views. When it became apparent that the party was no longer
viable, they were motivated to join a party that thrived on the polarization of the province and was sufficiently strong to defeat the enemy. Activists who did not follow suit thereby demonstrated the magnitude of their loyalty to the Liberal Party.
Table 3.1

ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT REGULATION BY PARTY*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
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</tbody>
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* table entries are valid percentage distributions

** 1=substantially extended
2=slightly extended
3=kept as now
4=slightly reduced
5=substantially reduced
N=valid cases
Table 3.2
ATTITUDES TOWARD GOVERNMENT SPENDING BY PARTY

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* table entries are valid percentage distributions

** 1=substantially extended
2=slightly extended
3=kept as now
4=slightly reduced
5=substantially reduced
N=total sample excluding missing responses
Table 3.3
ATTITUDE DIFFERENCES AMONG ACTIVISTS BY PARTY*

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<th>Attitude Scale</th>
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<th>Sig. Level</th>
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* Table entries are mean scores. Scales were scored in direction indicated by name of scale.
This chapter will use a cognitive theory of motivation to analyze the relationship between activists' desire to be associated with a winning party and membership in the moribund Liberal Party. The belief that it is a strong force in BC politics is, of course, false, considering past electoral performances of the party. A cognitive model accounts for the importance of false beliefs in the healthy individual and offers a comprehensive explanation of how they arise. It posits that individuals engage in cognitive attributional biases in order to justify their actions as meaningful, appropriate and effective. Thereby, individuals feel they have control over the course of future events. This, in turn, fosters hope; hope leads individuals to persevere. Hope, perseverance, security, and control are positive affective dispositions, reinforcing or enhancing self-esteem. As such, cognitive processes that lead to our dispositions occur naturally, and most often, below the level of conscious awareness.
Concepts of the cognitive model include the tendency to exaggerate and to feel beneffectance, which is the belief one is able to achieve intended outcomes and to avoid unintended outcomes. The illusion of control, the false consensus effect, or self-fulfilling prophecies are also involved. This thesis predicts that attributional biases would foster optimism in the party’s future, despite evidence to the contrary. Essentially, reality would be distorted in order to justify involvement in a party without a chance at success, such that the party would be seen as a successful political force. In turn, optimism would guide their motivations to be active party members, and more importantly, their persistence in the face of repeated electoral defeats.

A Winning Party

The data revealed a party whose members believed it can win—some predicted that they could possibly form the government with up to 55 per cent of the popular vote in the next election.¹ This is in contrast to Sorauf’s assertion that winning is of less importance to activists inspired by ideology and identification with the party’s ends.

Although targets of 30 per cent or more of the popular vote were given by only a minority of respondents (10.5%), an equally small proportion predicted more realistic figures of 10 per cent of the popular vote and less. This thesis assumes

¹ The exact question was, "What do you think are realistic goals for the Liberal Party in the next provincial election? a. __% of the vote  b. 0 seats; 1-3 seats; 4-10 seats; __ seats; opposition status; form the government
that 10 per cent or less of the popular vote are realistic goals for a party which has polled less than 8 per cent over the last 4 elections. Indeed, one could argue that predictions of 6 per cent or less of the vote are the most realistic goals considering that the party received only 6.74 per cent in the last election, 2.69 per cent previous to that, and less than 1 per cent in 1979. Yet, only 2.6 per cent of the respondents gave 6 per cent or less of the vote as realistic goals for the party in the next election. In contrast, 83 per cent of the activists thought that 12 per cent or more of the popular vote were not unrealistic goals. The median realistic goal targeted by the respondents was 19 per cent. It must here be noted that although the Liberal Party consistently hovered around this figure in the elections from 1952 to 1966, it has not been able to pull up its share to even half that since 1972.

Nevertheless, what is important is that BC Liberal activists believed the party has the ability to win: the expectation of 43 per cent was that the party will elect between 4 and 10 MLAs, while slightly less (40%) thought a realistic goal was between 1 and 3 seats. The remainder were evenly divided between those who believed the party will attain opposition status or form the government and those who believed that the party will repeat their previous performances.

See Appendix I for the Liberal Party's election results, 1903-1986.
Clearly, the majority of Liberal activists perceived they were associated with a winning party despite its history of election defeats. To determine whether this false belief was an incentive governing Liberal activism, the remainder of this chapter will examine the data for evidence of underlying cognitive biases.

Sources of Optimism

Perusal of the party literature revealed BC Liberals engaged in cognitive attributional biases. Not only did they present themselves as being simultaneously beneficial and effective, but they also exaggerated what the outcome of the last election portended for the party. The last election saw the Liberal’s share of the popular vote rise from 2.69 per cent to 6.74 per cent. In the literature produced by elite Liberal activists for the party cadre, this outcome was interpreted as auguring well for the party. The following quotes, which contained repeated references to the outcome, confirmed Clark and Wilson’s prediction that, "Considerable attention will also be devoted to producing among members a sense of accomplishment - often spurious - which is essential in maintaining the force of the incentives.”

...the doubling of our vote in the provincial election proves to me that we can and will elect Liberals to the Legislature.


4 Dove Hendren, President, Executive Reports to the 1987 Convention, May 8, 9, 10, Richmond, BC.
We didn’t achieve the results we had hoped for during the last election by winning a seat, but we did manage to raise the profile of liberalism in B.C. That was evidenced by our percentage of the popular vote. The breakthrough we hope for will have to await another election and a new leader, but I know it will come. One day there will be a Liberal government in Vancouver.  

Art [Lee]'s tireless efforts during the last campaign resulted in the doubling of our popular vote and have provided the foundation upon which we can all build.

It is exciting to contemplate the rise in popularity of our party in British Columbia over the last two and one half years and its implications for our future. The recent provincial election showed us that people in this province are willing to take a second look at the Liberal alternative.

...we were able to double our percentage of the popular vote in the 1986 campaign. More people began to recognize the need for a moderate party of the centre.

Cognitive dissonance was avoided by not acknowledging the actual figures. This enhanced their ability to assert with conviction that Liberal popularity was on the rise in BC.

These statements reflected a number of other cognitive biases. Beneffectance, for example, was illustrated in Art Lee’s belief that, “we did manage to raise the profile of liberalism in B.C.” The false consensus effect was apparent in the assertion that a doubling of the vote reflected the Liberal Party’s rising appeal among the electorate.


* John Turner, Liberal Insight, op. cit., 2.
According to the literature, effort is expected by individuals to be a variable disposition within their control. Specifically, they are primed cognitively to expect effort to produce success. The following statements by elite Liberal activists, Art Lee and John Turner respectively, illustrate this thesis' argument that optimism in the party's future success arose from such attributional biases.

During the past two years, Liberals have all worked very hard to re-establish our Party as a political force in British Columbia. Although we were not successful in winning a seat in the recent general election, the Party did double its popular vote. Liberals can be very proud of this achievement, and because of our result at the polls, we also can be very optimistic about our future role in British Columbia.*

I am convinced that we have what it takes to make great inroads in this province in the coming months. If we strengthen our resolve, discipline our efforts and unite in a common purpose, we will move quickly and surely towards a brighter future.10

They attributed the party's improved standing at the polls to the amount of effort expended by Liberal activists. Given this inference, they predicted that more effort would result in an even better showing in the next election. The illusion of control fostered confidence that they could predict outcomes. It also gave them the security to believe that activism in the Liberal Party was not meaningless and futile. Hard work had paid off in a doubling of their share of the popular vote. They were, therefore, optimistic that the

outcome signified a brighter future for the Liberal Party. As such, they have set up the possibility for a self-fulfilling prophecy. If the party wins a seat in the next election, they would credit their success to increased effort. However, if the party again failed to win a seat, they would believe this occurred despite their efforts. This would enable them to continue being optimistic that their work for the party was not a waste of their time and energy.

Evidence of cognitive biases in the data support this thesis' argument as well. A new variable was created by dividing the activists into two groups, those we considered to be optimists and those we considered to be realists about the party's future electoral chances. An optimist was defined as an individual who rated the party's chance of winning a seat in his or her constituency as medium or high. A realist was an individual who rated the chance as low or nonexistent. Optimists constituted 45 per cent of our sample; the remainder was composed of realists. The variable was crosstabulated with a series of questions probing the factors to which the activists attributed the party's outcome in the previous election.\(^{11}\)

According to the literature, disparities in internal versus external, and fixed versus variable, attributions of

\(^{11}\) The exact question was, "How important do you think the following factors will be in determining the Liberal Party's success in the next PROVINCIAL election (very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important)?: the provincial leader; the party's local candidates; weakness of the Social Credit; weakness of the NDP; strength of the federal Liberals; the provincial platform
causality when postdicting an event are responsible for variations in expectancy of future success and failure. Specifically, if blame for a failed outcome is placed on fixed, external characteristics, there would be less likelihood of predicting a future outcome inconsistent with the past. If failure is attributed to variable, internal factors, there would be more likelihood of displaying an atypical aspiration shift. That is to say, the individual would predict success will occur with repeated attempts at the task.

The data revealed that, as predicted, optimists were more likely than realists to attribute past election failures to variable, internal factors. They were more likely to rate the party leader and platform, as opposed to a weak Social Credit or NDP, as important.\textsuperscript{12} The party leader and platform, being matters internal to the party, were factors they controlled. As such, they regarded the choices of leader and platform as strategies. Believing they would be of primary importance in determining the outcome of the next election demonstrated that optimists monitored the effectiveness of their choice of leader and platform in the last election, and concluded that they were ineffective in meeting the goal of electing the party. Future failure could be avoided by manipulating these

\textsuperscript{12} There was no difference between variation in the level of optimism and the importance with which the party's candidates were regarded. According to the literature, optimists should have seen this as an important factor.
strategies. Clearly, attributional biases inspired the optimism displayed by this sub-set of our sample.

Realists, on the other hand, were more likely to rate a weak Social Credit or NDP as the most important portents of the next election outcome. The strength of the other provincial parties, although variable, are external factors. As such, they are strategic features of BC politics beyond Liberal activists' control. Realists would not attend to the effectiveness of internal strategies as they disagreed the outcome would be dependent on them. In this regard, they exhibited a lack of optimism in the party's future because they were not operating under an illusion of control similar to that of the optimists. In turn, they were more likely than the optimists to display some feelings of futility.13

This is not to argue that realists were not engaging in attributional biases. The data also revealed that realists were more likely to agree that the strength of the federal Liberal Party was an important strategic factor influencing the chance of future success for the provincial Liberal Party. Their internal locus of control was, therefore, different from that of optimists; realists perceived that the federal party was a matter within their control.

13 When asked why they thought federal Liberal supporters deserted the party in provincial elections, optimists were more likely to attribute the cause to a variety of party-related matters such as the platform, poor organization, the leader, or the candidates. Realists were more likely to say it was because votes were wasted on the Liberal Party.
It follows that realistic provincial activists would be more oriented than optimistic provincial activists toward the federal party. The data confirmed the expectation: all other properties being held constant,¹⁴ realists were more likely than optimists to feel closer to the federal party (43% versus 13%). They were also less likely than optimists to feel equally close to both parties (43% versus 67%).¹⁵ Provincial realists were also more likely to have served in the higher echelons of the party organization. They predominated among those individuals who reported ever serving on a federal riding executive. And they were more likely to have ever been a federal candidate or to have worked on a federal election campaign, including the last one.

¹⁴ Variations in the level of optimism were not significantly associated with most demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Income was the only SES variable significantly associated with level of optimism (sig. level=.03). While optimists tended to have an income between $20,000 and $50,000, realists tended to make either less than $20,000 or more than $50,000. There was also no relationship between level of optimism and a number of contextual factors: length of Liberal Party involvement; length and region of residence in BC; whether the constituency represented by the delegate received a high, medium or low degree of support from voters in the 1986 election.

¹⁵ The relationship was statistically significant at the .01 level.
Optimism and Activism

A new variable was created measuring the degree and type of participation reported by the respondents. It was predicted that optimists would be the most active members in the party, yet a breakdown of the amount of activity by level of optimism revealed the inverse relationship. As the level of optimism increased, the degree of participation decreased. Moreover, the data revealed that realists predominated in the higher echelons of the provincial party organization. They were more likely to have ever served on the provincial executive or a provincial constituency executive. And they were more likely to have been a provincial candidate, or to have worked for a candidate, or to have worked for the party in the last provincial election.

No statistical relationship was found between the level of optimism and variation in activity for the provincial party. However, the relationship between level of optimism and variation in activity for the federal party was significant at the .05 level. Federal activism was inversely related to the level of optimism in provincial politics. As the level of activity for the federal party increased, the level of optimism in the provincial party’s future decreased. A breakdown of provincial activity by capacity at the leadership convention revealed that realists were more likely to be federal constituency representatives while optimists were more likely to be provincial constituency
representatives. Therefore, activism in the federal party, rather than optimism in the provincial party, governed activism in the BC Liberal Party.

We have seen that almost half the activists believed they belonged to a party that could win. Their optimism stemmed from a number of attributional biases, especially the illusion of control over internal party features such as the leader and platform. Yet, their optimism did not determine involvement in the Liberal Party. Rather, federal activism was found to be the determinant of provincial participation.

The negative relationship between variations in the level of optimism and activity reinforces this thesis' argument that persistence in activism for the Liberal Party was governed by attributional biases. The following hypothetical example will illustrate this contention.

Optimists, because of their lower participation rates, were subject to the false consensus effect. Party activists, by definition, maintained contact with the electorate. It follows that workers with higher participation rates would have had more contact with the voters. As such, the opportunity was there for the realists to make valid assessments of the party's popularity among the voters. However, the optimists, given their lower participation rates, did not have a similar opportunity. They associated less with those who would not necessarily support their political

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1 This was significant at the .04 level.
values. Consequently, their sense of the representativeness of their political values could easily be biased in the direction of overestimating the extent to which their attitudes toward the Liberal Party were shared among voters. In turn, optimistic estimates of the party's popularity meant there was little reason to be actively raising the profile of the party.

On the other hand, realists, by virtue of their higher participation rates, set up a self-fulfilling prophecy. Belief creates reality, and in this case, the belief that hard work pays off governed the incentive to work for the provincial Liberal Party. Activism in the federal party enhanced their conviction that more effort results in the intended outcome. That the federal party elected candidates was validation in itself of this belief. Involvement with the federal party provided a vicarious thrill of victory, a successful outcome they attributed to hard work.

Activism in the federal party also fulfilled the desire of the realists to be associated with a winning party and its perquisites while remaining loyal to the Liberal Party. It can be reasonably argued that realists were, first and foremost, federal activists. Provincial activism was a means of demonstrating their commitment to the Liberal Party. The purpose of doing so was twofold. First, loyalty and party identification inspired activity that would potentially raise the profile of the Liberal Party in BC. In turn, this might help the federal party's fortunes in the province. Second,
demonstrable loyalty and commitment is usually rewarded by the party. Political opportunism, therefore, inspired participation in the provincial party organization. But the satisfaction of tangible, material benefits required they also be activists in the federal party.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{17} The plausibility of the argument that the provincial party was unable to give its workers certain perquisites is apparent considering the BC Liberal Party's poor financial status and thin organizational base. Presumption of their poor financial status was based on information contained in the Executive Reports to the 1987 (Policy) Convention of the BC Liberal Party, Richmond, BC, May 8-10, 1987. For example, Dove Hendren, President's Report, 1 commented on a new fundraising method: "...the traditional financial woes of our party can indeed become part of history if we all work together to make the new system work." She continues: "...we have also lacked the resources to build our organizational base and to implement communications programs, and special projects. Our future efforts must be directed to making the new fundraising program work to ensure that we have the necessary funds for the party to be a viable force in the political life of British Columbia (2)." The Vice-President's Report said the party had to undertake a program of financial restraint. This meant lack of funds for "the program component (Communication, Organization, Membership, Policy (1))."
CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis was to explain why individuals are active in the BC Liberal Party, considering it was finished as a viable force in BC politics following the 1975 election. Related goals were first, to classify their incentives and second, to account for the factors that governed them. This thesis used a two-pronged theoretical approach to formulate predictions about incentives governing activism in the BC Liberal Party. It predicted that both incentives dependent on, and independent of, the Liberal Party being elected would result in Liberal Party activism. Data derived from a survey of Liberal activists was then analyzed for the presence of incentives suggested in the existing literature on motivations. Evidence for both types of incentives was found.

This thesis used cognitive motivational theory to explain party activism in a failed party. Two types of activists were classified: optimists and realists. The data revealed that the most optimistic activists had the lowest level of
involvement in the party. In contrast, the realistic activists had the highest level of involvement in the party. They were also more likely to work for the federal party as well.

This thesis argued that variation in the types of attributional biases engaged in determined the level of optimism and activism. It was concluded that optimists falsely believed the party’s values were widely shared by the voters. Therefore, since the party was already popular, optimists saw little reason for higher participation rates. Realists, on the other hand, believed that effort was the dependent variable in the party’s outcome in the next election, and as such, they were more actively involved in the party.

This thesis reported that personal ideologies and evaluative dispositions of Liberal activists were strikingly different from those of Social Credit or NDP activists. Specifically, Liberals placed Social Credit and the NDP on opposite sides of the left-right continuum that characterizes BC politics. They classified their party as neither individualist nor collectivist. In effect, they perceived their party to be ideologically balanced and to have moderate views on policy domains salient to BC’s political culture.

This was then contrasted to the political beliefs of former Liberal activists who joined the Social Credit Party after the 1972 election. This thesis contended that Liberal defectors were members of the Liberal Party because it was a
free-enterprise alternative, not because it was moderate or ideologically balanced. They were more likely to see the individualist/collectivist division as a salient aspect of their personal views. As such, they were not committed to the ends of the Liberal Party. Consequently, when it was apparent that the party was not sufficiently viable to defeat socialism in the province, they joined the Social Credit Party, a more appropriate vehicle for their beliefs.

It was concluded that current Liberal activists would not feel comfortable in any other provincial party. Therefore, identification with the ends of the Liberal Party, including its ideological position, was a strong motivation determining activism in the Liberal Party, despite its history of defeats.

This thesis asserted that former Liberal activists were also motivated to leave the party because of their desire to be associated with a party that could reward its workers. Perquisites depending on the party winning elections include patronage, material benefits, status, career advancement and sensations associated with the thrill of victory. It was argued that current Liberal activism was also governed by political opportunism. However, they chose a route satisfying this incentive which allowed them to remain loyal to the Liberal Party: they became activists for the federal Liberal Party as well. Liberal activists tended to feel that federal politics was more important than provincial politics and tended to feel closer to the federal party. This was especially true of the realists. This finding suggested that
provincial activists relied on the federal party for their rewards, therefore, obviating the need for the provincial party to win elections in order to attract and retain its active supporters.

A caveat to this conclusion must here be noted. The survey was not designed to probe for motivations. As such, the methods used by this thesis were indirect measures of motivations and incentives. As it was a preliminary study, I have not weighed the relative contributions of these factors. So whether these conclusions are alternative explanations, or simply strands within the same explanation, is not yet determined. All these factors, in various ways, contributed to determining activism in the BC Liberal Party.

Existing literature classifies incentives for party activism based on evidence from successful political parties. As such, it focuses on ideology, purposive concerns and political opportunism. While this thesis found those to be important incentives for activism, patterns of cognitive inferences played an equally powerful role in governing involvement in a political party. Focussing on a weak, unsuccessful political party provided an opportunity to observe this. Consequently, the explanation for political party activism is more comprehensive. As such, this thesis has contributed to the accumulating knowledge on party organizations and the individuals who compose them.
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# APPENDIX I

## BC LIBERAL PARTY ELECTION RESULTS, 1903-1986

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election Year</th>
<th>Candidates Elected</th>
<th>% Vote</th>
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<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>1909</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953(^1, 3)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960(^2)</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>0</td>
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Source: *Statements of Votes, 1903 to 1986.* Province of British Columbia, Chief Electoral Office.

1. final results of single transferable ballot (first and second counts were 23.46% and 23.59% respectively for the Liberal Party)
2. Liberal Party elected as part of coalition
3. Liberal candidate elected in by-election (Victoria) November 24, 1953 giving the Liberal Party a total of 5 seats
4. Liberal candidate elected in by-election (Vancouver—Point Grey) December 17, 1962 giving the Liberal Party a total of 5 seats
APPENDIX II

Attitude Scales

Collective versus Individual Responsibility
(scale scored in individual responsibility direction)

1. After a person has worked until he is 65, it is proper for the community to support him. (Disagree)

2. The government ought to make sure that everyone has a decent standard of living. (Disagree)

3. Let's face it, most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted to. (Agree)

4. Why should the government spend my tax dollars on sick people; my family always put aside something for a rainy day. (Agree)

5. Government regulation stifles personal initiative. OR Without government regulations, some people will just take advantage of the rest of us. (Choose first statement)

6. If I do my best, it is only right that the government should help me out when I get some bad breaks. OR Each individual should accept the consequences of their own actions. (Choose second statement)

Continentalism
(scale scored in continentalist direction)

1. Canada should have freer trade with the United States. (Agree)

2. Canada's independence is threatened by the large percentage of foreign ownership in key sectors of our economy. (Disagree)

3. We must ensure an independent Canada even if that were to mean a lower standard of living for Canadians. (Disagree)

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1 I am grateful to Professor Donald Blake of the University of British Columbia for the use of these scales.
Populism
(scale scored in populist direction)

1. In the long run, I'll put my trust in the simple, down-to-earth thinking of ordinary people rather than the theories of experts and intellectuals. (Agree)

2. We would probably solve most of our big national problems if government could actually be brought back to the people at the grass roots. (Agree)

3. What we need is government that gets the job done without all this red tape. (Agree)

Antiregulation

This scale was created by summing the number of areas in which a respondent favoured slight or substantial reductions in government regulation. The policy areas were:

- environmental protection
- marketing of agricultural products
- land use
- sale of alcohol
- shopping hours
- gambling