

Pluralism, Institutionalism and the Theories of BC Politics

The best case for connecting history to the social sciences is neither empirical nor methodological, but theoretical.

-----Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time* (2004)

Theories of B.C. politics have generally sought to explain the *distinctiveness* of this provincial polity and society. The concluding sentences of Margaret Ormsby's 1958 opus *British Columbia: A History*, captures this historical distinctiveness quite well:

“The name chosen for the Gold Colony by Queen Victoria seemed to the Duke of Newcastle in 1858 to be neither ‘very felicitous’ nor ‘very original’. But one hundred years later, ‘British Columbia’ still suggests more aptly than any other name could do, the sentiment and the outlook of the Canadian people who live in the furthest west.”¹

Ormsby's description has a post-colonial ring that is jarring to the ears of many Canadians half a century later, especially First Nations and New Canadians; nonetheless, it does seem to me to capture the essential premise of all theories of B.C. politics: that something about the imposition of a British parliamentary and legal system upon the frontier political economy and culture beyond the Rockies produced a unique compound.

— Theories of BC politics have varied somewhat in their characterization of this difference, and what it is therefore that they seek to explain. A — focus on the nature of the provincial party system—i.e. why it —was that the two minor parties federally at that time, Social Credit and the CCF/NDP, predominated provincially, and why Social Credit in particular was dominant—often necessitates a discussion of ideology, political economy or political culture, as well as consideration of styles of public policy,

¹ Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1958), p.495.

leadership and conditions of “governance” broadly defined as citizen-state relations. The early 1970s particularly produced a burst of scholarship about these questions, much of it in the pages of *BC Studies*. In a series of articles, book reviews and exchanges that produced much heat as well as light, Professors Black, Robin, Sproule-Jones, Blake, Ruff and Cairns laid out the then-current parameters of thinking about the nature and evolution of the provincial state and political behaviour in British Columbia.

Today’s readers will find these articles interesting not only as objects of historiography, but as points of reference for subsequent developments, both empirical and theoretical. Three theories in particular merit our renewed attention: Ed Black’s “politics of exploitation,” which stresses the origins of Social Credit in populist protest and a desire by various marginalized social groupings, in particular small business, for a bigger piece of the wealth generated by resource industries; Mark Sproule-Jones’ quite different formulation of elite-mass theory, which locates Social Credit electoral dominance in the state’s ability to control flows of information to the province’s hinterland; and Martin Robin’s account of the state and British Columbia’s polarized politics as the outcome of a particularly pronounced class struggle, brought about by the structures of ownership and conditions of employment in the province’s resource industries.

Each of these theories needs to be re-examined in the light of four more decades worth of evidence. How has Black’s characterization of B.C.’s political culture in terms of populist and anti-elitist sentiments stood up in the face of massive demographic, socioeconomic and technological change? To what extent do communications developments help to explain the rise and fall of Social Credit, and the changes we have

observed in the conditions of governance since? Has the rise of a tertiary sector and the service economy, coupled with immigration and globalization, muted the impact of class as a determinant of B.C. politics and public policy? And since theories of B.C. politics have been primarily concerned with explaining *distinctiveness*, (i.e. difference from other party systems and political cultures in Canada) could the continuing influence or lingering effects of structural determinants such as class, which are declining in absolute terms, nonetheless still be counted upon to explain what are still observably unique features of the B.C. political system?

In addition to the challenges posed by evidence to traditional theories, are the challenges posed by newer theories. Of these, post-materialism is a leading candidate, because its central thesis—that political values are becoming essentially less materialistic—speaks to the decline of what both the Black and Robin theories argued *historically* made B.C.’s politics unique. And its psychological premise—that increased ontological security, coupled with increased human capital and education levels, produces a more cognitively mobile citizenry and consequently a more fickle electorate—provides a ready account of the decline of government’s ability to easily control the flow of information in the way described by Sproule-Jones—and an explanation of, among other things, the rising importance of environmental and quality of life issues, as well the growing premium placed upon “communications strategy” by provincial governments.²

² Hence the same data that can be used to document the breakdown in the “one-step flow” of information described by Sproule-Jones is used by researchers in the area of value change and the reorientation of citizen-state relations, such as Mebs Kanji, to demonstrate the changing nature of human capital as part of the cognitive mobilization argument: See Mebs Kanji, “Political Discontent, Human Capital and Representative Governance,” in Nevitte, Neil, ed., *Value Change and Governance in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 71-105. (2002), esp. 82-90.

This article will explore the limitations of both economic ‘materialist’ theories and post-materialist cultural value change in explaining the growing complexity, high opacity and sporadic contingencies of processes shaping the B.C. political landscape. Building upon Alan Cairns’s early work on provincial state-building and neo-institutionalism, the paper challenges each of the four theories in question. It finds that the conjunction of growing social pluralism with the increasing density of regulations, laws, policies, networks and institutions in B.C. has changed the political “rules of the game”. But if pluralism, legalism and institutionalization have blunted the primacy of social forces and structures privileged by most of these theories, have they also erased the distinctiveness of B.C. politics? Or is that distinctiveness still there, and consistent with a more state-centred perspective? It will be suggested that British Columbia is indeed still a unique puzzle to be solved, but one which will require more nuanced attention to the historical development (e.g. timing, sequence, and inertia) of *institutions*, as well as to the intellectual development (e.g. historical, economic, sociological and discursive) of *institutionalism* in political science.

The Explanandum: A Moving Target

Much of the intellectual interest in B.C. politics has centred upon attempts to understand its “party system”— i.e. the prevalent pattern of relationships among parties, usually expressed in terms of the number of parties and their relative strength of support among the voters.³ . The three classic theories were all written and debated during either the last years of the first Social Credit Government of W.A. C. Bennett, which ruled

³ See Norman Ruff, “Birth Pangs: The Emergence of British Columbia’s Fifth Party System 1991-2000,” in Hugh G. Thorburn, *Party Politics in Canada*, Prentice-Hall, 8th Edition, 2001, pp.369-380.

British Columbia for 20 years, from 1952 to 1972, or during the first New Democratic Party (NDP) Government, led by David Barrett, which lasted from 1972 to 1975. Hence they all attempt to explain either Social Credit dominance or, more generally, the dominance of the the two minor parties nationally (Social Credit and CCF/NDP)—although Ed Black’s “politics of exploitation” does take B.C.’s *political culture* as the primary phenomenon to be explained and the nature of the party system as somewhat incidental.

The watershed election of 1991—which finally ended the long reign of the Social Credit party as B.C. dominant political party—has gradually led to a newly polarized two-party system reminiscent of that of the 1980s, except that the centre-right coalition that has governed since 2001 now does so under a Liberal banner. Is this only a nominal change, after all? Certainly, the convincing win by Gordon Campbell in his 1993 bid for the liberal leadership was done with assistance of many former Social Credit supporters; the drastic spending cuts and business-friendly policies of the Liberals’ first years in office were reminiscent of the Social Credit restraint programme of two decades earlier. The central dynamic of B.C. electoral competition has remained the same: the maintenance of an anti-NDP coalition of the centre-right. If there has been a decisive shift in the character of the dominant party, that is reflected in its geographical and socio-economic base of support and the style of political leadership that it gives rise to. The Campbell Liberals were arguably Vancouver-based party, and its core supporters were the high income earners (business and professional elites) of Greater Vancouver, who no longer have to vote for populist politicians with bases in the interior in order to

keep the NDP at bay.⁴ While this shift still carries considerable risk of a right-wing splinter party forming and gaining strength, particularly in the interior, it is probably significant that none of the main contenders to succeed Gordon Campbell as Liberal leader in 2011 mounted a challenge that was conspicuously populist, anti-Vancouver, or anti-elite.

It can be argued that this semi-normalization of the party system means that it should no longer be the sole or even primary subject of a contemporary theory of B.C. politics. The focus upon parties was an understandable pre-occupation of analysts during the Social Credit era, when there was so much that was obviously distinctive about the party system. In addition, smaller policy communities and less institutionalized networks of governance probably made political parties more important in the middle years of the twentieth century, when they functioned as the principal sources of policy and as the most important interlocutors between many interests and the state.⁵ And while the politics of resource wealth and land development still occupy centre stage, the sources of polarization today may stem less from the historic demands of labour, small business and the hinterland for a bigger share of the steadily growing prosperity than from a positional competition for legal rights to varying kinds of land use and land value under conditions of increasing relative scarcity, of both the physical and social kinds.⁶ That the Land Question is still such a question in the twenty-first century is an important aspect of the

4 “The data ...confirm the persistence of the economic and class base of party support that [Donald]Blake reported in the mid-1990s and indeed suggests that the relationship has sharpened. “ Lynda Erickson, “Electoral behaviour in British Columbia,” in Michael Howlett, Dennis Pilon and Tracy Summerville, eds., *British Columbia Politics and Government*, Emond Montgomery, 2010, p.141.

5 “[T]he formalization of lines of communication between interest groups and government has reduced the importance of political parties as the principal conduits of interest articulation, interest aggregation, and policy formulation.” Mark Crawford, “New Governance: NGO and Interest Group Activities in British Columbia,” in Howlett et al , *ibid*, p.184.

6 For a discussion of positionality, social scarcity and their relation to land, see Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth*, Harvard University Press, 1976, 1999.

continuing distinctiveness of the province's politics, and of the elevation of the provincial state itself—its rights, rules, regulations and entitlements-- into a zone of contestation. Some of these fault lines can cut across party lines, as Campbell's belated embracing of the New Relationship with First Nations and the Climate Action Plan illustrate. Other issues will no doubt serve to reinforce longstanding class and geographic differences in the electorate, along with differences in party support.

A word of skepticism is probably also warranted with respect to the apparent de-centring of the party system and party politics as a whole. While a number of trends such as declining voter turnout and growing voter volatility alongside the growing size, number and legal definition of policy networks are all clear and well-documented, their over-all import is not. As a recent survey of developments in the forestry sector admitted, "doubts about whether there is anything especially new about new environmental governance and whether it can deliver sustainability in forestry or in any other natural resource and environmental policy sector remain unresolved."⁷ Other studies point to disjunctures between ideas and interests and conflict between core policy networks and broader policy communities.⁸ It remains open for important interest groups, along with broad swathes of the electorate, to decide that 'real change' lies in the ballot box, after all.

⁷ Michael Howlett, Jeremy Rayner, and Chris Tollefson, "From Old to New Dynamics in Canadian Forest Policy: Dynamics Without Change?", in Debora Van Nijnatten and Robert Boardman, eds. *Canadian Environmental Policy and Politics* (Toronto: Oxford University Press).

⁸ See, for example, Melody Hessing, Michael Howlett, and Tracy Summerville, eds, *Canadian Natural Resource and Environmental Policy*, second edition (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005).

What has been crystal clear is the growing size, complexity, and capacity of the provincial state over the past half-century, which has consequently merited increasing analytical attention as an independent variable and not just as a dependent variable shaped by social structures and processes. The critique by Edwin Black and Alan Cairns of centralist views of Canadian federalism that neglected the importance of the provincial state⁹ was carried over into Cairns's trenchant appraisal of studies of provincial politics in 1972.¹⁰ The concept of "province-building" was in turn clearly related to the more general critique of sociological approaches articulated by Cairns in his presidential address to the Canadian Political Science Association in 1977.¹¹ "The significant question, after all, is the survival of provincial governments, not of provincial societies, and it is not self-evident that the existence and support of the latter is necessary to the functioning and aggrandisement of the former. Their sources of survival, renewal, and vitality may well lie within themselves and in their capacity to mould their environment in accordance with their own governmental purposes."¹² A crucial question for theories of B.C. politics is whether they treat that growing capacity of the state as an element of the distinctiveness they are trying to explain; or whether they treat that distinctiveness merely as "the historic residue of the cleavages of yesteryear."¹³

⁹ Edwin R. Black and Alan C. Cairns, "A Different Perspective on Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Public Administration* 9 (1966), 27-44.

¹⁰ "The contradiction between the centralist bias of most English-Canadian interpretations and the decentralist reality of contemporary Canada requires a counter literature which explains the survival of the provinces, their present importance, and the manner of their functioning. Our knowledge of these matters is a shambles of confusion and contradiction." Alan C. Cairns, "The Study of the Provinces: A Review Article," *B.C. Studies* 14 (1972), 73-82 at 75.

¹¹ Alan C. Cairns, "Governments and Societies of Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 10 (1977), 695-725.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.145.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Social Class as the Basis of B.C. Politics: Continuing but Declining Importance?

Martin Robin's thesis, that class structure and class conflict were the most important factors distinguishing B.C. politics, first appeared in a short essay on B.C. political parties in the *Queen's Quarterly* in 1966¹⁴, and was later developed in more depth in his two volume political history of British Columbia, *The Company Province*.¹⁵ He also wrote a chapter for a book which he edited on Canadian provincial politics¹⁶. Of particular interest are the sections in all three publications in which Robin develops linkages between economy (resource base and industry), social structure, and political and partisan conflict. In Robin's account, the British Columbia anomaly ("in no other province are the two federal minor parties—Social Credit and New Democratic—major parties in the legislature") "derives in part from the peculiar nature of the coast social structure," in which "extreme social cleavages, based primarily on class differences" inhibited the rise of consensus politics.¹⁷ The particular character of these cleavages—a stronger, more organized and more militant labour movement pitted against Robber Baron industrialists, and a more dispersed and variegated cadre of farmers and small businessmen both opposed to socialism and resentful of corporate and financial centres in Vancouver and in the east—was in turn rooted in an industrial economic structure very different from that of the prairies and distinguishable from the industrial manufacturing bases of Ontario and Quebec. In British Columbia, the central role of primary resource

¹⁴ "The Social Basis of Party Politics in British Columbia," *Queen's Quarterly*, 72(1966), reprinted in Hugh Thorburn (ed.), *Party Politics in Canada*, 2nd ed., (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

¹⁵ *The Rush for the Spoils: The Company Province 1871-1933* (Toronto: McLelland-Stewart, 1972); *Pillars of Profit: The Company Province 1934-72*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973).

¹⁶ "British Columbia: The Company Province," in Martin Robin (ed.), *Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of the Ten Provinces*, second edition (Scarborough, Ont: Prentice Hall, 1978).

¹⁷ "Social Basis", p.201.

extraction industries made it a corporate frontier and a company province: “the large enterprise, rather than the small family homestead, is the dominant shape of the social landscape.”¹⁸

Although Robin acknowledged that “[i]t is difficult to say which cleavage, class or regional, is more critical in determining the structure of British Columbia politics,”¹⁹ he leaves little doubt that class struggle is the more important factor in explaining the distinctiveness of that structure in comparison with other provinces and regions of Canada. Large-scale production in the timber and mining industries ensured the predominance of industrial unionism within the provincial labour movement, and attracted militant unionists and organizers to settle in B.C.:

The British Workingmen who first led the unions and worked the coal mines of Vancouver Island were not the highly skilled and exclusive artisans who dominated the trade assemblies of Ontario during the 1880s. They were men from the north of England who brought to Canada organizational skill and a marked propensity toward independent politics characteristic of the English and Scottish northern mining communities. Equally militant were the many American workers who provided the early constituency of radical unions like the Western Federation of Miners. ...The question of labor’s political action, together with a host of issues arising from working-class participation, form enduring themes of the British Columbia political culture.²⁰

Robin pointed out that in 1966 the British Columbia labour movement was the most highly organized and most strike prone in the country. 42.7 percent of the paid labour force was unionized, as opposed to less than 33 percent nationwide; between 1949 and 1959 the 10 percent of Canada’s nonagricultural workforce that inhabited British

¹⁸ *Canadian Provincial Politics*, p. 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.29-30.

Columbia was responsible for 15% of the labour stoppages.²¹ The ratio of industrial unionism to craft business unionism was the highest in the country. Other factors contributing to labour militancy were the closed nature of single-industry resource communities with small or non-existent middle classes, coupled with seasonal and cyclical unemployment and unstable markets, all serving to reinforce working class insecurity and to intensify working class consciousness.²²

The most important consequence of these characteristics for provincial politics was the involvement of organized labour in the electoral arena—initially with socialist and independent labour candidates, the Socialist Party of Canada (which in 1912 briefly formed the Official Opposition in the Legislature) and eventually the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the NDP. Robin rightly stresses the unique social basis of the CCF/NDP in British Columbia, however: whereas on the prairies farm movements had been relatively militant, class conscious and cohesive compared to labour movements, in British Columbia that situation was reversed. Moreover, the smaller size, variegated nature and comparative affluence of the agrarian sector in B.C. made it less receptive to agrarian radicalism, even during the Depression years, and more suitable as a base for Social Credit support.²³ The Social Credit Party drew its support and leadership disproportionately from “self-employed old middle classes”, both urban and rural, who could wage popular battles against socialism without being too closely identified with the Vancouver-based economic elite.²⁴

²¹ “Social Basis,” 203.

²² Robin actually could have buttressed point about the strength of class consciousness even further by documenting the flourishing of a distinctive working class *culture*—for example the folk songs, poetry, church groups and social activism that developed in the coal-mining industry on Vancouver Island in the mid-to late nineteenth century—much of it oriented toward class struggle and promoting solidarity.

²³ “Social Basis,” pp.204-205.

²⁴ Ibid. 206-211.

While B.C.'s economic structure centred on primary resource extraction, particularly timber and minerals, throughout the twentieth century, it was also altered by the rise of new industries and markets. Philip Resnick's article on "B.C. Capitalism and the Empire of the Pacific" picked up on a latent theme in the historical literature—B.C.'s economic role as the gateway to the Pacific—and correctly predicted its growing importance in the future (although in the mid-1980s he naturally placed greater emphasis upon Japanese growth and influence than on China's). A "new international division of labour" was emerging, in which trade and commerce were shifting decisively from the Atlantic Region to the Pacific region, and in which "Canada will continue to enjoy a kind of semi-peripheral status," with a continuing reliance upon resource exports.²⁵ A shift in the provincial social and economic structure accompanied Vancouver's growing status as a hub for all of Western Canada: "Vancouver, moreover, has developed an extensive tertiary sector, typical of a managerial-service centre within the international capitalist chain, rather than of a strictly industrial city."²⁶

We have witnessed the persistent importance of resource industries in the "economic base", since the "only unambiguous category of final demands is exports—and exports are dominated by the products of natural resource-based industries".²⁷ On the other hand, several economists over the years have commented upon the growth of the services sector, which accounted for 80% of the employment growth in the province between 1961 and 1991²⁸. Some analysts even went so far as to say that its dramatic expansion in the 1980s and 1990s was "clearly driving a fundamental restructuring of British

²⁵ Philip Resnick, "B.C. Capitalism and the Empire of the Pacific," *BC Studies* (Autumn 1985), 29-46.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁷ Ronald A. Shearer "The Economy," *B.C Studies*, no. 100 (Winter 1993-94), p.131.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.132.

Columbia's economy," resulting in the uncoupling of Vancouver from the resource-based hinterland. 29

Whatever the remaining importance of resource extraction for provincial growth and government revenues, however, the era of "electoral class struggle" appears to be diminishing, as today's politics revolve increasingly around the new "post-staples" service political economy. It is very significant that B.C.'s union density, once the highest of any jurisdiction in North America, has fallen to about 30%, or just over the national average.³⁰ Strike activity was no longer routinely the highest in Canada, or even in English Canada, by the mid-1980s.³¹ Large-scale expansion of the public sector in the latter half of the twentieth century meant that *by 1998 union membership in the public sector was four times greater than that of the private sector*; growth of the service economy was also spurred by increased contracting out and commercialization of domestic services.³²

The NDP has aligned itself with the new service sector workforce, which are either in the public sector or else depend heavily on government spending, labour legislation and employment standards. The Liberals have attempted to mediate "the tensions between the resource hinterland and the service-based urban economy" by promising prosperity through the protection of corporate interests and delivering privatization, deregulation

29 T.A. Hutton and H.C. Davis, *Toward a Service Sector Strategy for British Columbia: Policy Context, Objectives, Models and Programs*. Victoria: British Columbia Round Table on the Environment and the Economy, 1992; Roger Hayter and Trevor Barnes, "Innis' staple theory, exports and recession: British Columbia, 1981-86," *Economic Geography* 66: 150-73 (1990).

30 Statistics Canada. "Unionization." *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, August: 1-8. (2007).

31 Robert Allen, "Province's proposed new labor law solves a problem that doesn't exist," *The Vancouver Sun*, April 10, 1987.

32 Keith Brownsey, Michael Howlett, Joshua Newman, "From Forestry to Film: The Changing Political economy of British Columbia," in Michael Howlett, Dennis Pilon and Tracy Summerville, eds., *British Columbia Politics and Government*, Emond Montgomery, 2010, pp.23-24.

and tax restraint to middle class professionals and businesses. The Liberals were able to “disrupt the traditional class division of electoral politics in British Columbia” by increased spending on infrastructure and by pursuing a more progressive social agenda (First Nations, Climate Change , less privatization) in its second term.³³ The present governing coalition must try to prevent conservatives and interior supporters from splitting off, while at the same time be seen as sufficiently progressive to undercut the opposition; the NDP must strive to broaden its coalition so as to expand beyond its old blue collar industrial base without becoming too strongly identified with just public sector workers. While there are still strong echoes of old class and regional antagonisms, the interests in play are now too complex to be portrayed as simply emanating from the industrial base and being reflected in the politics of the superstructure.

There is an additional twist to the economics, and hence the politics, accompanying the decline of resource-led growth, which was highlighted by UBC economist Robert C. Allen in 1986. Criticizing former premier William Bennett’s premise that deteriorating terms of trade necessitated a boost in exports in order to maintain B.C. ‘s standard of living, (as well as the argument that politicians of all stripes had made that it was necessary for B.C. to boost secondary manufacturing), Allen pointed out that the average income of British Columbians had not depended on the level of provincial exports or the rate of *extensive* growth (total growth, along with a larger population) for most of the twentieth century. Instead, it depended upon *intensive* growth (i.e. growth in output per capita) which was not as dependent upon resource or manufacturing exports.³⁴

³³ Ibid., p. 26..

³⁴ Robert C. Allen: “The B.C. Economy: Past, Present, and Future,” in R.C. Allen and G. Rosenbluth, *Restraining the Economy: Social Credit Economic Policies for B.C. in the Eighties*. Vancouver: New Star Books, 1986, 9-42.

The jump from “primary” to “tertiary” (service) economy that has become manifest during the past quarter-century ought to facilitate the acceptance of Allen’s recommended goal of raising average incomes as opposed to total growth, but for one problem: the power of several organized interests (developers, landowners and those service businesses and some private sector unions who benefit disproportionately from a growing total population and economy). Allen even offered an intriguing economic explanation for “polarized politics” in B.C. : most resource rents remained uncollected by government, thereby encouraging attempts by each side (employers and unions) to use the state to boost its bargaining power so as to collect more of the economic surplus.³⁵ This observation supported the general thesis that “class counts”, but revealed the provincial state as more complicit (constitutive) in spawning and perpetuating the conflict than class-based analysis had previously allowed for.

Notwithstanding these developments, both empirical and theoretical, that limit the explanatory power of Robin’s theory today, there is another aspect that indicates and explains its continuing relevance. Robin rightly placed great stress on the comparative weakness of extant social and political structures at the time that B.C.’s industrial economy, and concomitant labour relations, took shape. British Columbia society developed as a “corporate frontier” :

Unlike all other provinces in Canada, socialism settled on the ground floor of industrial development in the coast province and socialist politicians claimed the affiliations of large blocs of unionists at the very beginning of growth of the organized labour movement. In Ontario, the only other province where the

³⁵ Ibid., 26-27. Since the goal of maximizing “average income” is more consistent with quality of life and environmental sustainability than simply maximizing total output (which is more lucrative for developers and landowners), this distinction should have continuing relevance for policy debates in the future.

NDP has a moderately strong urban and working class base, socialist organization appeared after the working class and trade unions had been disciplined electorally and ideologically by the elite dominated Liberal and Conservative parties. The socialists had to break down an established structure of political loyalties. Their task was considerably less onerous in British Columbia where a weakly developed party system, structurally generated class conflict, and a traditionally radical working class population concentrated in key industrial constituencies, combine to facilitate early radical political representation.³⁶

Contemporary historical and sociological institutionalists will recognize in Robin's vivid descriptions the importance of *institutional origins* and *conjunctures* of different social processes giving rise to unique patterns and dynamics of institutional development that proved to be self-reinforcing. In the case of British Columbia, a different sequencing of labour organization and political institutionalization than was to be found elsewhere provided more room for "ideas and interests [that were] not only learned in interaction, but sustained by it", in Alexander Wendt's words.³⁷ As with path-dependent processes more generally, political choices in B.C. became more constrained as reinforcement set in. At least partly as a result, a degree of polarized politics has endured, despite declining union density and growing social complexity.

The Politics of Exploitation

Another major interpretation of B.C. politics that surfaced in the late 1960s was that of Edwin R. Black, who proposed that British Columbia's "governmental way of life" was best characterized as "The Politics of Exploitation."³⁸ The purpose of this phrase was to direct readers' attention to 1) "[t]he great provincial preoccupation with economic

³⁶ "Social Basis," p.203.

³⁷ *Social Theory of International Relations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³⁸ Black, Edwin R. "British Columbia: The Politics of Exploitation," in R. Shearer, ed., *Exploiting Our Economic Potential: Public Policy and the British Columbia Economy*, Toronto: Holt Rhineholt Winston, 1968, 23-41. Reprinted in Hugh G. Thorburn, *Party Politics in Canada*, Prentice-Hall, 3rd Edition, 1972, pp.225-236.

development as the most important question of provincial politics;³⁹ and 2) “the peculiar context and the particular processes within and through which are made those governmental decisions affecting the utilization of natural resources.”³⁹ Like Robin, Black explains the materialism of B.C.’s political culture in terms of its character as a continuously evolving “frontier”— “with a frontier population, a frontier economy, and a frontier type of politics.”⁴⁰ But Black also stresses factors constraining government decision other than class structure, such as high rates of immigration. “Immigration has always been a big factor in British Columbia’s growth, and very rarely has has the number of native-born exceeded the number of immigrants.”⁴¹

There were several cultural consequences of an immigrant population that were found by Black to be politically significant. A population in flux inhibited the growth of incipient local custom, while the generally materialist motivations for moving to B.C. in the first place further reinforced attitudes shaped by both economic opportunity and vulnerability. Lack of traditionalism, political uncertainty and instability gave rise to weak party loyalties and a weak party system, as evidenced by the fact that B.C. did not even have a government formed along party lines until 1902. From 1902 to 1941 successive Conservative and Liberal governments had “personality leaders” who had to justify federal party connections in terms of whatever concessions could be wrung out of Ottawa—and their ability to stave off the rising threat of a CCF government. When the wartime coalition broke down and the watershed election of 1952 gave the province two new major parties, each of those parties attempted to exploit surviving non-partisan

³⁹ Ibid., 1972, p.225.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 226.

⁴¹ Ibid., 227.

feeling by emphasizing their character as a popular “movement” rather than as a party.⁴²

Social Credit, in particular, showed a remarkable ability to channel popular protest against social elites, even after many years in government. The key to making this “institutionalized protest” work was, of course, the “one-man government” style and personality of the premier, W.A.C. Bennett. A corollary of the lack of respect for established elites was a lack of respect for “their” institutions or the “niceties of their parliamentary procedures”⁴³ and an affinity for “government that gets things done.”⁴⁴ The events surrounding the 1960 and 1963 B.C. provincial elections demonstrated all of these elements of materialism, activism, personalized leadership and institutionalized protest quite well.⁴⁵ Bennett had campaigned vigorously against the CCF’s plans to nationalize the B.C. Electric Company in the fall 1960 election campaign, calling it “socialism” and bad for the investment climate in the province. But in the summer of 1961 he reversed this position and announced the expropriation of B.C. Electric in order to achieve the government’s ambitious plans for the development of the province’s hydro potential.

In the ensuing campaign, the much-heralded new Conservative leader, former World War II commander, federal cabinet minister, lawyer and Rhodes scholar E. Davie Fulton, who had been buoyed by the Conservatives’ strong second-place finish in the Columbia by-election in the summer, seized upon the nationalization issue, insisting that B.C. Hydro was legally non-existent. Meanwhile the NDP Opposition tried to portray a new and more responsible image to contrast with both the arbitrary and footloose Socreds and

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 228.

⁴⁴ “The Government That Gets Things Done” was a Social Credit campaign slogan .

⁴⁵ These events are just touched upon in Black’s article. I rely upon Walter D. Young, “British Columbia,” in *Canadian Annual Review*, 1963, and newspaper accounts as well.

its own more radical past. All Opposition leaders argued that the cheque giving B.C. Electric fair value was in any case worthless without legislative approval. Meanwhile, Highways Minister, the Rev. “Flying Phil” Gagliardi, who had been on the defensive because of allegations of kickbacks in his ministry, had to fight Fulton in their mutual home riding of Kamloops.

The Vancouver Province congratulated The Opposition leader, Mr. Bruce Strachan, for his more restrained style and “frankness, dignity and statesmanlike approach to provincial problems.” *Vancouver Sun* editor-in-chief, Bruce Hutchinson, gushed that “Mr. Fulton towered over all other party leaders.”⁴⁶ In contrast, Social Credit Ads urged British Columbian voters to “Keep B.C. Moving” and to “Elect that Government that Gets Things Done.” The result: Fulton was trounced by Gagliardi in Kamloops, and the Socreds (to the surprise of many commentators) were returned with an increased majority, raising their share of the popular vote by 2% (to 41%), and even making considerable inroads into NDP working class support in several ridings.⁴⁷

Just as the politics of B.C. Hydro’s creation exemplified activism, materialism and anti-elitism in the political culture, it also exemplified Black’s characterization of economic policy under Social Credit as “state capitalism”. Whereas socialists try to use the state to break down concentrations of private economic power in order to realize democratic values, state capitalists like W.A.C. Bennett viewed government enterprise more instrumentally as a means of stimulating economic development and private opportunity— especially for the small entrepreneurs who owned and operated their own businesses, and who represented the core of Social Credit support. Unfortunately,

⁴⁶ Vancouver Sun, editorial September 28, 1963.

⁴⁷ Young, op.cit., 141.

however, open competition in most resource sectors resulted in the growth of big integrated development companies, creating a “cruel dilemma” for the Socreds: “The Premier and his ministers are forced to create and maintain favourable conditions for larger corporate enterprise, while all the time trying to remain free of its clutches and satisfy their supporters’ demands that life be made better for the “little fellow”.⁴⁸ An improved system of rail and highway transportation (and the thousands of jobs created in their construction), the encouragement of local entrepreneurs as well as foreign investors to balance the interests of the giant corporations, the encouragement of widespread property and home ownership, and initiatives such as the creation of the Bank of British Columbia, were all indicative of the Socred approach to spreading the benefits of capitalism as widely as possible. When combined with well-placed fed-bashing and socialist fear mongering, it proved to be a potent formula.

So what has changed since the collapse of Social Credit and the pre-1991 party system? Paradoxically, the Asian immigration of recent decades may have helped to maintain traditional levels of materialism, but that materialism is no longer as directly connected with the resource wealth of the province. This, coupled with the growth of the service and knowledge economy centred in Vancouver and the retreat from the province-building strategy centred upon resource development in the hinterland, has created a new political geography.⁴⁹ Furthermore, the electorate’s penchant for activism and personality leadership has declined, or, more precisely, come into conflict with the

⁴⁸ Black, *op.cit.*, 234.

⁴⁹ Tracy Summerville, “The Political Geogrpahy of British Columbia,” in in Michael Howeltt, Dennis Pilon and Tracy Summerville, eds., *British Columbia Politics and Government*, Emond Montgomery, 2010, ch.5.

growing *institutional density* of political life.⁵⁰ Formal institutions, legally-binding rules, and public policies are more numerous and more entrenched. They are further reinforced by widespread proceduralism and rights-consciousness on the part of citizens, as well as a growing number of officially recognized groups and interests in society that are organized into institutionalized networks. Modern leaders can still successfully appeal to the materialism and populism of B.C. voters, but it is sheer folly to do so with the kind of expediency, spontaneity and disdain and disregard for rules, traditions and procedures that was common in W.A.C. Bennett's day.

Recent history has furnished two spectacular examples that illustrate this point perfectly. William Vander Zalm and Glen Clark both displayed classic political skills and dynamic personalized leadership in the great tradition of colourful B.C. premiers, but ran afoul of a less forgiving cultural and legal/institutional environment. Several books have been written about the accident-prone and scandal-ridden Vander Zalm years; it will suffice to mention four subject areas that relate both to his pre-election commitments and to the politics of exploitation: industrial relations; parliamentary government; financial management; and conflict-of-interest. Despite a pre-election commitment to create a premier's economic development council within which a more co-operative labour relations climate might develop, Vander Zalm endeavoured to introduce some amendments to the province's labour code (Bill 19) as soon as possible after the election. In what Graham Leslie, the author and former deputy minister of labour described as "the first betrayal," Bill 19 significantly eroded the bargaining power of unions, inflaming an already rocky industrial relations climate. It was produced by two private sector lawyers "with exclusively management backgrounds," and introduced in a way

⁵⁰ See Pierson, *op cit.*, 31, 34-36.

that “deliberately ignored” “even the simplest checks and balances available to the government,” such as consideration by cabinet and/or a cabinet committee.⁵¹

The true costs and benefits of the Expo lands sale and the Coquihalla Highway project became major subjects of media inquiry and opposition criticism, leading to the establishment of a commission of inquiry which found evidence of financial reporting “tainted with an atmosphere of deceit and prevarication by both politicians and public servants.”⁵² The aptly-acronymed Budget Stabilization (BS) Fund, while not illegal and arguably within the Social Credit tradition of financial accounting innovation concerning “perceptions about funding availability”, created considerable confusion and derision among MLAs, media and the general public. Last but not least, was the premier’s insistence that, once the formality of transferring ownership of Fantasy Garden’s into his wife’s name was complete, he could continue promoting “Lillian’s place” while acting as premier.⁵³ It was a dance with impropriety redolent of Gagliardi’s tenure as Minister of Highways, but after his receipt of a wad of \$100 bills in the early hours of August 4, 1990, it ultimately sealed his fate and led to his resignation.

The case of NDP premier Glen Clark’s fall from grace is perhaps an even better illustration of the point that the legal and political context has changed incontrovertibly since the postwar era. For Premier Clark ran into trouble even though, like W.A.C. Bennett, he was not out of his depth on the issues, as Vander Zalm clearly was in the 1986 forestry negotiations, the Meech Lake negotiations, the South Moresby, and the

51 Graham Leslie, *Breach of Promise: Sacred Ethics under Vander Zalm* (Madeira Park: harbour Publishing, 1991), pp. 52-54.

52 Ibid., 194-195.

53 Gary Mason and Keith Baldrey, *Fantasyland: Inside the Government of Bill Vander Zalm* (1989).

Expo lands sale, to name just a few.⁵⁴ In contrast, Clark's political judgements often displayed Bennett-like courage and acuity. When he displayed extreme action orientation—in stark contrast to Harcourt—he *did* enjoy brief spikes in popularity, as when he defused the well-laid Liberal trap of the BC Hydro scandal by promptly firing two senior Hydro executives right after assuming office. Clark also took rapid action in several social program areas, and certainly showed workers in the fishing and shipbuilding industries that he was determined to “get things done” for them as well, as when he threatened to close the Nanoose Bay torpedo-testing range, and determinedly circumvented all bureaucratic obstacles to the building of the fast ferries. “Process is for cheese” was a phrase used to announce the Clark government's new action orientation in 1996. It was also revealed to be an anachronism, both in an Auditor General's report on the Fast Ferries Project, which was found to have contravened sound principles of project management, and in a criminal court decision concerning Glen Clark's alleged breach of trust stemming from his involvement with a friend and neighbour who stood to benefit from the conferral of a gambling licence. (Although cleared of all charges, Madame Justice Elizabeth Bennett did say that Clark's actions constituted “an act of folly”.)

The “chickens coming home to roost” for these two premiers reflected the changed context of policy-making. On the one hand, the continuing salience of traditional economic and populist value preferences is borne out by the ascension of both Vander Zalm and Clark to the leadership of their respective parties, their subsequent electoral victories, and the undoubted popularity of some of their decisions. On the other hand, both leaders collided with the twin forces of (1) declining deference, rights

⁵⁴ Leslie, *op. cit.*, 323.

consciousness and increasing demands for information, consultation, and participation on the part of citizens; and (2) legal and procedural constraints on action that were more pronounced than they had been a generation earlier.

“Sponsored Conceptual Ideology”

Mark Sproule-Jones provided a third attempt to explain the long-run success of the Social Credit Party in a more satisfactory way than either the class or “anti-elitist” approaches to voting behaviour. He regressed party preferences as expressed in the 1960 *Statement of Votes* against the 1961 Census list of the population according to occupational categories, and found that there were only a relatively small number of statistically significant relationships, suggesting that Robin’s thesis about a deep class cleavage shaping the pattern of provincial voting was suspect.⁵⁵ As for the “anti-elitist” interpretation of voting behaviour—the thesis attributed to Edwin Black that Social Credit support was distinguished by its animosity toward established social elites—Sproule-Jones found that of the relevant demographic (“unorganized ranks of the lower class and lower middle class groups, and...small and medium-sized businessmen”), only small and medium-sized businessmen (or “self-employed”) showed a positive and statistically significant preference for Social Credit (although the negative repulsion of professionals was also found to be consistent with Black’s thesis).⁵⁶ This data was deemed insufficient to prove the validity of Black’s theory, since the party would have needed a more generalized appeal to win elections so consistently.

55 “[I]t was only one of the occupational categories, that of “transport and communication, craftsmen, production process and related workers” ...that distributed itself consistently for one party (the CCF) and against all others.” Mark Sproule-Jones, “Social Credit and the British Columbia electorate.” *B.C. Studies* 12: 34-35 W ’71-72; 11:37-50 F ’71, p.37 (1971).

56 *Ibid.*, p.41.

Sproule-Jones's alternative interpretation of the data was that from the mid -1950s to the early 1970s Social Credit dominance was secured as a result of two basic processes: (1) a large proportion of the electorate came to "identify" with the party at the provincial level; and (2) the party had a net partisan advantage in pulling weaker identified NDP, Liberal and Tory voters as well as independent voters to their cause at election time. The Social Credit Party consistently defined issue alternatives in ideological terms, as a battle between "free enterprise" and "socialism". This sponsored ideology was of the "conceptual" type, "in that voters were asked to evaluate all political objects in terms of this one dimensional ordering."⁵⁷ The reason for the particular effectiveness of this "sponsored conceptual ideology" in British Columbia? The very weakness of "intermediate structures of interest group influence" (with the possible exception of trade union influence on its members) meant that the usual "two-step flow of influence" from partisan appeals through the norms of the mediating groups to the electorate found in most advanced electoral democracies was largely absent. Instead, the B.C. electorate experienced a "one-step flow" of information coming from the political parties, with most of the weakly identified partisans migrating to the ruling Party, which had the loudest and clearest voice.

Although Sproule-Jones was careful to say that his was an "interpretation" and not a full-blown theoretical explanation⁵⁸, he drew sharp replies from Black and Robin, who both argued that his approach was no more supported by the data than was theirs.⁵⁹ Their complaints received considerable methodological support from Donald Blake, who

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 46.

⁵⁹ Black, "Rejoinder: No Death-bed Repentance from this Man," *B.C. Studies* 12:46-48 W '71-72; Robin, "Rejoinder: Class Still Counts", pp, 49-50.

pointed out that Sproule-Jones's regression analysis did not produce coefficients that indicated precisely what percentage of the variance in party support was produced by occupational differences; and did not compare the role of social class (Robin's key variable) or social status (that attributed to Black) in explaining partisan choice to other social characteristics such as religion, ethnic origin or rural/urban residence.⁶⁰

Nonetheless, Sproule-Jones' analysis did represent a theoretical advance, particularly from the perspective of modern institutionalism,⁶¹ because it directed our attention to the agency and structuring influence of the state as well as to that of mediating structures of interest groups and their communicative behaviours. Robin had stressed the importance of a lack of established structure of political loyalties to the grounding of working class consciousness in British Columbia; Black had adverted to the traditionless materialism of a population in constant flux. Both views were well-founded and to a degree complementary. But both (especially Robin) saw the state as influenced more than influencing.

There is a need to explain why the discursive or communicative dominance identified by Sproule-Jones was not as evident either before or after the post-war period. One specific hypothesis that springs to mind as a result of his thesis of sponsored conceptual ideology is that W.A.C. Bennett seized the potential for political domination at a time when provincial state capacity to control communications and to shape

⁶⁰ Donald Blake, "Another Look at Social Credit and the British Columbia Electorate," *B.C. Studies* 12:53-62 W '71-72, at pp.55-56.

⁶¹ See Vivien Schmidt, "Give Peace a Chance: Reconciling the Four (Not Three) New Institutionalisms," in Daniel Beland and Robert H. Cox, eds, *Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research* (2010). Schmidt argues that "discursive institutionalism" (i.e. a focus on ideas and discourse as well as an overall "constructivist" viewpoint) explains political action and institutional change, while still recognizing the importance of contexts of interest-based power, structure-based position, and culture-based framing addressed by other institutionalist theories and methods.

discourse was developing faster than either the communicative networks of civil society or the configuration of interest groups in civil society. Prior to this period, a relatively small and weakly developed system of state institutions and laws strongly reflected their socially constituted and culturally framed origins in a post-colonial frontier political economy and could not overcome local parochialisms. During the W.A.C. Bennett era, the governing party could take advantage of the new province-wide frame of reference. After the W.A.C. Bennett era, in the late twentieth century, this newfound hegemony was dissipated, even after Social Credit regained power for an extended period (1975-1991).

The reasons were at least threefold. First, the impacts of further developments in communications and transportation. Jeremy Wilson demonstrated how “the communications revolution” (especially the introduction of radio television and an improved highway system) had contributed to a decline in electoral localism between 1903 and 1975, as measured by increased swing uniformity.⁶² The spread of cable and satellite facilities throughout the interior in the 1970s and 1980s, followed by the establishment of the internet in the 1990s and 2000s, have undoubtedly accentuated this context-broadening trend, bringing global as well as provincial and national mass media into practically every home. But the sheer quantity and variety of news sources and cultural influences would have also likely undermined any “one-step flow” of information about provincial politics that could be directly controlled by the provincial government. Second, there has been an equally impressive “proliferation and institutionalization of interest groups” constituting precisely the kind of dense thicket of mediating influences that Sproule-Jones argued was conspicuously lacking in British

⁶² R. Jeremy Wilson, “The Impact of Communications Developments on British Columbia Electoral Patterns, 1903-1975,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 14:509-536 (1980).

Columbia in the early and mid-twentieth century.⁶³ Third, the relationships of state and interest group actors with each other and with individual citizens are increasingly governed by legal rules, rights, norms and procedures, which (although arguably constituting and reinforcing an ideological influence in its own right) constrain the coordinative discourse among policy actors and the communicative discourse between political actors and the public. Some of these norms have powerfully enabled hitherto marginalized groups by giving them symbolic capital (rights of recognition) that could be drawn upon in demanding political influence.

A Note on Post-Materialism

Over three decades ago, Ronald Inglehart, a Political Scientist at the University of Michigan, also associated with the University of Geneva in Switzerland, first proposed a theory of value change that predicted value priorities in advanced industrial societies would tend to shift away from “Materialist” concerns about economic and physical security, toward a greater emphasis on freedom, self-expression, and the quality of life, or “Post-Materialist” values. This was basically a theory of intergenerational value change based on two key hypotheses, as set out in Inglehart’s 1977 book *The Silent Revolution*⁶⁴: (1) a Scarcity Hypothesis, which postulates that individuals’ priorities reflect the socioeconomic environment by placing the greatest subjective value on those things that are in relatively short supply; and (2) a Socialization Hypothesis, which holds that there is a substantial time lag between socioeconomic environment and value priorities since,

⁶³ Crawford, *op. cit.*, argues that old fault lines predominated by classic industrial conflicts have been both eroded and supplemented by a wide variety of other interests, old and new, although the influence of class polarization is of course still strongly felt “within increasingly confined areas” of action.(p.185).

⁶⁴Inglehart, Ronald. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).

to a large extent, one's basic values reflect the conditions that prevailed during one's preadult years. Taken together, these two hypotheses generate a clear set of predictions concerning value change: conditions of prosperity lead to a fundamental, but very gradual shift in which needs for belonging, esteem, intellectual and aesthetic satisfaction, and a cleaner environment become more prominent, as a younger generation replaces an older one.

Thus Inglehart in the *Silent Revolution* found that an emerging emphasis on quality of life issues was being superimposed on the older, class-based cleavages of industrial society.⁶⁵ His later books *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*⁶⁶ and *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*⁶⁷ not only use the cumulative results of the massive World Values Survey to empirically confirm these theoretical expectations, but also situate this value shift in a much broader historical process of postmodernization: hence the core societal project of traditional societies is survival; in modern societies maximized economic growth; and in postmodern societies maximized subjective well-being. At the individual level, individual achievement defined in material terms is the primary value in modern societies, only to be supplanted by postmaterialist and postmodern values of well-being. Furthermore, a growing emphasis on individual freedom leads to not only a rejection of traditional authority that is characteristic of processes of modernisation, but an erosion of the

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 179-261.

⁶⁶Inglehart, Ronald. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁶⁷Inglehart, Ronald. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997)

rational-legal institutional authority that is often seen as the hallmark of political modernization. At all of these levels, the root cause of the Postmodern value shift has been the gradual withering away of values systems that emerged under conditions of scarcity, and the spread of security values among a growing segment of the population.⁶⁸

However, the question of post-materialism and inter-generational value shift, and how it cuts across both class-based and populist analyses, did not begin to be seriously considered in the B.C. context until the 1990s, no doubt in response to the volume of theoretical and comparative post-materialist literature, but also because of the transformation of the B.C. party system in the 1991 provincial election, which was associated with the assumption by a large number of baby-boomers of positions of leadership. Indeed, one could have given a fairly compelling account in the early 1990s of how the new party system and policy agenda was a straightforward manifestation of intergenerational value change as predicted by Inglehart and Nevitte. A look at the Parliamentary Guide for the years 1990 through 1993 shows clearly how in the Vander Zalm and Johnston government the majority of cabinet including the premier were born before 1940, while in the Harcourt cabinet the majority, including the premier, were born after 1940. It is easy to attribute large parts of the Harcourt government's agenda to the postmaterialist attitudes of the baby-boom generation: the importance of women's issues; and the importance of the environment reflected in the creation of new parks, cancellation of Kemano II and a new forest practices code; recognition of cognitive mobilization of an educated citizenry's new demands for participation and involvement was reflected in the significant new mechanisms for consultation represented by the CORE process, land use

⁶⁸Ibid., 78.

plans, the Economic Summits, the Treaty process, Freedom of Information legislation, and so on. While these value preferences had gradually increased in salience under the Socreds, in keeping with the gradualness of change implied by the Socialization Hypothesis, the sudden appearance of a new-look party system in 1991 largely dominated by the postwar cohort pushed them, quite predictably, to the top of the policy agenda.

Nevertheless, postmaterialism has proven to be but one current in public opinion, albeit a significant one. Donald Blake in 1995 used survey data on three dimensions—populism, neoconservatism and postmaterialism—and concluded that populism and the clash between left-wing and right-wing political philosophies still structure the political orientations of the electorate. He observed that although the importance of postmaterialism and “New Politics” were increasing, that trend may have been blunted by the greater priority accorded to traditional materialist values such as law and order and economic security by the province’s Asian ethnic minority, especially given the large component of immigrants from newly-industrialized countries in that group.

. More recent studies generally confirm the conclusion that New Politics has not been structuring either the party system or the policy agenda in a dominant or determinative fashion. Erickson suggests that the Liberals may have made some inroads among postmaterialist voters due to Campbell’s climate change initiatives, while the NDP (as the opposition party) has made gains among those with populist sentiments.⁶⁹ The traditional antinomy between labour and capital has been supplemented by conflicts between economic and environmental interests that are more pronounced on the south coast of British Columbia than perhaps anywhere else in Canada; but postmaterialist politics are only one aspect of the province’s political distinctiveness.

⁶⁹ See Lynda Erickson, “Electoral Behaviour in British Columbia,” *op. cit.* (2010), pp.144-149.

Equally important, from an institutionalist perspective and from the perspective of Cairns's Citizens' Constitution theory particularly, is that proceduralism, legalism and rights norms deserve a separate analytical emphasis, and should probably not be seen as mere outgrowths of economic prosperity or physical security.⁷⁰ The willingness of insecure or marginalized groups to support political and institutional change has been an important motif in B.C.'s political history, but the the veritable explosion in the number and variety of demands for recognition during the past three decades has undoubtedly been fuelled in part by the symbolic resources that the Charter of Rights has afforded to individual citizens and minority groups seeking to make claims. The failure to understand a citizenry who are suddenly much more likely to demand a voice in, and assert their rights against, institutional authorities, has caused several Canadian politicians to be caught off guard, and may have caused a couple of ill-starred B.C. premiers to underestimate the hazards of populist politicking in the late twentieth century.

Conclusions

The depleting explanatory legacies of the classic theories reveal some crucial common threads and important clues for understanding the modern trajectory of B.C.'s institutional development. One is the reliance that the class-based, 'exploitation' and 'sponsored conceptual ideology' theories all placed on the comparative *simplicity* of social structures and patterns of interest group activity, particularly at crucial formative periods in the province's history. A later period of colonial settlement than eastern

⁷⁰ See Alan C. Cairns, "Constitutional Minoritarianism in Canada," in Cairns, *Reconfigurations: Canadian Citizenship and Constitutional Change*, Douglas E. Williams, ed. (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1995); Ian Brodie and Neil Nevitte, "Evaluating the Citizens' Constitution Theory," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 26, no.2 (1993) 239; Cairns, "A Defence of the Citizens' Constitution Theory: A Response to Ian Brodie and Neil Nevitte," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 26, no.2 (1993) 266.

Canada and a constant stream of newcomers, combined with a very different political economy from that of the prairies, provided room for heightened agency on the parts of business corporations, organized labour and/or the state to shape and at times dominate the province's political discourse. In the late twentieth century, growing social pluralism and complexity—as evidenced by the kind and number of interest groups and organizations, the development of the service economy, changing ethnic composition of the population, the linkage by improved communications and transportation to the outside world, and the addition of a new postmaterialist dimension to public opinion—has partially eroded and greatly altered all of the major theorized conditions of B.C.'s distinctive political culture and party system. Yet problems remain: why does the tilted pendulum (left-right polarization with right-wing predominance) still persist? Is that persistence merely inertial and destined to fade?

Some possible answers lie in the importance of temporal ordering (timing and sequence) of historical events and processes. Although Robin stressed how a conjunction of factors had facilitated the creation of radical political organization, and Black also discussed how the late development of the party system and the shallow roots of local tradition made for activist, populist and materialist politics, the twin processes of pluralism and increased institutionalization are diminishing the importance of these factors over time. Nevertheless, the 'lateness' of the Treaty Process ----the formal negotiation of most B.C. First Nations' terms of integration with the Canadian state coming only *after* modernization, urbanization, the institution of constitutional rights and the development of resource economies on the land base—is an example of a sequencing of events that is unique in Canada and is of *growing* significance. A new wave of

immigrant population with a highly materialist orientation represents a great continuity with B.C.'s past, but the independence of that phenomenon from (still important) resource exploitation, and its coincidence with strong post-materialist and rights orientations in the political culture, represents a new conjuncture with uncertain and possibly polarizing implications. B.C. is not necessarily losing its capacity for political novelty or excitement.