

The rise of money-driven media politics is marginalizing Canadian voters and contributing to a very real democratic deficit. In this new paper for **the CSJ Foundation For Research and Education** Dennis Pilon argues that if we want to make parties more responsive to people rather than money, then we have to make elections more competitive. Specifically, election results need to better reflect what Canadians actually vote for. To that end, he takes up the question of reforming Canada's voting system and what results we might expect from some form of proportional representation.

"Canada's Democratic Deficit: Is Proportional Representation the Answer?" sketches out how different voting systems operate and critically examines the debate over proportional representation, both for and against. The author then makes a case for why PR should be an issue now, what form it could take, and what obstacles stand in the way.

Other issues in this series:

Robert MacDermid, "Funding the Common Sense
Revolutionaries: Contributions to the Progressive
Conservative Party of Ontario, 1995-97,"
June 1999

Canada's Democratic Deficit: Is Proportional Representation the Answer?

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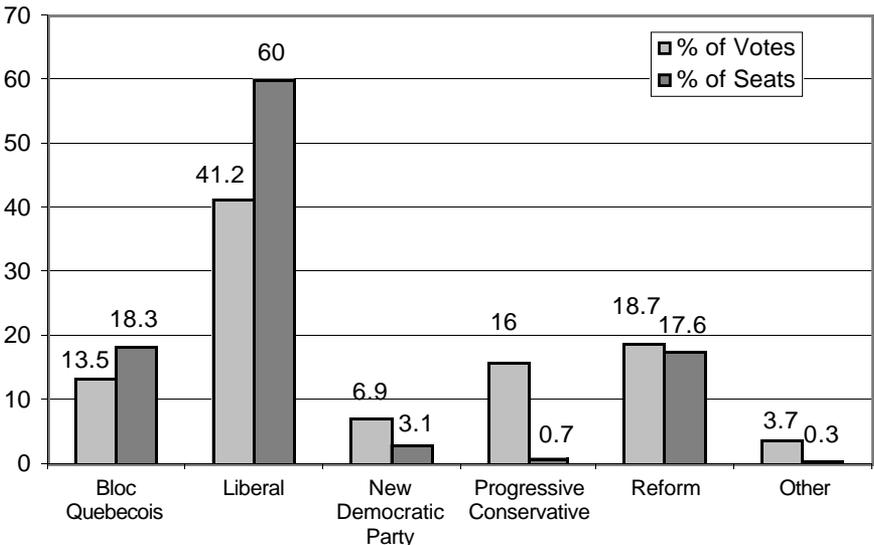
Introduction

In the 1997 federal election Canadian voter turnout slipped to its lowest level since 1925 – just 67%. Political scientists struggled to explain it. Canadians are, on average, educated, well informed, and interested in politics – all factors associated with high voter turnout. Why then did so many sit out the election? Expert opinion blamed the lack of strong defining issues. It appeared that too many voters simply found little to vote for.¹ This marked a surprising departure from the heady days of 1993 when voter ‘rage’ savaged Tory and NDP ranks and brought two new parties into the house. With five parties crowding into parliament, many had expected a broad, more dynamic level of debate. Certainly the rise of new

parties historically in Canada had led to sharpened political differences, whether the challenge emerged from the farmer-based Progressives of the 1920s or the socialist Co-operative Commonwealth Federation in the 1930s. Yet in 1997, just three and half years after a ground-breaking shake-up in the country’s party system, voters were having trouble distinguishing between the players, old and new. What went wrong?

The 1997 election hinted at a rot not far from the surface of Canadian democracy. Over the last quarter-century Canadian democratic practice has been transformed. Local campaigning has largely given way to TV-mediated national contests, party-organized voter contact has been surrendered to professional polling, and election costs have

1993 Federal Election Results By Party

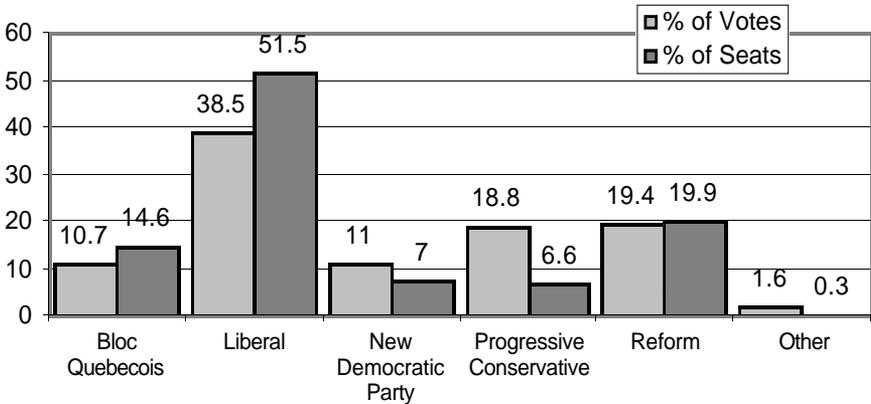


Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

skyrocketed with the increasing use of television and advertising. The links between parties and voters have never been weaker; increasingly parties simply buy access to voter data while citizens are left to rely exclusively on media for political information. But polling, media and purchased voter data are far from neutral instruments. As services to be bought and sold, they are open to influence and manipulation by those with plenty of money to spend. The fact that the wealthy can buy more - more polls, more media, more voter data - gives them an advantage in setting and containing the political agenda. Even launching a new party - Canada's historic strategy of protest - now seems less effective.

isn't the whole problem. Though money has been playing an increasing role in democracies the world over, in Canada these effects have been magnified by an 'all or nothing' voting system that systematically distorts election results and increasingly acts as a barrier to new ideas, new representational concerns, and effective political party competition. Canada's single member plurality system (SMP) lets the 'winner take all' in 301 separate local contests. But the terrain of Canadian democracy is hardly local anymore: election campaigns are centrally run, centrally funded and political debate largely occurs on either national or provincial television. Though a range of opinion broke through the constraints

1997 Federal Election Results by Party



Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

The rise of expensive media-managed politics has led to a very real 'democratic deficit', one where party policies appear to converge and political debate evaporates. But money

of SMP in the past, usually by building up local support in the face of media indifference or hostility, it's not clear that could happen today. *It's certainly telling that Canada's most*

recent new parties espouse economic and political views little different from the dominant media perspectives and their financial backers. Today a combination of money, media, electoral system distortion, and voter apathy are mutually reinforcing one another, contributing to a slow but perceptible democratic decline.

So what can we do about it? Clearly, greatly strengthened campaign and party finance laws are in order, along with improved access to media both public and private. But reform must also extend to Canada's democratic institutions themselves. Specifically, *we need to strengthen the link between what people vote for and the results that they get.* Here we'll consider the implications of getting rid of Canada's current voting system and whether some form of proportional representation (PR) would better respond to our democratic deficit.

How Voting Systems Work

Few people know what voting systems are, much less how they work. It's only when something unusual occurs – like when the party with the most votes loses the election (as happened provincially in BC, Quebec and Saskatchewan in 1990s) – that people show some interest in the nuts and bolts of their democracy. The voting system is easily defined: it comprises the distinct subset of election rules that concern how votes will be translated into representation.

Voting rules determine if votes are counted in local constituencies or totaled across the country as a whole, what kind of marking must be made on the ballot, and how winners are established.

Voting rules also tend to point to what is supposed to be represented: party interests, regional concerns, or local ridings. In many European proportional systems political parties are the main focus; in the United States the single member plurality system (SMP) gives more prominence to candidates and local areas. Though Canada too uses SMP there is less agreement about what exactly is supposed to be represented - some say party, some say locality, some say individual. Recently, the question of identity has been added to the debates around representation and voting systems have been compared on the basis of how well they reflect a society's diversity, particularly as concerns gender.

All voting systems consist of three components: voting formula, district size and ballot structure. Voting formula refers to how votes are added up to determine winners. With a plurality formula, the candidate with the most votes wins, regardless of what proportion of the overall vote she has. With just two candidates, a majority is likely, but with three or four a winner could have just 34% or 26% of the vote and win. A majority formula seeks to correct for this by insisting that a winner gain 50% +1 for election. PR formulas broadly convert votes into seats so that the proportions of seats awarded roughly mirror

the proportions of the votes cast. Each formula is applied to votes within a geographical area or district, which can vary in size from a single to multi-member constituencies. Thus plurality can be combined with single member districts, as for election to the Canadian House of Commons, or multimember districts, as in the elections for Vancouver's city council. Ballot structure refers to the manner in which voters mark their preferences on the ballot - nominal or ordinal. A nominal ballot involves one choice - usually an 'X' - for an individual candidate and/or party, or a number of choices of equal voting weight in multimember contests. An ordinal ballot allows voters to rank candidates by number - 1,2,3 - from their most to least preferred.

When these three elements are combined in different ways, they create specific voting systems. There are three broad types: plurality, majority and proportional. The **plurality** system is a 'winner take all' approach that, as mentioned above, can be combined with either single or multi-member constituencies - both are plurality voting systems. Single member plurality, also known as 'first-past-the-post' or the simple majority system, is used for most Canadian and American elections. Multimember plurality is usually referred to as bloc voting or 'at large' and remains in use municipally in a few North American locales. A **majority** system can be organized like the French double ballot, where votes are cast in two rounds (one to narrow the field and the second to elect someone), or by using a transferable ballot,

where voters number their choices (low vote-getters are eliminated and ballots redistributed until someone has a majority). The latter system, also known as the alternative vote, is used for lower house elections in Australia. Finally, **proportional** voting systems come in all kinds of combinations, based primarily on single or multimember ridings, with either transferable or non-transferable balloting.

It is worth looking a bit closer at the three most basic forms of PR: party list, single transferable vote (STV), and mixed-member proportional (MMP). **Party list** has multi-member ridings, nominal voting (voters choose a list *in toto*, though sometimes they can alter the candidate order), and a proportional formula (there are different formulas that tweak the level of proportionality). Party list is used in many European countries, particularly in Scandinavia. **STV** also uses multi-member ridings and a proportional formula but utilizes transferable balloting to determine which individual candidates will be elected. STV has been used in Ireland, for the upper house elections in Australia, and for some provincial and municipal contests in Manitoba and Alberta from about 1920 to 1960. **MMP** combines single member plurality elections with top-ups from party lists to create an overall proportional result. Some call MMP a 'mixed' electoral system rather than a proportional one, but as the results are usually proportional it makes more sense to consider it a form of PR. It is used in Germany and New Zealand.

These are the basic components of the main voting systems and how they work. Next we move beyond how different voting systems work to consider debate over the political outcomes they allegedly produce. Specifically we will consider whether particular kinds of results – more or less parties, political instability, etc. – can be connected to particular voting systems, or whether voting systems affect political outcomes at all.

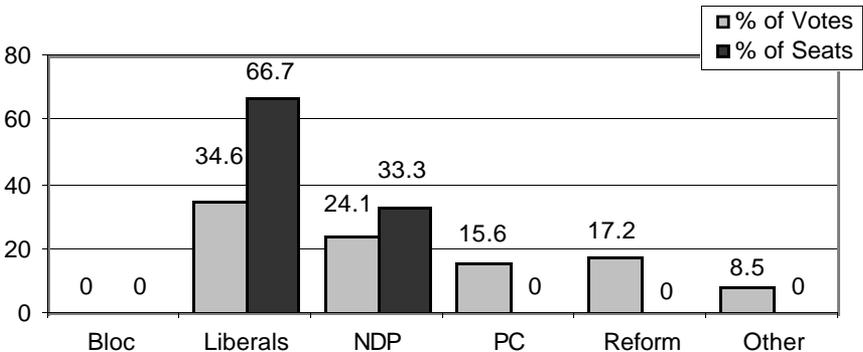
Do Voting Systems Make a Difference?

There might be a familiar ring to many of the claims made about different voting systems, even to non-specialists. Canadian newspapers invariably suggest that PR voting is ‘complicated’ and ‘confusing’, while more in-depth treatments usually associate it with political frag-

mentation and extremism. On the other hand, Canada’s own SMP voting system is regularly credited with producing stable majority government and a close representative/constituency link. Even Duverger’s ‘law’ - that SMP leads to two party systems, PR to multiparty systems - is familiar outside of political science departments. But what is familiar isn’t necessarily true. What are the real effects of different voting systems? While the familiar views still find adherents, a number of recent commentators have repudiated them, championing PR and deriding what they claim are the ill effects of SMP. On the other hand, some skeptics remain doubtful that voting systems have much effect at all.

The roots of the debate go back to the 1950s and the work of Belgian political scientist Maurice Duverger. He argued that voting rules affect the number of parties that can emerge. Though Duverger himself was care-

1997 Regional Federal Election Results By Party, Northern Canada



Source: *Elections Canada* (figures rounded)

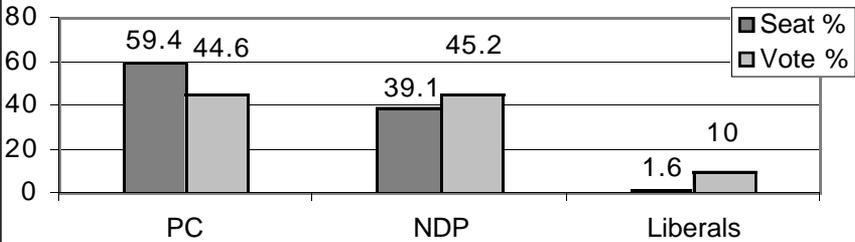
ful never to call it a law, his 'SMP-two parties/PR-multiparty' rule of thumb stuck and became widely popular, particularly with those who had an axe to grind with PR. Postwar North American and expatriate European scholars held PR largely responsible for interwar political instability in Europe, notably the rise of the Nazis. PR was variously accused of encouraging splinter parties, giving voice to extremist sentiment, obscuring the lines of political accountability and generally making effective government impossible. North American commentators were much more impressed with their own voting system - the two-party, majority government-inducing SMP. By the 1970s, however, the North American anti-PR front began to crack. In Canada SMP came under criticism for unduly regionalizing representation and blocking the political advance of women and minorities. By the 1990s a growing contingent of Canadian scholars endorsed PR to improve regional representation, voter turnout, and the behavior of the parties. Still, there are many who remain skeptical that voting rules deserve so much attention either way. Some argue that party competition is influenced by social competition - class, religion, region - not the voting system. Here the number of parties is determined by how many important social divisions there are. Still others simply think that no voting mechanism can hold back a political movement once it gets organized.

There are problems with all these views. The real world of democracy has never really reflected the mod-

els. Some SMP systems have had plenty of parties, some PR systems a scant few. Nor have social divisions and parties matched up in a tidy manner either. And the failure of strong social movements in North America to translate their support into electoral representation on par with European levels still requires some explanation. The idea that voting systems have either specific effects or no effects at all appears increasingly untenable. But there is another option. British political scientist Peter Mair suggests that "electoral systems provide at best 'facilitating conditions,' the impact of which will also be mediated by a variety of other institutional cultural factors."² Even Duverger himself allowed that voting rules act as brakes or accelerators but of themselves "ballot procedures ... have no driving power."³ In other words, voting systems have general as opposed to specific effects. But this doesn't mean they are unimportant. Neither voting rules nor social forces act independently. But as social forces constantly change, we do need to attempt to sketch out just how these general tendencies operate.

Duverger isolated two ways in which voting rules make a difference: through mechanical effects and psychological effects. Mechanical effects refer to the logic of a given system - SMP tends to constrain new parties, PR less so. This is because SMP sets a high threshold for political players to get representation, often 35-45% of the total vote. PR systems generally set a much lower threshold, ranging anywhere from

The Winner Loses: 1986 Saskatchewan Election Results



Source: J.F. Conway, *The West* (1994)

5% in Germany to .67% in the Netherlands. But these mechanical effects work hand in hand with a system's psychological effects. SMP's constraints can create a kind of catch-22 – the voting rules appear to hinder new parties, so voters are cautious about giving them support, thus assuring that new parties rarely succeed. PR voters, on the other hand, clearly have more room to support new parties. These psychological effects also extend to party behaviour as well, with SMP placing a high price on break-away or new parties (they tend to fail) and PR a lower one. Despite these mechanical and psychological effects, voters do support new parties in SMP systems on occasion, just as voters may not in PR systems. And this is a key point – though we may recognize that voting rules have real effects, they assure no necessary and specific results. The adoption of PR in Canada might lead to a further multiplication of parties. But then again it might not. So too should we be suspicious of claims that different voting rules will lead to different po-

litical behavior – consensus over conflict, participation over apathy – again, it will depend on the particular politicians and public involved. What we can say with confidence is the following: *SMP systems will constrain the entry of new parties and distort the electoral results of two-party, and particularly multi-party, contests, and PR systems generally will not.* Whether these effects are acceptable or 'democratic' requires further exploration and argument.

For and Against Proportional Representation

Even if we agree that voting systems do have some general effects, the debate over which particular voting system should be adopted - plurality, majority, or proportional - is only just beginning. Views on voting systems are not simply technical choices but reflect deep assumptions about democracy - how it does and should work, and who it should work

for. Nowhere is this more clear than in the debates over proportional voting. Here we will examine the three most common complaints made against PR and then explore three arguments supporting its introduction in Canada.

The Case Against PR

The case against PR in Canada rests on three key arguments: that PR leads to too many parties, that PR tends toward political instability, and that PR gives parties too much power in the political process. Though not readily apparent when taken up separately, the source linking these arguments is ultimately a defence of Canada's status quo, the Westminster system of majority government and opposition elected by single member plurality.

1. PR leads to too many parties.

Probably the most popular complaint made is that it leads to a multiplication of parties. Proportional voting systems do have a lower threshold of representation than plurality or majority systems, thus making the existence of many parties, or the entry of new ones, easier. For many critics, the use of PR by most European countries explains why they have so many parties. In Canada, this is seen by some as PR's fatal flaw as it would further balkanize the country's regional, ethnic and linguistic differences into several separate parties.⁴

The claim that PR creates political fragmentation and multiparty systems cannot be supported historically. In fact, research shows that the widespread adoption of proportional voting throughout Western Europe only came after the emergence of multiparty systems, not before.⁵ Nor have countries using PR necessarily seen a wild fluctuation in the number or kind of parties gaining election. European party systems have remained fairly constant throughout the twentieth century, shifting decisively only in the face of serious social upheaval. For example, the parties responsible for the WWI-era PR reforms in Holland and Sweden were still the main parties four decades later. PR, then, does not automatically lead to more parties or assure the arrival of new ones. However, when important new claims have emerged - improved representation for women, for instance - PR systems have proven more flexible in adapting to the challenges. As for Canada, regional, ethnic and linguistic differences haven't required PR to create separate parties - they've appeared regularly from the West and Quebec throughout this century. In fact, since 1921 federal politics have seldom been without at least two regional parties in addition to the Liberals and Conservatives. These regional parties have enjoyed consistent over-representation while contributing to the regional balkanization of more nationally-oriented parties.

2. PR leads to political instability.

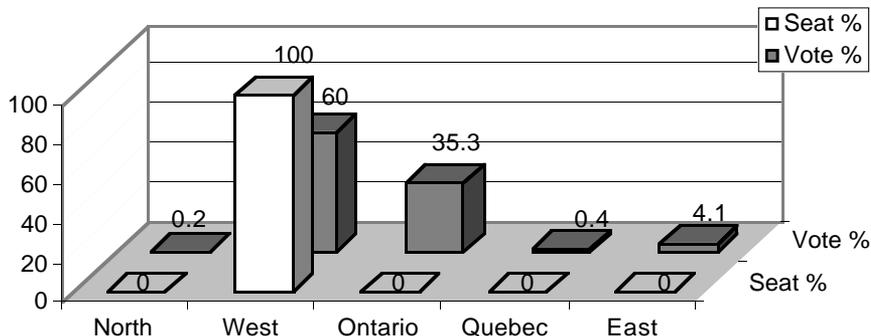
Whether PR creates multiparty systems or simply sustains them, critics hold that the existence of so many parties makes political compromise difficult and government inefficient. They claim PR favours division and actively works against efforts to build broad political coalitions within parties. In Canada, critics of PR claim it would threaten Canadian unity by working against 'pan-Canadian' parties that seek support across regions and linguistic/ethnic identities, and prevent the election of single party majority governments. PR is also accused of legitimizing extreme views by allowing extremist parties to gain election. The sum of all these alleged PR effects is ongoing political instability.⁶

The evidence that PR contributes to political instability is selective and one-sided. The favourite examples are undoubtedly Israel and Italy. Israel is held to be dominated by small, extremist parties while Italy is alleged to have had fifty governments in fifty years - all because of proportional voting. But what of all the other PR-using European governments - do they all face the same difficulties as the much-publicised Israel and Italy? Quite obviously, no. Germany, Scandinavia, the Benelux countries - all use PR and all have effected stable coalition governments over the last fifty years. Holland uses a PR system even more proportional than Israel or Italy yet few commentators would consider it 'unstable'. Even Israel and Italy are not such convinc-

ing examples when examined more closely. Despite yearly changes in Italy's governing coalition, one party - the Christian Democrats - dominated post-war government, comprising the major partner of every coalition and holding the premiership uninterrupted from 1946 to 1980. Moves away from PR in Italy in recent years have not altered things much: there is still a multitude of parties and government turnover in non-election years. Israel, on the other hand, is clearly a special case. If anything, by assuring that a great many serious political divisions are represented, PR has arguably been a stabilizing force there. As for PR's penchant for extreme politics, critics would do well to remember that Europe's oldest and largest extremist party, the National Front, emerged in France, a country that does not use PR.

As for Canada, the idea that proportional voting would inhibit 'pan-Canadian' parties - and thus contribute to instability - is hard to sustain. It is our current non-proportional voting system that unduly regionalizes political party support. In both 1993 and 1997 Reform won all their seats but one in the west despite having substantial support in Ontario, while throughout the post-war period the Liberals have won few seats west of Winnipeg despite an average popular vote of 25%. The fact is that Canadians have always been more 'pan-Canadian' than our election results would suggest. On the other hand, Canada's non-proportional voting system has been generous with parties whose vote is

1997 Distribution of Reform Party Votes/Seats



Source: *Elections Canada* (figures rounded)

regionally concentrated, regularly giving them representation well beyond their percentage of the national vote. This was true for the western-based Progressives in the 1920s and later for Social Credit both in the west and Quebec. In 1997 the regional bias in Reform party support gave them more than three times as many seats as the more nationally-oriented Conservative party despite roughly similar levels of voter support. With results like these it's hard to believe that PR could lead to more instability or threaten Canadian unity any more than our current system. After all, it was an election under our current SMP voting rules that witnessed the Bloc, a sovereignty party from Quebec, become the country's 'loyal opposition' with just 13.5% of the vote. Critics get no further arguing that single party majority governments are required to stave off chaos – governments with strong legislative majorities reigned federally both times Quebecers considered

leaving the country through a referendum. On the other hand, Canadian minority government in the 1920s, 1960s and 1970s were models of stability, political compromise, and, arguably, great periods of national integration and social advance.

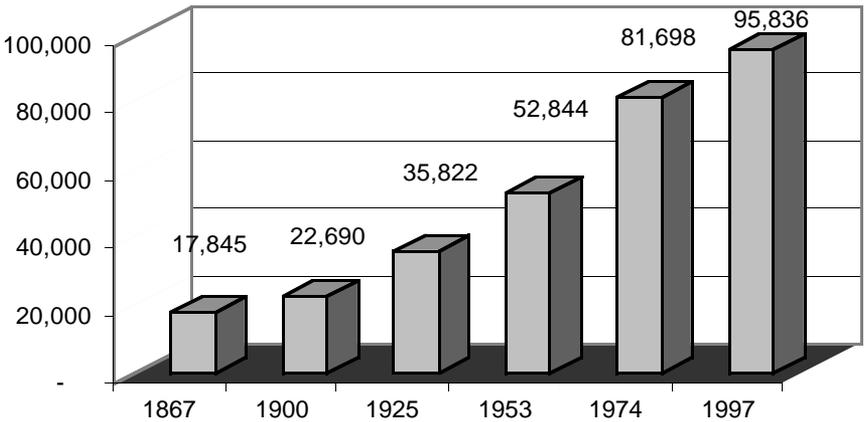
3. PR leads to a tyranny of parties.

Some critics worry that proportional voting gives too much power to parties at the expense of individual representatives and, ultimately, voters. This occurs in two ways. First, PR systems are held to weaken the influence voters have over which particular individuals are elected by eliminating or seriously reducing the number of local representatives. With little or no local base, it is claimed that elected members will owe little to voters and everything to their party. Second, as proportional voting is unlikely to produce an out-

right majority for one party, government will likely result from post-election bargaining by the parties to form a coalition, thus allegedly weakening the public's role in directly choosing the winner. In both cases, critics claim that PR weakens political accountability because voters cannot defeat specific politicians or assure an unpopular party doesn't return to a coalition government.⁷

member ridings.⁸ Very few voters in SMP systems have any actual contact with their representative, fewer still seek any help. Most voters can't even remember their local representative's name. Indeed, in Canada the number of voters each MP represents has increased steadily ever since Confederation, hardly the mark of a system that values their 'link'. The fact is that voting in Canada is primarily party voting and individual

Population Per MP in Canada



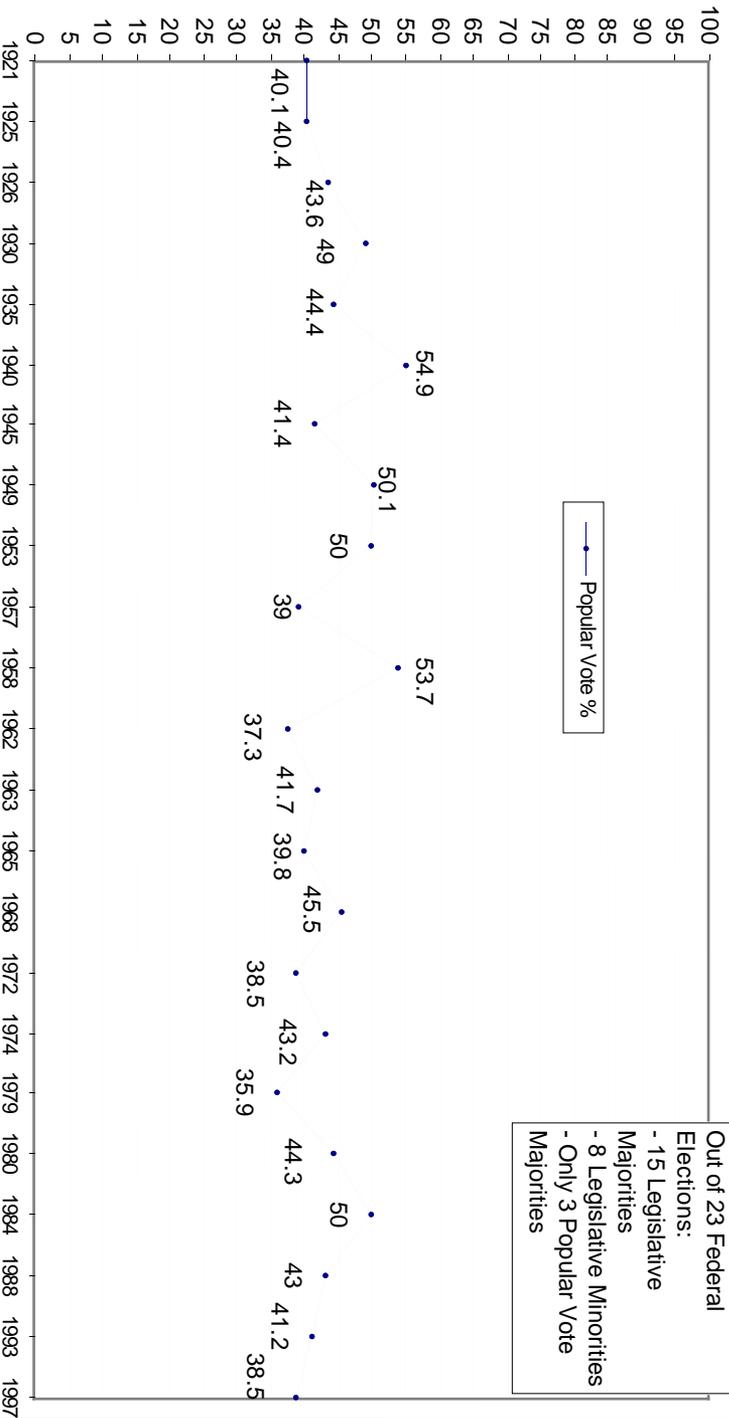
Source: *Elections Canada*

The problem with the criticisms above is that the concerns are based on falsehoods about non-PR systems. Put simply, voters - regardless of the voting system - don't appear to care much who wears the party label as long as it's the right one. Nor does it appear that voters have much control over the individual candidates parties select even if they are concerned. Research has consistently shown that party identification much more than the particular candidate is the key determinant for voters in both Canada and Britain, despite single

candidate effects on voting patterns are negligible. Some recent research has suggested that local campaigns do matter; however this results from parties targeting marginal ridings with resources, not because local personalities make a difference.⁹

Nor is it clear that Canada's SMP voting system allows voters to 'choose' the government directly. In 1997 Liberal support dropped from the 42% of the previous election to 38.5% but they still secured another majority government. In 1988 the

Federal Election Winners: Popular Vote 1921-97



Sources: *Elections Canada; H. Thorburn, Party Politics in Canada, 5th Edition (1985), p. 349.*

Conservatives' 'majority' for free trade secured only 42% of the popular vote - a majority of Canadians voted for parties opposed to the deal. In 1996 38% of British Columbians' secured a majority NDP government even though 41% of the province preferred the opposition. Meanwhile in Saskatchewan the NDP received more than their opponents in 1986 but still lost. In fact, the whole notion of 'choosing' seems problematic in a system where majority governments are nearly always the product of a minority of votes. Only three times since 1911 have more than fifty percent of Canadians endorsed the same party in a federal election (1940, 1949, 1958). It's hard to believe that Canadians wouldn't see some kind of coalition government as a more fair result, even if negotiations only began after the last ballot was counted.

The Case for PR

PR's critics appear to think that political accountability only exists if voters face a narrow set of voting options. Though they applaud the independence of local representatives against all-powerful parties, they have no qualms about restricting political party competition to a choice between two. This explains why they fail to appreciate the kinds of political accountability possible under proportional voting. Here too accountability can focus on specific politicians. All proportional systems - except closed party lists - allow voters to influence which individual candidates get elected: German

MMP has single member ridings, Irish STV has voters rank order the candidates, and open party lists allow voters to give particular politicians extra support. In the end, the individuals elected under PR systems tend to be more representative of the electorate. But more importantly, PR allows accountability to occur through political party competition. Voters unhappy with the policy direction of a coalition government can shift their support within the coalition, thus sending a signal about where policy should go. Or they can vote for a new party altogether to try and expand the policy options available. SMP's alleged accountability rests on the dubious assumption that voters unhappy with party 'right' will try to make them accountable by switching to party 'left'. Under PR, voters can switch between parties of the same bloc, left or right, a more realistic and arguably accountable alternative. These are the themes we will explore here: the relationship between proportional voting and representation, democratic process and political competition.

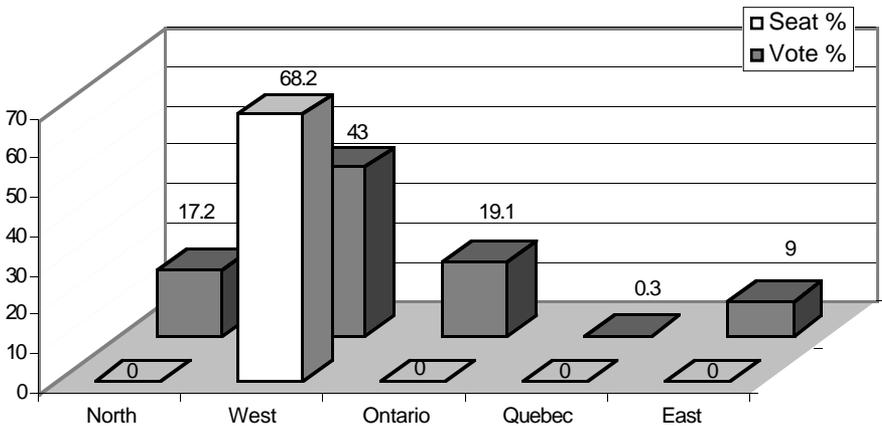
1. PR leads to better representation.

Canada's representative democracy doesn't look much like Canadians or what they vote for. Middle class women and minorities are dramatically under-represented while working people, regardless of their differences, are wholly absent. Occupationally, Ottawa looks as narrow as any nineteenth century pre-democratic legislature - mostly lawyers

and businesspeople. The system can't even properly register what people clearly do vote for - party representation. Election results consistently distort voter intentions, giving regional parties too much and national third parties too little. Even the major parties that do well find their success lopsided and regionally unrepresentative. How much democracy can be going on when so many voices are distorted or absent? All evidence suggests that PR can do much better.

but now analysts are recognizing that party managers play a big role in deciding who voters get to choose from. In Canada, these choices are influenced by an SMP voting system that essentially creates an 'all or nothing' contest in 301 separate ridings. Not surprisingly, such high stakes have led to conservative behavior from parties in terms of the kind of candidates they offer to the public. Though Canadian parties are now nominating more women and minorities in winnable ridings, the figures

1997 Reform Party Federal Election Results by Region

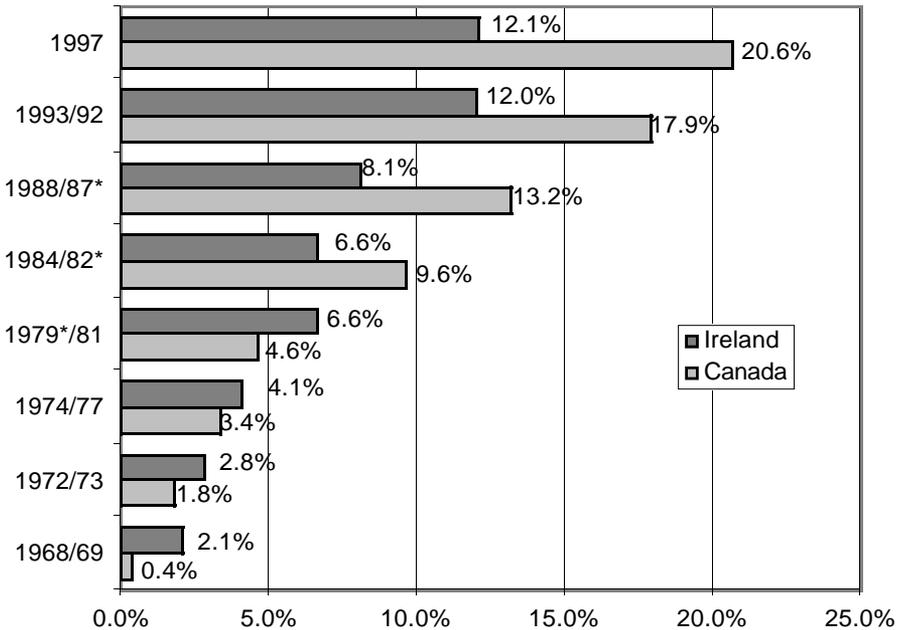


Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

Comparative studies of voting systems regularly underline one finding: PR tends to lead to better representation of women and minorities than plurality or majority systems. But it is important to underline why: PR creates different incentives for party behavior. For a long time Canadian voters took the blame for electing nothing but upper class white men

are still low by comparative standards and even this meagre response has lagged decades behind public opinion. By contrast, because proportional voting is not 'all or nothing' it is easier for parties to put together more diverse slates of candidates and respond more quickly to new demands for representation.

Women's Representation In Ireland and Canada



Election Years: Canada/Ireland

* An average of two elections

Socially conservative Ireland surpassed Canada in women's representation up to 1980 demonstrating the greater flexibility of the STV form of PR over SMP.

Sources: J. Lovenduski et al (eds.), *Gender and Party Politics* (1993), p. 152; J.P. Bickerton et al (eds.), *Canadian Politics, Vol.2* (1994), p. 161.

PR would also give Canadians the party results they, in fact, vote for. If a party received twenty percent of the votes, it would get twenty percent of the seats – no more, no less. And a proportional system could award those seats where the support is. Our current system produces a phony political balkanization - Reform in the west, the Liberals in Ontario, and so on. PR would better represent the diversity of political opinion within regions, as well as between them. But most important, *PR would improve representation in Canada by allow-*

ing for more effective political party competition.

Improved competition might help sharpen the differences between parties and give voters some choice. Much has been made of a rising anti-party sentiment among the public recently. Who hasn't heard the complaint that 'all the parties are the same'? For some, this means the representation of parties should give way to a more individualized politics where representatives would be free to vote as they wish, presumably in

line with their constituents. The problem with this scenario - aside from the naive idea that a single person really can act for all constituents - is that the representative will not be 'free' from influence. Instead, influence will just take another, less easily identifiable, form. Those that champion an individualized politics obscure the collective nature of political action - it always takes more than one vote to accomplish anything. Parties make collective action and goals explicit. Voters have a better chance of sorting out competing party claims than a myriad of individual promises. At the same time the existence of parties makes those trying to influence politics, particularly with money, more visible. If Canada's current party system is failing to represent voters the answer isn't automatically to get rid of parties in favour of individual representation. The answer is just as plausibly to improve party competition so new and better parties can emerge.

2. PR leads to improved political competition.

Canada's current voting system places serious constraints on political competition, more often than not sheltering dominant parties from challenge. Instead of facilitating the democratic will of the people, its 'all or nothing' logic actively interferes with it in three important ways.

First, SMP actually suppresses political competition between parties. If a particular constituency sees two right-wing parties each receiving 30%

of the vote and a left wing party gaining 40%, the right wing majority will lose to the left candidate. Sooner or later, even though there may be important differences between the two parties, pressure will mount for right wing voters to abandon one party so the other can win. This real fear of 'splitting the vote' acts as barrier to new political competitors. New entrants don't just seek representation, they have to try and replace one of the two largest parties - a daunting, increasingly expensive task.

Second, SMP suppresses political debate within parties. Far from creating broad and inclusive coalitions, parties under SMP face pressure to bias their appeals to whatever are perceived to be the dominant views of the polity. Voters subscribing to these dominant views get to choose amongst the parties; other voters face little choice if any. Meanwhile these dominant ideas themselves are the constant focus of polling and 'spin' in an effort to shift them one way or another, usually to the right.

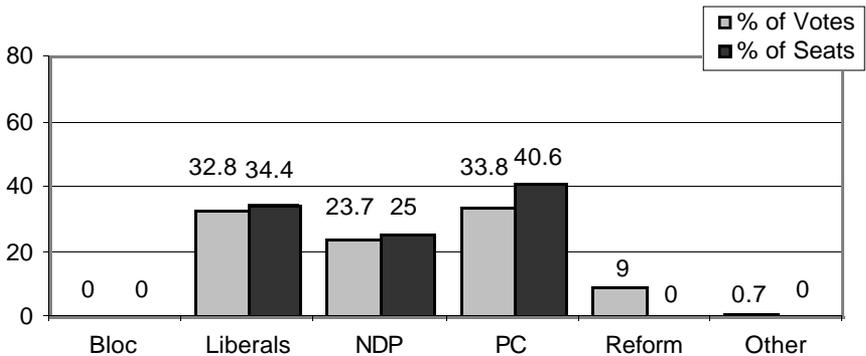
Third, SMP tends to reduce democracy to these rather constrained elections. This happens because SMP typically manufactures a legislative majority for the party with the most votes, whether or not (usually not) they enjoy a majority of the votes. Over the last two decades, governments with legislative majorities have suffered little in the way of deliberative democracy, increasingly relying on closure to cut off debate and ram through unpopular measures while exhibiting indifference to extra-parliamentary opposition from

social movements. And reducing democracy to a kind of blank cheque plebiscite once every four years has proved a boon to those with money, providing them with a focused opportunity to influence the result.

The logic of proportional voting creates a very different democratic process than SMP. Because it is not 'all or nothing', PR establishes different rules for political competition, affecting how both voters and parties behave. Under PR, voters are more free to vote as they like. If they are unhappy with the current political parties they can vote for a new one with less fear of 'wasting' their vote. Of course, whether they do or not will depend on how existing parties respond. PR's greater capacity for party competition also means that challenges to existing parties can come from all sides, not just the perceived centre, forcing them to clarify policy and debate just who and what

they represent. Nor can governments under PR remain indifferent to opposition criticism or mobilized social movements because single party election victories are more rare - no more exaggerated, manufactured majorities for the leading party. Now 'majority' government will require a real majority of voting support behind it, usually through a coalition of parties, and coalition partners get anxious in the face of large public demonstrations against unpopular policy. PR election results are also less open to media spin because they are more transparent: majority governments really do enjoy a majority of voters' support and parties with comparable voting strength (like the Tories and Reform in 1993 and 1997) can expect to gain similar numbers of seats (unlike SMP which gave Reform many more seats, thus making them appear more popular). Again, it must be underlined, PR doesn't create specific results - more

1997 Regional Federal Election Results By Party, Eastern Canada



Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

parties, more representation of women and minorities, etc. – but facilitates whatever representation people want when they vote for it.

3. PR leads to a better democratic process.

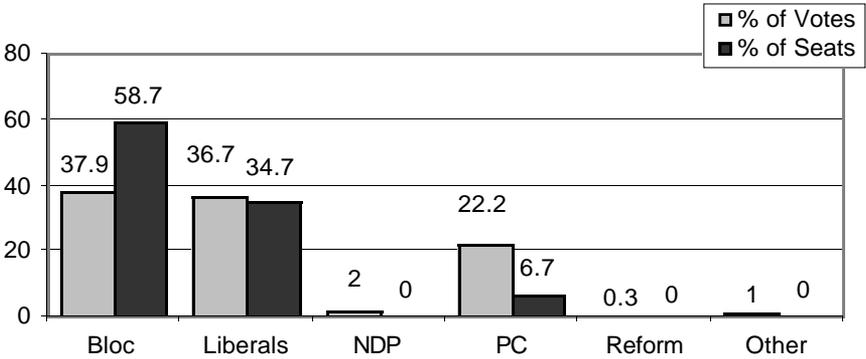
With its ‘all or nothing’ approach to representation and decision-making, SMP is not merely a blunt democratic instrument, it’s not much of a democratic instrument at all. But this shouldn’t be surprising. Embedded in nearly all the defences of SMP is a holdover, antidemocratic fear that, given too much choice or too much room to decide, democracy invariably descends into chaos. The response then tends toward restricting choices and decision-making with highly restrictive party competition and artificial majority governments, something SMP accomplishes admirably. Some even argue that elections are less about representation than about electing a ‘responsible government’, one capable of governing and being clearly responsible for governing decisions. It is always assumed here that ‘responsible’ governing can only be provided by a single party legislative majority facing a single potential alternate government - coalitions need not apply.¹⁰ There is more than a little paternalism in all this. It’s as if Canadians are squabbling children incapable of working anything out without some authoritarian presence - in this case a single party majority government - to impose order. All in all, a rather impoverished view of democracy’s potential.

A different view of democracy has emerged from Canadians themselves over the last thirty years - a view that wants more, not less, representation. Women are no longer content to be represented only by men, aboriginal people want their historic claims made good, Quebecers fear for their language, and the West wants in on federal decision-making. In a way, Canadians have already been seeking a kind of proportional representation. But so far, their success has been ad hoc and unstable. This is because SMP can both suppress and exaggerate attempts at political pluralism - it doesn’t handle diversity well. This should be clear from the failures of Meech and Charlottetown, and the highly distorted party results in 1993 and 1997. To be fair, SMP didn’t emerge historically with representation and diversity in mind. In their pre-democratic infancy, plurality elections involved a small homogeneous electorate choosing which loose grouping of their peers would govern. Today’s electorate is too large and diverse to keep confusing the issue: the question of governing must now flow out of the process of representation. As Swiss PR enthusiast Ernest Naville wrote as far back as 1865, “In a democratic government, the right of decision belongs to the majority, but the right of representation belongs to all.” Elections have to be about getting the people’s representatives, in all their diversity, to the table and letting something democratic happen: deliberation, mediation, cooperation, compromise and yes, majority decisions when necessary. Here PR better reflects these democratic val-

ues - it respects political pluralism in that it allows a greater, more sophisticated diversity of views to be represented. And if European experience is instructive, the act of governing need not be sacrificed in the process.

ing up an alternative political movement, rather than tinkering with voting rules.¹¹ Jenson certainly offers a sober response to much of the more idealistic reformer rhetoric, particularly to those that promised the introduction of PR would single hand-

1997 Regional Federal Election Results By Party, Quebec



Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

Why PR? Why Now?

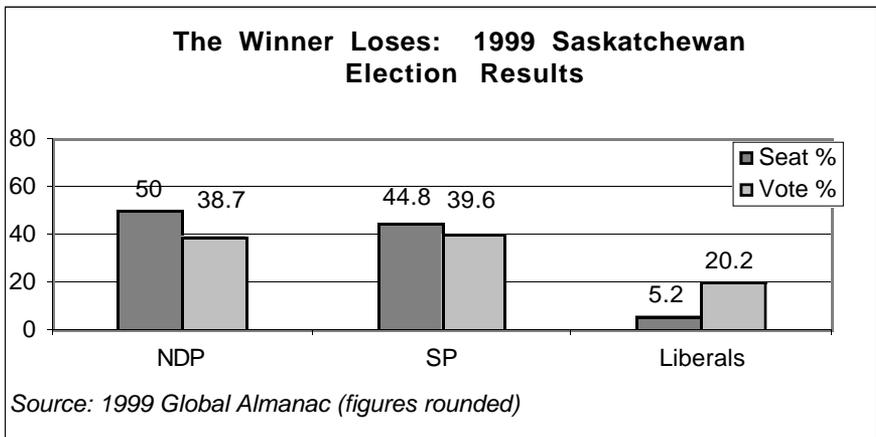
Despite the merits outlined above, not everyone concerned with the state of Canadian democracy agrees that agitating for a new voting system should be much of a priority. For instance, Université de Montréal political scientist Jane Jenson argues that the enormous energy put into changing New Zealand's voting system from plurality to proportional over the last two decades didn't really change that country's right wing politics much. In fact, the first election after the introduction of PR witnessed many of same people back in power. She suggests organizing efforts could have been better spent build-

edly alter politician and political party behavior - it did not. Other critics simply point to Canadian history and note that political alternatives and parties from all over the spectrum have broken into Canadian politics and did so despite the barriers imposed by our voting system. So the question must be faced: why PR, why now?

Canada's use of SMP has not prevented political alternatives from arising historically. But what needs to be considered is whether circumstances have altered to the point where SMP is presently a much less open voting system. Voting system effects are not static: they result from the interaction of a particular sys-

tem's general tendencies with whatever politically organized social forces exist at any given time. In terms of the ultimate democratic results, neither the voting rules nor these social forces can be said to act independently. In the past, despite the 'all or nothing' nature of political competition under SMP, new parties emerged from time to time because voters somehow came to see new political strategies as viable. *Viability here doesn't just mean that voters think a new party's ideas are workable, it refers to their perceptions about the party's chances of election.* How voters come by that perception depends on the various means of social communication available. Obviously discussion in mainstream media sources – newspapers, radio, television - gives people some sense of which ideas are popular or unpopular, and a great deal of money is spend on polling and advertizing to convince people that certain parties or ideas are popular or unpopular. But historically people have also assessed political viability through a number of alternate communication

sources - non-mainstream press, unions and faith communities, or simply by living in more community-oriented geographic neighborhoods. However, while these sources still exist, their influence has declined dramatically with the rise of mass communication and mass media. And this has arguably affected the kind of results possible with SMP. Where historically marginalized groups – farmers, socialists, etc. - successfully marshaled their political forces despite indifferent or hostile coverage from mainstream media, today's political challengers find it difficult to be noticed at all without regular media attention. A lot of money is spent to try to control the 'psychological' effects of SMP, to convince voters that some parties are competitive but others are not. And this is further complicated by recent moves to increase constituency sizes, combine local governments into 'mega-cities', and shorten campaign periods – all trends that heap advantage on those with money and hobble those without.



The decline of any appreciable effect on local campaigns with SMP has meant that new ideas must break into public discussion through media, particularly television. Political aspirants must either catch the media's attention somehow or purchase it directly through advertizing, a difficult or expensive proposition. The Reform party managed to break in, suggesting that new party organizing still isn't entirely precluded by SMP, though their pro-business, pro-market message certainly made them media-friendly. However, even where people try to build a political movement along the lines suggested by Jenson, they will not be free of today's pervasive media influence. For instance, events like the Ontario 'Days of Action' in 1997 or BC's Solidarity rallies in the early 1980s marshaled tens of thousands of people against government policies that the media largely endorsed. Media dismissed the events as they were being organized and could offer few explanations for their success when they occurred. But while organizers clearly demonstrated that significant portions of the public did not agree with their governments (and the media), these events did not lead to any real shift in media coverage of the policies that had led to the demonstrations in the first place. Indeed, just a few weeks after the events it was like they never happened. For all intents and purposes, the events didn't appear to have any effect at all – the majority governments in both provinces (both elected by a minority of voters) conceded little to nothing and went on to win re-election a few years later. Nor did parties noticea-

bly reorient themselves to take up those movements' concerns. Of course, the events did have effects, but the point here is that newspapers and especially television play an important role in mediating how people understand these effects and their impact - and do so in away that arguably influences public decisions about how to act or the efficacy of further action at all.¹²

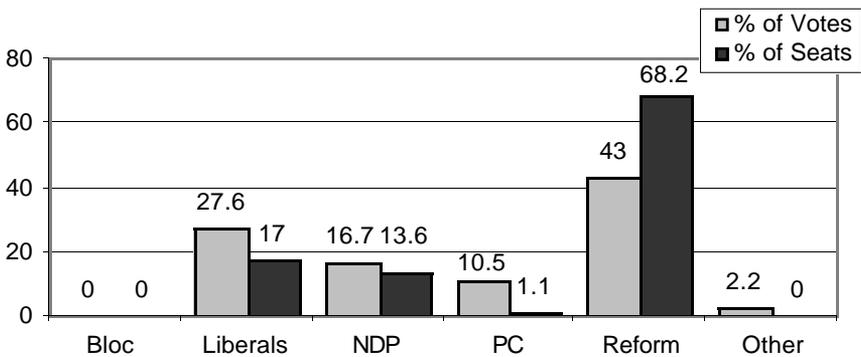
Could a different voting system have offered better opportunities to organizers? If parties were restricted to representation that roughly mirrored their electoral support, coalition government would likely become an on-going reality. And coalition partners get edgy when tens of thousands of people march on the legislature. But more to the point: with a different voting system organizers could build on their efforts in a number of ways, either by better influencing an existing party to take up its concerns, or forming the base of a movement party of its own. In a way, this is what has occurred in New Zealand. Back in the 1980s two parties dominated their politics and both were moving to the right. Long-time supporters of the Labour party were disturbed with its increasingly right wing economic policies but could see few alternatives. However, when PR became an issue Labour supporters overwhelmingly supported it (even though the party didn't) and in the first PR election split their support between Labour and parties to the left of them. By 1999 Labour had moved to the left and won the second PR election, effecting a governing coalition with another left party and the

Greens. Writing back in 1997, shortly after the first New Zealand PR election, Jenson was too quick to draw negative conclusions about the results. In the previous two decades tightly managed, money-driven media campaigns under 'winner take all' had led to a policy convergence heavily weighted to the right and parties that were largely indistinguishable. But over the course of two PR elections voters have seen a better representation of their diverse views with more transparent and open negotiation.

The terrain of Canada's democracy has changed – it is no longer very local, or locally financed, or locally mediated. Campaigns are centrally run, centrally financed and take place mostly on television in either provincial or national contexts. As a result, the 'all or nothing' logic of SMP now simply costs too much for parties or voters to take many chances. By

contrast, a proportional approach to Canadian democracy poses fewer obstacles to new ideas, new representational concerns, and new parties. Of course, voting system reform will not redress all the inequalities inherent in Canadian democracy by itself. Reform needs to proceed on a number of fronts simultaneously: campaign finance regulations, strict spending and contribution limits, more public broadcasting, longer campaign periods, and so forth. Our focus must be to limit the advantages enjoyed by those with money and lower the economic costs of participating to those without.

1997 Regional Federal Election Results By Party, Western Canada



Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

What kind of PR?

Which version of PR would best address our current democratic deficit? The key problem we've identified so far is that the combination of SMP with a media-dominated politics puts too many obstacles in the way of political party competition in Canada – our PR system must lower the barriers to new parties and more effectively represent the existing ones. But at the same time our PR system should facilitate the political influence of the organizers of people rather than money. We want a system where people can organize in and across their various communities to affect the results. The three main proportional systems under consideration are the single transferable vote (STV), mixed member proportional (MMP), and party list.

Of the three main PR systems, party list is usually the most proportional. If it is diversity we want then party list offers the greatest opportunity to capture whatever exists in the polity: party list systems usually entertain the most diverse array of parties and identities, particularly women and visible minorities. Curiously, party list has few proponents in reform circles. Academics criticize it as too party-centric and with little meaningful role for voters in selecting the actual representatives. Party elites complain that it would allow too many parties to gain election and lead to instability. Both criticisms warrant further scrutiny. European experience demonstrates that very sophisticated arrangements can be

made to assure some level of democracy in structuring the list, at least in terms of party democracy, or that members are chosen in a way that respects where party votes come from. In Holland, while seat totals for the parties are based on national results, the actual representatives are chosen regionally on the basis of where votes are cast.¹³ In truth politicians and academics seem to have few problems with party-centric voting systems (SMP, MMP) and many with ones where voter preferences really matter (STV). As for the question of stability, most PR-party list countries are quite stable, while only a few are less so – hardly conclusive evidence of a trend toward instability. Party list does face some challenges from Canadian geography, though many Scandinavian countries have a similar urban/rural divide as our provinces.

MMP currently enjoys a consensus among the contemporary political scientists and activists in favour of voting reform. Typically, most MMP proposals take the current total number of representatives and divide them into two groups, some to represent constituencies and the others to form a pool that party top-up lists can draw from. How many are assigned to each group depends on how proportional the designers want the system to be. This approach means that constituencies have to be enlarged, usually making a mockery of the system's supposed aim to maintain a representative/constituency link. A better approach would be to increase the size of the house itself to keep constituencies to a

reasonable size. When we recognize that the ratio of representatives to those represented has been steadily eroded over the last century the increase is not unreasonable. Another typical component of MMP that should be eliminated is the artificial threshold for representation from party lists. West Germany, and now the re-unified Germany, have long used a five percent threshold and most proposals for Canada highlight this aspect positively to stave off criticism about multipartism and minor parties. But those that want to restrict the representation of others should have to make a strong case. The fact is that the case for thresholds is based largely on the experience of Weimar Germany and Israel, two countries that faced or still face exceptional circumstances. Tellingly the threshold-proponents never cite Dutch experience where a threshold of less than one percent has coincided with a stable multiparty system.¹⁴ Canada is not Israel or Weimar Germany and, as such, artificial thresholds place unwarranted restraints on new parties and party competition. With its single member ridings and reduced use of the party list, MMP is not ideal but with the modifications recommended above it would still represent a real improvement over plurality and majority voting systems.

While party list and a revised version of MMP could go a long way toward addressing our democratic deficit, a case can also be made for Canada's historic choice for proportional voting, STV.¹⁵ This system would see the country divided up into

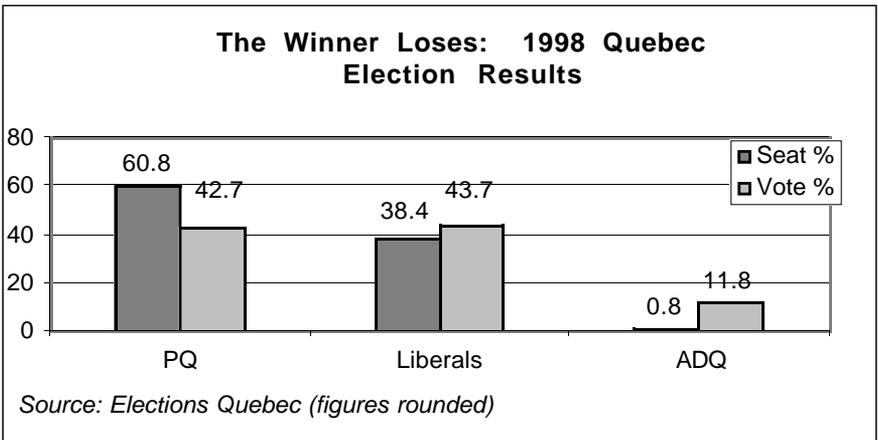
multi-member constituencies ranging from five to ten members each (depending on population density, geography, etc), and voters would number their choices 1, 2, 3 and so on for as long as they wished to register a preference. Winning candidates would need only a portion of the total vote to be elected; in a five member riding winning a seat would require gaining approximately one-fifth of the votes. STV is often criticized as being too complex for voters to understand and too complicated and time-consuming for returning officers to count but these complaints are often anecdotal. On the other hand, because STV has been used most extensively in the socially conservative Irish Republic, the progressive possibilities of the system are seldom sketched out or taken seriously either.

Compared with party list and MMP, STV is much more sophisticated, voter-centred proportional voting system. With its use of multi-member constituencies STV creates an opportunity for diverse representation that single member systems lack, and, because voters themselves rank the candidates, change is not entirely dependent on activism within the parties (as is often the case in party list systems). What this means is that wherever people can organize themselves around political goals they can pressure the system in two ways – indirectly through the parties, and directly through the voting system. This can happen because voters using STV number their choices. If their first choice is unpopular, or is wildly popular, then either the whole vote

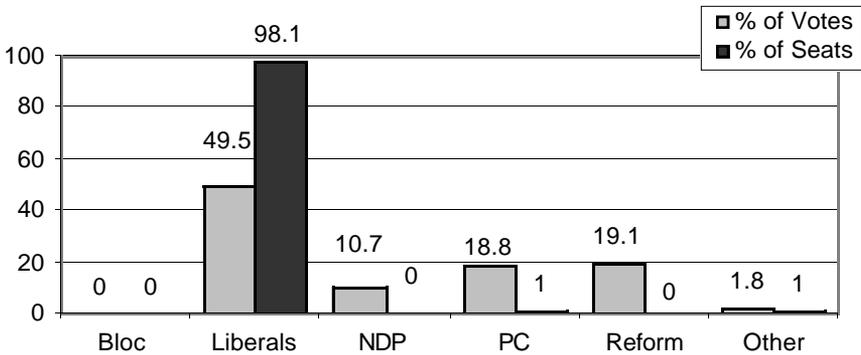
or a portion of the vote goes on to support their second choice, and so on. These transfers allow for some fairly sophisticated voting strategy and analysis, as well as contributing to the proportional result. Voters can number their support for all the candidates of a particular party or highlight other representational concerns that cross party lines. They can take a chance on a new party but give later preferences to a more established party thus ensuring they don't waste their vote or inadvertently help their opponents. Vote transfers also make public how voters understand the party system and parties themselves – which parties are seen to be more closely related to each other (and thus consistently receive transfer support) and which ideological elements within parties gain voter support (and which do not). All in all, STV is the most dynamic, sophisticated form of PR, combining proportional results for parties with a strong role for voters in being able to influence just which party members get elected.

A Modest Proposal - STV+

STV was the only choice of Canadian reformers in the early twentieth century but has been ignored or dismissed by most contemporary reformers. Political scientists complain that the system is too complex for voters, or leads to an unsustainable level of competition within parties.¹⁶ Others complain that STV fares poorly in comparison with party list or MMP on the representation of women and minorities, or that it is simply not proportional enough.¹⁷ While some of these criticisms have merit, others display little knowledge of historical or contemporary use of the system. STV offers voters much potential leverage over political parties and candidates, more than other forms of PR. On the other hand, STV does contain a built-in threshold to representation that is much higher than other PR systems; a problem if improved political party competition is the point of electoral system re-



1997 Regional Federal Election Results By Party, Ontario



Source: Elections Canada (figures rounded)

form. But STV could be modified to address its shortcomings. It is necessary to sort out the legitimate concerns from the uninformed assertions about STV, and then sketch out some modifications to improve it.

First, the uninformed assertions that STV is too complicated, divides political parties, and performs poorly in terms of diversifying representation do not hold up. STV is hardly too complicated for Canadian voters as nearly forty years of use in Alberta and Manitoba attests to.¹⁸ Nor is a fracturing of political parties by internal competition a necessary result of STV, as eighty years of Irish experience demonstrates.¹⁹ It is true that STV use in Ireland and the Canadian prairies did not lead to western European levels of female representation but it is important to remember that party list systems did not auto-

matically produce better women's representation either. In fact, decisive increases in women's representation in Scandinavian party list systems only emerged in the 1960s alongside the second wave of feminism, more than forty years after PR was introduced.²⁰ On the other hand, for cleavages that were organized politically in STV-using locales, a more diverse representation was achieved. In Ireland STV facilitated representation of divergent religious and class interests; in the Canadian prairies it saw diverse levels of ideological representation. Sadly, STV was abolished at the provincial level in both Alberta and Manitoba by 1960, and thus we lack evidence as to whether the system would have allowed Canada's second wave feminists a better chance of election than the SMP system that replaced it.

Critics are on firmer ground when they question STV on proportionality, though some do better than others. For instance, Irish elections results have sometimes demonstrated fairly serious departures from proportionality in different periods. But, as researchers have shown, these departures have had less to do with the limits of STV as a proportional system than the manipulation of the ruling parties. The problem was that over time Ireland's leading parties systematically reduced the number of members elected in each of the multi-member constituencies. By the 1970s a majority returned just three members, not enough to achieve proportionality. However, when members were added back to these constituencies in the 1980s Ireland's proportionality returned to within European range.²¹ On the other hand, while the number of members returned in each constituency is crucial to STV's results, it doesn't overcome some of the limits to proportionality inherent in the system, particularly as concerns the entrance of new parties. Basically, STV has a built in barrier to small parties because the multi-member constituencies cannot exceed a certain number without becoming unwieldy. With a generally accepted upper limit of ten members per constituency, STV would have a built-in threshold of ten percent. In practice STV's threshold is much higher. Typical constituencies are usually just five members and that leads to a threshold in the range of seventeen to twenty percent, much too high to address our concerns about improving party competition and making

them more responsive to those with fewer resources.

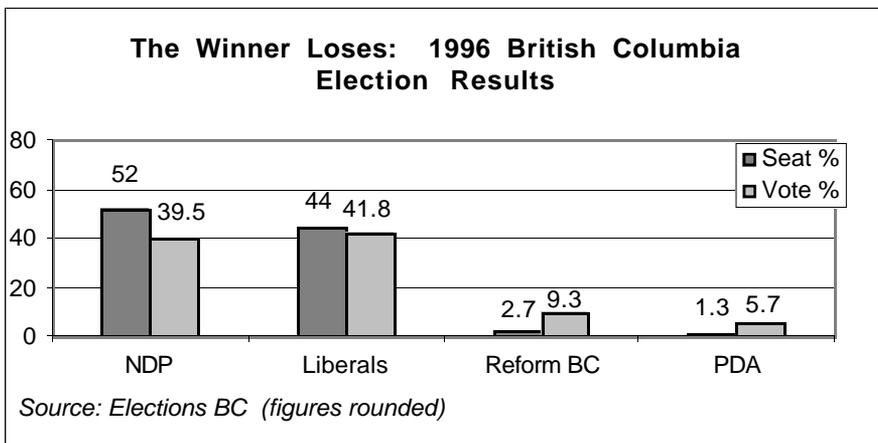
It would appear that STV can satisfy no-one – it's too democratic for the elite reformers and not democratic enough for the grassroots. But the possible gains for organizers of an STV system are great and shouldn't be dismissed lightly, especially if the problems with the system can be addressed. For our purposes, STV's greatest drawback is its built-in and fairly high threshold. But this can be easily rectified with the addition of a top-up party list for significant opinion that fails to gain representation in the multi-member constituencies. This form of 'STV+' - STV plus a compensatory party list - would make the system as open to party competition as any other form of PR. Some of course will claim that this addition will only make more cumbersome an already complex voting system. Undeniably, STV is complex, especially when it comes to counting the ballots (though electronic balloting has largely eliminated this problem). But the idea that complexity is a problem must be argued for, not merely asserted. Democratic procedures do not necessarily require simplicity but transparency in their workings. As long as the process is open and accepted as fair, the most complex forms of social decision-making will maintain legitimacy, as the clearly-flawed US presidential electoral college demonstrates. Complexity is socially accepted when it comes to rocket science and genetic research, why shouldn't it extend to our democratic process as well?

How Do Voting Systems Change?

All this discussion about replacing Canada's voting system raises an obvious question - just how would this change occur? Here many pundits see only an irresolvable conundrum: those that want a new voting system usually lack the means to get it, and those that could give it don't want any part of it. Or, put another way, those that benefit from a system are usually loathe to change it. Even parties that swear allegiance to voting reform in opposition often waffle or become 'forgetful' once in office. This is what leads political scientists to go cap in hand to politicians pleading for a crumb of proportionality. For over a quarter century now a handful of Canadian political scientists and representatives of various political elites have championed a rather mild - often not even proportional - version of MMP precisely because it is seen to be the least competitive version of PR. Their rationale is entirely prag-

matic - because governments must agree to change the voting rules, they believe any proposal must be tailored to their interests. With the promise of more balanced regional results for the major parties, better representation of women and minorities, and little chance of increased political competition, MMP is characterized as a practical reform palatable to those in power. But after decades of hobnobbing and networking, these elite reformers still have no takers for their half-measures.

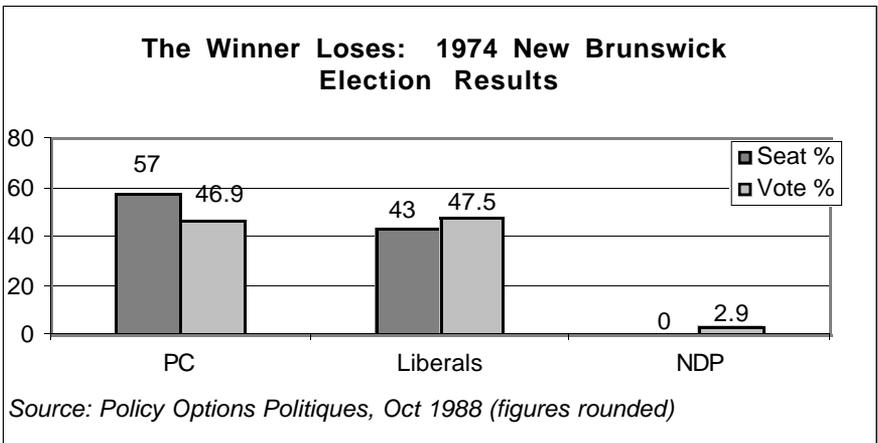
The problem with these pragmatic 'truisms' about changes to the voting system is that they are wrong in important ways. The beneficiaries of any system will gladly change it if change will give them more benefits or, conversely, not changing it will deny them benefits. Voting system changes have often been introduced by those with power who either thought they could get more power or could see their existing power slipping away. And this points to the problem with our first truism - suc-



cessful demands are seldom asked for, they are struggled over. Early voting reform emerged in the face of serious and far-reaching social demands and upheaval. If we want voting reform today we must forget the pragmatism and timidity of the professionals and talk about power - who has it, and who doesn't.

The public is ready for a debate about Canada's voting system. A recent poll found 49% of Canadians unhappy with SMP (up from 39% ten years earlier), 29% unwilling to venture an opinion either way, and just 23% satisfied with its performance.²² Today two clear strategies are emerging in Canada to secure voting system reform. On the one hand, activists are pushing the issue in political parties, attempting to gain commitments either to introduce PR once in office or hold a public referendum on the issue. Both the former Reform party - now Canadian Alliance - and the federal NDP have committed to the latter course. On the other hand, activists, political sci-

entists and interested journalists are attempting to raise the public profile of the reform with books, articles and appearances on public affairs programs. Both are laudable and necessary strategies, though historic efforts for voting system change suggest they are seldom sufficient. Unless voting reform is cast as part of a larger challenge to the current deficiencies in Canadian democracy, specifically the unbridled use of money and media to influence the results, calls for PR will likely go unanswered.



Conclusion

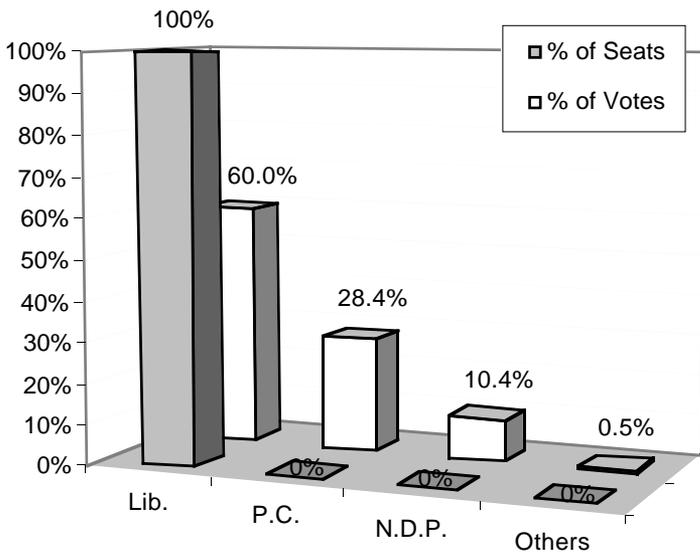
Democracies the world over are facing the rise of a media-dominated politics - with decidedly undemocratic results. The media forgo democratic deliberation in favour of sound-bites and the 'horse race' aspects of political competition, while the public interest is increasingly given shape by political advertizing and the generally business-friendly media themselves. In Canada these trends have been magnified by the constraints of the single member plurality voting system and its 'all or nothing' logic. Though Canadians clearly want choice, this combination of an expensive, increasingly narrow media politics with the 'sudden death' style competition of SMP has led all parties to adopt rather conservative election strategies - with the result that few look or sound very different. Under such conditions, voters can hardly be blamed for staying at home in disgust.

One way out of our current democratic impasse is through improved political competition. We must change the logic of our political competition from 'all or nothing' to a proportional representation of what the public wants. We need to adopt some form of PR. By doing so we'll open up more democratic space for new ideas, new representational concerns, and new parties, if that's what Canadians want. At the same time, PR will contribute to a different kind of democratic process. Election re-

sults will be more transparent and less open to 'spin' and 'horse race' coverage. Majority governments will likely result from a coalition of parties and media will have to comment on the deliberations and negotiations with more than just sound-bites. Of course money will still make itself felt in the political process but it will have to work harder and longer - PR will open more space to resist its machinations.

Voting reform is a strategy to try and reopen the political landscape to those without substantial resources. It is not a replacement for political and social organizing but a complement to it, one of many strategies adopted to give organizers, groups and individuals more leverage in the highly unequal competition that is Canadian democracy. In this sense, PR is definitely an answer to Canada's democratic deficit.

The Winner Takes It all: 1987 New Brunswick Election Results



Source: P. Fox and G. White,
Politics: Canada (1991) 340-1.

Endnotes

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- 2 Peter Mair, "The Question of Electoral Reform," *New Left Review*, 194 (July/August 1992), 85.
- 3 Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, (1954; New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1963), 205.
- 4 A number of PR critics appear in a special voting systems issue of *Policy Options* (October 1997); see particularly separate contributions by Weaver and Courtney.
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- 8 See Vernon Bogdanor (ed.), *Representatives of the People? Parliamentarians and Constituents in Western Democracies*, (Aldershot: Gower, 1985).
- 9 See R. Kenneth Carty and Munroe Eagles, "Do Local Campaigns Matter? Campaign Spending, the Local Canvas, and Party Support in Canada," *Electoral Studies*, 18 (1999), 69-87.
- 10 See contributions from Blais and Smith, and Lortie on this question in *Policy Options* (October 1997).
- 11 Jane Jenson, "Out of Proportion," *Canadian Forum*, LXXV:857 (March 1997), 27-29.
- 12 For instance, see Matthew Mendelsohn, "The Media's Persuasive Effects: The Priming of Leadership in the 1988 Canadian Elections," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, XXVII:1 (March 1994), 81-97.
- 13 Enid Lakeman, *Power to Elect*, (London: Heinemann, 1979), 59.
- 14 Arend Lijphart, "The Dutch Electoral System in Comparative Perspective," *The Netherlands Journal of Sociology*, 14 (1978), 115-33.
- 15 For a brief review of Canada's historical use of STV and the majoritarian alternative vote (AV) see Dennis Pilon, "The History of Voting System Reform in Canada," in Henry Milner (ed.),

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About the Author

Dennis Pilon is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Political Science at York University. His current research explores why voting systems change in western industrialized democracies. Over the last decade he has written and spoken extensively about proportional representation in Canada. In 1990 he presented a fifty-page paper to the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing recommending proportional voting, and in 1999 contributed an historical chapter to Henry Milner's edited volume, *Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System* (Broadview, 1999). In June 2000 he spoke at the Ontario NDP provincial convention about voting reform.

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