The NDP: Manitoba's Natural Governing Party?

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This paper peers at the Manitoba New Democratic Party through the prisms of leadership, performance, ideology, and policy. It traces the party's development, membership, and changing bases of support. It probes the interplay of leader, party, and society, of biography and history. To understand the party, its ideas and leaders, requires an appreciation of Manitoba's ever-evolving political sociology.

The provincial NDP's meteoric rise to power came exactly 50 years to the day after the Winnipeg General Strike ended. The party's 1969 victory was remarkable because the NDP and its predecessor parties – the Independent Labor Party (1920-1936) and then the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) – had never been more than third parties in the legislature. Within a few short years of the NDP's creation, however, the party catapulted into government and moved from the periphery to the centre of provincial power and from the margins into the mainstream of provincial society. The party has held office in every decade since its initial election, in 26 of the last 40 years, winning seven of 11 elections. This raises the question: Has the NDP become Manitoba's natural governing party?

What accounts for the party's success? Consciously constructed as a mass party, it is principle, philosophy, and the membership that ostensibly drive the NDP rather than opportunism, expedience, and leaders. A major element in the NDP's successes and setbacks, however, has been its leaders' personal qualities. It has benefitted too from the shortcomings of the other parties. Social and institutional forces have also shaped the party's fortunes. Ethnic integration, intermarriage, assimilation, urbanization, and modernization transformed the provincial political culture during the twentieth century in directions favouring the NDP. Institutionally, the party profited from periodic changes to the electoral map, the polarizing effects of a first-past-the-post electoral system, and public expectations of government in a "have-not" province.

Flagging CCF federal electoral fortunes – evident in 1958 with the CCF shut out in Manitoba for the first time – propelled the NDP's creation in 1961. Like the CCF, the federal NDP is a federation of provincial parties so it was critical to the new party's architects that the provincial CCFs dissolve and reconstitute themselves as provincial NDPs. In light of the Manitoba NDP's subsequent success, it is ironic that more

opposition to the NDP project arose in Manitoba CCF circles than in any other province (Wiseman, 1985: Chap. 5).

Notwithstanding the effort to launch a "new party" (Knowles, 1961), the NDP's first federal convention evidenced partisan continuity and little "newness": no more than five of the Manitoba delegates would have been ineligible to attend had it been another CCF convention (Wiseman, 1985: 102). What was seemingly new about the NDP was that it represented a formal political alliance of the CCF and the Canadian Labour Congress and its provincial affiliates, in this case, the Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL). However, most of Manitoba's union delegates at both founding federal and provincial NDP conventions had been CCF members and regular attendees at CCF conventions. Moreover, the CCF had provided for affiliated unions as well. Yet another sign of continuity was leadership: Russ Paulley, a member of the ILP's youth wing (Paulley, 1972) and the last Manitoba CCF leader, became the NDP's first leader.

Despite the social democratic party's makeover, the fledgling provincial NDP's 1962 electoral debut was unimpressive; floundering, it garnered fewer seats and votes than the CCF had won in the 1958 and 1959 elections. By the 1960s, social democrats were struggling to differentiate themselves from the welfare liberals in the federal Liberal party of Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau and from provincial "red tory" Conservatives such as Duff Roblin and George Johnson. In 1959, a prominent CCFer summed up the dilemma, which soon also confronted the federal NDP in Ottawa:

> Look at our position. The Roblin [federally, read: Pearson] government is putting in effect good legislation. The people want it: they need it, and they should have it. Are we going to defeat them and face the charge that we obstructed the very things we have been calling for over the years?
> The only thing we can say is that they are not doing enough…On the other hand, we're supposed to be socialists. We believe in an entirely different system. We're supposed to want to change the whole order of things, not just vote for this improvement here and that one there. (Wiseman, 1985: 72).

What changed in Manitoba in the late 1960s was a dramatic lurch to the right by the NDP's opponents. The Liberals' choice of a new leader, Bobby Bend – a former cabinet minister during the less than progressive Liberal-Progressive dynasty – proved a boon to the NDP. Combined with the Conservatives' rightward shift after Roblin's departure in 1968 under Walter Weir, the ideological stage was set for an NDP upsurge.

In confirmation of partisan repositioning, the consensus in a survey of Liberals who deserted their party in 1969 was that the NDP "was doing what the Liberals ought to be doing." (Wells, 1969: 42). The party also benefitted from a new regime for redistributing seats. It replaced a system based on the legal requirement that the votes of four rural voters equal the weight of seven urban ones, and edged closer to the principle of equality, boosting the urban-anchored NDP. Media, too, were helpful: they generated an unprecedented level of public awareness of the party by televising for the first time its leadership convention, held in the midst of the election campaign. Even the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the NDP's nemesis, weighed in by endorsing Ed Schreyer for party leader (Green, 2003: 68). The upshot was that the NDP displaced the Liberals as a major party. In moving toward the centre of the ideological spectrum under Schreyer, the NDP appeared to growing numbers of Manitobans as having entered the political mainstream. The NDP's ascent realigned and polarized the party system. The NDP and the Conservatives, secondary forces between the First World War and the Cold War, now became its major protagonists. The Liberals now suffered the NDP's earlier handicap as a third party in a single member plurality electoral system: the perception by many that a vote for them was "wasted".

The NDP's socio-geographic bases of support expanded dramatically. Essentially a party of native-born Manitobans, the NDP looked quite different than the ILP-CCF – a party led and supported by British-born immigrants concentrated in centre and north Winnipeg (Wiseman and Taylor, 1982). Under Schreyer, the NDP became more representative of the province's people and places. Contrast, for example, Winnipeg's phalanx of 20 ILP-CCF aldermen elected between 1920 and 1945 – the overwhelming majority of whom were British-born with nary a Winnipeg native or anyone of Ukrainian, Polish, or German descent (Rae, 1976: 234-5) – with NDP cabinets of later decades. In 1969, for the first time in provincial history, Anglo-Saxons became a minority in the cabinet. By the time Schreyer's government left office, the cabinet – which contained unprecedented numbers of Unitarians, Catholics, and Jews – had six Ukrainians, two Franco-Manitobans, a Métis, a Dutchman, and a German alongside six Anglo-Saxons.

Premiers

As a mass party, the NDP tenders its platforms as the democratic expression of its members' preferences as determined at annual conventions. Party leaders are, in principle, merely the party's spokespersons. In contrast, the Conservatives and Liberals, as cadre parties (Duverger, 1963: 63-71), revolve around their leaders and their coteries. Their partisans look to them as shepherds and potential scapegoats. In practice, the NDP marketed Schreyer and Gary Doer's qualities as major assets and favourably contrasted them with their opponents. An example is the NDP's 1977 campaign slogan, "Leadership you can Trust." The party has had only three leaders since 1969 and each has served as premier. Durability of NDP leadership contrasts with the relative instability of Liberal and Conservative leadership. The Liberals contested the six elections between 1966 and 1986 under six different leaders. The Conservatives have had eight leaders including an interim leader, since the mid-1960s. The NDP premiers, however, have reflected different currents in party thinking and their philosophical orientations and legacies have been distinctive. Each has also had a different relationship to the party.

Schreyer came closest to inspiring a personality cult. He appeared charismatic in comparison with Weir and Bend in 1969. Elected in the first election in which he was eligible to vote as Beausejour's 22-year-old CCF MLA, he had a "rural touch", a quality that escaped previous CCF-NDP leaders (Eliason, 1972). He proved to be the legislature's most independent MLA, often voting against his party. Evoking glee and awe in party circles, Schreyer appeared invincible at the polls despite his quiet, shy, introverted, and dull speaking style. Elected as an MP in 1965, his philosophy was a blend of American New Deal liberalism and Scandinavian style social democracy. He disavowed Marx but embraced Methodism's social ethic of a fairer distribution of wealth in the cause of man's spiritual betterment (Schreyer, 1972; Beaulieu, 1977: 187-211). He also wanted a more "pragmatic party" with "more centrists." He was the sole respondent in a 1966 survey of 70 journalists, intellectuals, and politicians who viewed the prospect of a federal Liberal-NDP merger with equanimity (Horowitz, 1966a: 23). He considered, but declined, overtures from Trudeau's Liberals to join them in 1968 although, unlike the federal NDP, he later endorsed Trudeau's invocation of the War Measures Act and wage-and-price controls.

A large part of Schreyer's appeal was his ability to combine a circumspect, cautious, and rural with a reformist, progressive, urban image. He held three university degrees, taught political science, and was the son-in-law of CCF MP Jake Schulz, the Romanian-born founder of the Manitoba Farmers Union, a leftist organization that arose to compete with the Manitoba Federation of Agriculture, dominated by Anglo-Saxons of Ontarian origin "who were almost Liberal to the core." (Tufford, 1972). A German Catholic who could communicate in four languages, Schreyer broke the Anglo-Saxon Protestant mould of provincial leadership at a time when Manitoba's ethnic minorities were ascending the socio-economic ladder. He was the only party figure who was capable of mustering the support the NDP captured in 1969 because, as David Orlikow put it, he was a "leader who personifies in himself, sort of, Manitoba." (1972). "Schreyer," wrote James McAllister, "was the perfect candidate for the moment," and he won over former Liberals, Conservatives, and even Social Crediters (1984: 14).

In power for 100 months, Schreyer exhibited shrewd political instincts in masterfully managing his caucus, his party, and public opinion. He nimbly converted a shaky minority government into a majority by wooing a Liberal MLA and scoring two by-election victories. The party "delivered itself into the hands of one man" according to an observer at its 1972 convention (Peterson, 1974: 185). A 1973 survey showed Conservative and Liberal supporters preferred Schreyer as premier, their most common criticism of him being that he was "in the wrong party" (Wilson, 1975: 32, and Surich, 1975: 10-11). In 1974, *Time* magazine designated him as one of the "150 Faces for the Future" (1974: 38) and, in 1977, "(t)here were times on the campaign trail", reported a journalist, "when the premier was greeted almost as a figure of royalty" (Billinkoff, 1977: 31). Two years later, at Trudeau's invitation, he became Governor-General. Schreyer's return to politics in the 2006 federal election revealed, again, societal and generational change since his political heyday; for now he appeared as a faint echo of the past to a younger electorate and lost.

Howard Pawley, like Schreyer, had been an active CCFer and also attended United College, the womb of Canada's social gospel tradition. The son of a CCF candidate, he married a Schreyer: Ed's cousin. Unlike Schreyer, however, Pawley ran and lost in five elections before 1969. While Schreyer accepted the 1956 reformulation

of social democratic thinking known as the Winnipeg Declaration (Whitehorn, 1992: 45-50), Pawley opposed it. He also led strenuous resistance to the CCF's dissolution and the New Party movement. His concerns were that union influence in the NDP would be excessive and would dilute the CCF's socialism. "I didn't think it would work. Philosophically, I thought it was wrong." (Pawley, 1972). No one would have thought in 1969 that the lackluster Pawley – sworn in as the last and most junior cabinet minister – would become Schreyer's successor a decade later. From his position in Schreyer's government, however, Pawley successfully piloted the NDP's most celebrated and bitterly contested bill, the creation of public automobile insurance (Autopac). It led to thousands of insurance agents and their sympathizers marching on the legislature, many waving signs reading "Pawley's Folly" and packing the legislative gallery for weeks. Autopac proved successful and immensely popular, boosting Pawley's stature.

Upon Schreyer's departure, Pawley won the caucus leadership by a narrow plurality (10 to 8), and a convention subsequently confirmed him as party leader, defeating two opponents. While Schreyer's coattails brought the NDP to power, the NDP's coattails elevated Pawley to the premiership. Unlike Schreyer, Pawley consistently trailed his party in the polls. He mismanaged and squandered a majority government and was defeated in a confidence vote on a budgetary matter in 1988 after two MLAs deserted him. One MLA left the caucus after Pawley ignored his dreams of a cabinet post; the other felt shabbily treated after a senior Pawley aide challenged his re-nomination and he was demoted him from the speakership of the legislature. The upshot was the only instance in Canadian history of a majority government defeated by a vote of one of its own members.

Honest, decent, kind, compassionate, unassuming, and quiet-spoken, Pawley was also uninspiring. "Consensual to the point of immobility and tolerant to the point of feebleness," weighed up a journalist with NDP sympathies. "He is no platform showman. His awkward syntax, frequent malapropisms and mixed metaphors left his audience bemused if not bewildered." (Russell, 1988: 7). Where Schreyer exhibited a particular interest in energy policy, Pawley demonstrated a bureaucratic interest in the administration of crown corporations (Pawley, 1996: 301-20).

There is an ironic symmetry in the political paths of Manitoba's first and current social democratic leaders, John Queen and Gary Doer. Incarcerated for his role in the General Strike, ILP leader Queen was elected to the legislature from his jail cell. Doer served as a corrections officer. A university drop-out, he became the youngest-ever head of the province's largest union – the Manitoba Government Employees' Association – at the age of 31 and, in that capacity, he criticized Schreyer's government but co-operated with it too. Courted unsuccessfully by the Conservatives, he entered Pawley's cabinet immediately after his election as an NDP MLA in 1986. Doer's public sector union background, in contrast to Queen's association with private sector industrial unions and Schreyer's membership in the Farmers Union, mirrored something of Manitoba's economic transformation. Government constituted a larger share of the economy. As premier, Doer terminated the institutionalized funding links between organized labour and the NDP. The son of a German father and Welsh mother, he embodied the growth in the twentieth century of the number of ethnically intermarried Manitobans. Unlike Schreyer and Pawley who came to the NDP via the CCF, Doer joined the party during Schreyer's first term and then resigned from it in 1975 to preserve, he said, his union's official neutrality.

Affable, bright, quick on his feet and articulate, Doer had acquired a reputation as an astute mediator and consummate negotiator. Despite his managerial and organizational skills, however, he could not escape the burden of the NDP's unpopularity in 1988 after it raised Autopac premiums. The paradox was that the public had rewarded the party with re-election in 1973 for its Autopac initiative. In dramatically lowering premiums for most motorists, Autopac easily withstood Conservative fear mongering; their deputy leader had likened its coming to the sound of jackboots approaching. In 1988, however, the Conservatives shrewdly championed Autopac's low premiums and trounced the NDP, punished for raising them. "There was a sense that the public had been betrayed by the party. We all knew," reflected Doer, "that we would be lucky to become the official opposition." (Doer, 1988). An internal party poll had its voter support as low as six per cent (Cleroux, 1988: A8).

In 1969, the NDP had swept to power 18 days after changing leaders; in 1988, the party suffered a resounding defeat 27 days after changing leaders. Pawley resigned as

party leader after losing the legislature's confidence but Doer, after winning the party's leadership in the midst of the resulting election campaign, astutely chose not to be sworn in as premier. Doer, therefore, did not appear opportunistic by grasping the premier's job without first gaining a mandate from the electorate. It meant that for the only time in Canadian history, a premier, Pawley, was not a party leader. The Liberal resurgence in 1988 occasioned by their leader Sharon Carstairs' popular assault on the Meech Lake Accord that Pawley's government had signed onto – an Accord unpopular with many in the party including ministers (Evans, 2008; Friesen, 1988: 53-57) – relegated the NDP to its older role as a third party. Schreyer, along with many others, believed that the election spelled the end of the NDP as one of the two major parties (Adams, 2008: 4).

In the 1990 election, however, Doer's feisty performance in a televised leaders' debate, his talk of a "People's Agenda", Carstairs' capitulation on Meech Lake, and the momentum generated by the Ontario NDP's election a week earlier, helped the NDP overtake the Liberals and Doer become the leader of the opposition. Premier since 1999, he repeatedly insists, unlike Schreyer and Pawley, that he is "non-ideological." *Maclean's* described his "knack for negotiating a middle way between the province's entrenched business and labour interests," and anointed him "Canada's most successful politician." (Bergman, 2002: 36). Annual polls between 2003 and 2006, affirmed that estimation (Samyn, 2003: A1; Samyn, 2004: A1; Samyn, 2005: A1; Samyn, 2006: A3).

Party and Performance

The NDP's initial electoral success proved transformative and magnetic. In 1962, the party had been dormant in about half of the 57 constituencies; a decade later it was a relatively booming operation with organized party structures in every constituency. In 1964, it was so feeble that it dispensed with its annual convention; in 1976, its annual convention boasted more delegates, 721, than there had been CCF members two decades earlier (Wiseman, 1985: 131). In the aftermath of its impressive 2007 reelection, the party mustered 585 convention delegates, double the number at the convention preceding its 1999 victory (*Today's NDP*, 2008a; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 2003: A3). This demonstrated that party strength, as measured by membership or convention size, are not necessarily related to success at the polls. Party and campaign finance are also weak

indicators of electoral success. After winning the 1969 election with its central campaign spending a modest $45,000, the NDP's annual budget by 1976 grew to over $400,000 with a dozen full-time staff including six organizers (Magnus Eliason Papers, 1970; NDP Papers, 1969; *Manitoba New Democrat*, 1976). Such relative wealth and resources did little for the party in the following year's election loss. "With 10,000 members," the party secretary noted, "we can raise more money than we did with 17,000." (NDP Papers, 1974).

More pivotal to the party's fortunes than either membership or finances have been party leadership, strategic voting, and the ideological repositioning and faux pas of the NDP's competitors. A vote-splitting scandal that broke in 1998, for example, revealed that the Conservatives had recruited and funded some aboriginals as bogus Independent candidates with the intention of splintering the NDP vote among aboriginals. The scandal implicated the Conservative premier's principal secretary, the Secretary of the Treasury Board, and "others who stood at the height of the Manitoba establishment" (Smith, 2003: 10). The revelations helped set the stage for the NDP's 1999 victory.

The print media, especially the *Winnipeg Free Press*, have historically been unsympathetic to the CCF-NDP, but the growth of television after the NDP's launch meant less editorializing and more neutral and wider reportage on the party. Viewers could see and hear the party's leaders, not merely read of them when the print media deemed fit to cover them. The party also honed its ability to harness modern political communications techniques by massaging its messages so as to deflect media attacks. It adopted marketing methods and strategies common in the private sector and relied less on the educational meetings, debates, door-to-door canvassing, and the grass-roots organizing of its ILP-CCF forerunners.

The Manitoba CCF-NDP has not been as vibrant a mass party as its sister Saskatchewan party (Carty and Stewart, 1996: 69) nor have its members been as militant as their British Columbia counterparts (Young, 1971). The party's constitution provides for an annual vote on the leadership, but party conventions – particularly when the party is in power – have mainly served as forums for the leadership rather than the membership. McAllister described the party's structures as "democratic showpieces for the electorate and as mechanisms for control and communication by the leadership."

(1984: 130). Schreyer was sufficiently popular that his threatened resignation as leader convinced a largely reluctant convention, caucus, and cabinet to permit a free vote in the legislature on the issue of state aid to private and parochial schools, something the party had always rejected. He also won the membership's backing in convention to endorse the federal Liberals' wage-and-price controls policy of 1976, something fiercely attacked by the federal and other provincial NDPs.

One indicator of the party's distance from its ILP-CCF legacy was its faded Protestant social gospel tradition. That tradition – exemplified by J. S. Woodsworth's People's Church, William Ivens' Labour Church, and clergymen such as Stanley Knowles and CCF leader Lloyd Stinson – was not wholly expunged however. Transcona MP and United Church minister Bill Blaikie, the federal NDP's longest-serving MP and runner-up for its leadership reflected it, for example. Nevertheless, the social gospel was overtaken by societal secularization. Prodded by the ILP-CCF-NDP, provincial governments eclipsed churches' charitable roles across Canada. The party also has been in the political forefront on abortion rights, a position at odds with many religionists including a cabinet minister, Joe Borowski, who left the NDP over the issue.

In another break with the past, the party severed its financial links to organized labour in 2000, a development greeted ambivalently by union leaders. This did not, however, weaken the affinity between them and the NDP, which launched initiatives in areas such as workplace safety and minimum wages and introduced a state-funded regime of election and party finance that the union movement supported (Manitoba Federation of Labour, 2008). NDP labour laws contributed to union ranks declining proportionately less in Manitoba and Saskatchewan between 1981 and 2004 than in any other province (Statistics Canada, 2005a). It occurred in the context of a radically transformed, if shrunken, labour movement. Craft unions (such as Knowles' printers) which had backed the ILP, and industrial unions (such as Paulley's railroaders), who were partial to the CCF, gave way in size to public sector unions such as Doer's. Five of those unions, largely composed of government employees, nurses, and teachers, accounted for over 90,000 of the province's 167,000 unionists in 2007. They look more favourably upon the NDP than the other parties because it has the most positive disposition to expanding

government services. Conservative criticism of NDP labour laws (Rabson, 2006b: A3) also contributes to keeping the unions in the NDP camp.

By the 1980s, the party's base and mobilization efforts had expanded beyond its traditional urban and union support. For example, the party both pursued and was pursued by the women's movement. In the 1960s and well into the 1970s, women filled auxiliary roles in the party as they had in the CCF, serving tea and crumpets and holding fund-raising bazaars. Evidence of their subsidiary status was on display at the 1969 convention: an MLA organized a bevy of young women, outfitted them in miniskirts and red-and-white sashes, and labelled them the "Schreyer Dolls." (Doern, 1981: 44). The image and role of women in both party and society soon changed dramatically, however. Myrna Phillips described how "The women's movement in the party congealed at the1973 convention and mobilized after that…. We realized that just having an NDP government with NDP guys was not enough. We began to learn the process and get into the hierarchy of the party." (Brock, 1997: 186). In 1977, Muriel Smith became the party's first female president and, two years later, she was runner-up in the leadership convention that selected Pawley. By the 1980s, the party's constitution provided for gender equality on its executive committee. Another turning point came in 1981 with the unprecedented election of seven female MLAs, five of whom were NDPers. Three of them appeared in the cabinet, including the deputy premier. Sidney Green, a party president who contested the leadership twice in the 1960s and served as a senior cabinet minister, attributed his marginalization in and departure from the party to the influence of its militant feminists and union leaders (Green, 2003: 159, 167).

Strategic voting now aids the provincial NDP and hurts its federal counterpart just as it now weakens the provincial Liberals and assists their federal cousins. Since its debut, the CCF-NDP has only bested the Liberals in Manitoba in three of 22 federal elections, those between 1979 and 1984. In contrast, the provincial NDP has outpolled the provincial Liberals in 10 of the 11 contests since 1969, something the CCF had only managed to do once, in 1945, at the apex of its support. In retrospect, the 1990 election proved critical because in winning more seats and votes than the Liberals, the NDP regained its status as one of the two largest parties. This made it the logical alternative for those who wanted to defeat the Conservatives.

The 1999 election demonstrated the crossover between federal Liberal voters and provincial NDP supporters as the NDP pushed the Conservatives out of many of their traditional south Winnipeg redoubts, a pattern that has held ever since. The NDP to date has also escaped victimization by the Green Party, which only captured one percent of the vote in the 2003 and 2007 elections. In contrast, the Greens snared substantial support in recent provincial elections in British Columbia (12 percent in 2001, 9 percent in 2005) and Ontario (8 percent in 2007) at some expense to the NDP.

The change in party finance law, eliminating corporate as well as union contributions and capping individual ones, most adversely affected the Conservatives. They lost more than two thirds of their annual revenues between 2000 and 2001 (Rabson, 2006a: A5). Benefitting the NDP, as the largest party, is the scheme for public funding of the parties on a per-vote basis. Such a regime is consistent with the NDP's statist orientation and contributes to consolidating its status as a major party at the expense of the smaller parties, the Liberals and Greens.

Surveys conducted during the 1999 and 2007 elections revealed the party's stable and shifting social bases of support. Women, the poor, the middle aged (35-59 years), and urbanites, gravitated disproportionately to the NDP in 1999 (Adams, 2008: 8). Women, who historically and cross-nationally have disproportionately preferred conservative parties to socialist ones (Lipset, 1981: 231), are now more likely than men to support the NDP. They have greater sympathy than men do for the ensconced welfare state. Political socialization has also contributed to party fortunes; the more experience people have of NDP government, the more willing they have become, it appears, to support it. In 1999, those over 55 years old preferred the Conservatives to the NDP by the gaping margin of 57 percent to 32 percent. By 2007, however, this age cohort disproportionately preferred the NDP (Probe Research, 2007: 4, 8). On the other hand, the life-long process of socialization also represents a looming threat to the NDP: they trailed the Conservatives in 2007 among young voters, those under 35, after having had a substantial advantage among that group in 1999.

Perhaps the most illuminating and counter-intuitive feature of the NDP's changing base of support is the weakening allegiance of those with lower incomes. Conversely, the party has newfound strength among the relatively well-to-do. Between

1999 and 2007, an 18 percent NDP advantage over the Conservatives among low-income earners shrank to 8 percent (Probe Research, 2007: 8). This occurred despite the NDP's identification with the less privileged and its characterization of the Conservatives as the party of the wealthy. Dramatically, these survey data point to an astonishingly refurbished NDP image among the well-to-do; it is now their preferred party. Among higher-income earners, a Conservative advantage of 16 percent in 1999 reversed itself to an NDP advantage of 7 percent by 2007 making the party appear as that of the more affluent.

The growth of the aboriginal population aids the party too and may well continue to bolster it. In the 1981, 1990, and 2003 elections, for example, between 72 and 83 percent of those on First Nations reserves voted for it (Kinnear, 2003: 47). If the affinity between aboriginals and the NDP persists, the party will benefit further; aboriginals constituted 17 percent of Manitobans in 2001, but will account for 23 percent by 2017, and their children under 15 years of age will make up 31 percent of that age cohort (Statistics Canada, 2005b).

One result of electoral success is that the NDP attracted many followers despite its ideology. A profound transformation of party membership resulted. Doer, who joined the party in the early 1970s, is a case in point. A study of the party's 1973 members revealed that fewer than five percent had been CCFers. Indeed, a remarkable 70 percent had not been members as recently as 1970 and over half joined in 1972-73 (NDP Papers, 1975). The membership's ephemeral composition led one organizer to speculate about the ideological implications for the party:

> These figures suggest that the NDP is not broadening its base, but shifting in character, conceivably from the left to the right. The party base has been wholly transformed not only from what it was in 1969 but also from what it was in 1971. No definitive evidence of the ideological bias of those leaving the party is available yet it is the feeling of some observers within the party that as senior members exit quietly via the left door, the NDP is welcoming large numbers of novice members through the right door. (McRuer, n.d.: 10)

This analysis implies, questionably, that the party has only two ideological doors.

Ideology and Policy

It is analytically important not to confuse ideology with policy. Vital at the ideological level is the rationale for a policy or program. Partisans of various parties and of different ideological orientations may embrace the same program, such as public education or medicare, but may do so on the basis of quite different motivations. A red tory Conservative might endorse medicare out of a sense of *noblesse oblige*, the belief that society's privileged classes are obliged to help underwrite the needs of less privileged citizens. A philosophic liberal might support it out of the belief that all individuals are entitled to an equal opportunity to get ahead, something compromised by an individual's illness or injury through no fault of her own. A socialist might embrace medicare because it manifests mutuality, our care for one another as equal members of a community in solidarity. A demonstration of policy convergence (Cartigny, 2008: 1), therefore, does not necessarily mean ideological convergence.

Discernible contrasts in parties' ideological orientations and their depictions of each other reveal more about the parties than policy convergences among them. The NDP's website, for example, continues to voice the party's socialist heritage: "Our society must change from one based on competition to one based on cooperation," reads its first enumerated party principle. The second conveys a decidedly radical leftist flavour: "We wish to create a society where individuals give according to their abilities, and receive according to their needs" (*Today's NDP*, 2008b). Autopac, ManOil, a crown corporation created for oil exploration, and the creation of Leaf Rapids – Manitoba's first government-planned mining community – demonstrated the NDP's willingness to wield government's instrumentality to redistribute goods and services. So too, did the party's opposition to the Conservatives' privatization of Manitoba Telephone Systems.

The NDP's ideological mellowing came with changing conditions and success. The party, like other social democratic parties all over the world, veered from the CCF's programmatic genesis by shedding much of the ILP-CCF's anti-capitalist, socialist crust. It forswore, for example, the nationalization of natural resource industries. A telling tale was the NDP's appointment of Eric Kierans – the ex-president of the Montreal Stock Exchange and former federal Liberal cabinet minister – to examine natural resource policy. Schreyer dismissed his report, which recommended the long-term takeover, with

compensation, of the private mining industry, characterized it as "too drastic and retrospective", and reassured the industry it had nothing to fear. (Lowery, 1973: 1). The NDP has remained on the left of the political spectrum as a party identified as committed to advancing the welfare of society's underclasses – the vulnerable, the weak, the less privileged, outsiders, and those facing discrimination – but it became less insistent, like social democracy everywhere, that this be at the expense of private capital.

The NDP also came to redefine and expand the older socialist notion of class politics by welcoming the new social movements of the twentieth century's last quarter – women, environmentalists, newer immigrant ethno-cultural communities, many of them visible minorities, and gays and lesbians. The party looks benignly upon the rise of identity politics, and although its posture is muted compared to the federal NDP, it is decidedly more sympathetic to this development than the Conservatives. The provincial NDP, for example, has taken a leadership role on aboriginal rights and programs. Pawley's government was a staunch advocate for them at the four First Ministers Conferences of the 1980s that dealt with aboriginals. It sent large delegations, outnumbered only by Quebec, and spoke of the need to "liberate Canada's aboriginal peoples from the remaining vestiges of colonialism." (Wiseman, 1990: 98). The position reflected continuity in that the CCF had been the first party to seek out an Indian candidate in the 1950s (Wiseman, 1985: 86). Schreyer appointed the province's first aboriginal cabinet minister, funnelled money into labour intensive northern programs, and contracted with northern Indian bands for road and airport bush clearance. Pawley appointed another aboriginal cabinet minister, Elijah Harper, and two aboriginals served in Doer's first government.

With respect to gays and lesbians, the NDP incorporated sexual orientation into provincial human rights legislation in 1986 after having introduced pay equity in the public sector. More recently, the party's 2008 convention pressed Ottawa to reverse its ban on gay organ donors (Owen, 2008: A3). The NDP has also demonstrated sympathy for francophones, but Pawley's government paid a steep political price for its co-sponsorship, with the federal government and the Société Franco-Manitobaine, of a 1983 tripartite constitutional accord on language rights (Hébert, 2004). It paralyzed the legislature for months and over 30 municipalities, including Winnipeg, held plebiscites

that revealed about 75 percent opposition to the proposal. Pawley's support for francophone rights was belated, coming only after legal compulsion – the Supreme Court declared Manitoba's language regime unconstitutional (*Reference*, 1985: 347) – and a change of mind. Pawley, as Attorney General a decade earlier, had rejected French statutes on the peculiar logic that it would oblige the government to provide German and Ukrainian statutes since "we have more populous groups of people that speak" those languages (Doern, 1985: 5).

In social policy, the NDP moved squarely into the liberal world of social welfare by defining state intervention narrowly – maintaining a high reliance on family relations and the private market (Hernes, 1987). Nevertheless, its innovations often stand apart from and ahead of those in other provinces, a notable achievement for a relatively poor province. It introduced Canada's first provincial home care program for seniors, which served as a catalyst and model for similar programs in other provinces. Likewise, its childcare regime reflected a communitarian orientation "characterized by more social solidarity than in other English provinces" (Prentice, 2004: 193). Manitoba, despite its "have-not" status, spends more per capita on early childhood education and care than any other province with the exception of Quebec (Friendly, 2007).

On fiscal issues, the depiction of CCF-NDP governments as spendthrifts has always been ill deserved. Conservatives and others have propagated an image of the NDP as profligate spenders. Jared Wesley, for example, characterizes Doer's government as "a drastic departure from the more programmatic, idealistic agenda of the Old Left [of Schreyer and Pawley]" and he defines that Old Left as "tax and spend." (2006: 15, 20). Doer did retain Conservative legislation that requires a referendum to raise taxes. This, however, is consistent with the NDP's fiscal record: the Saskatchewan NDP government recorded 14 consecutive balanced budgets and the Schreyer government's spending grew less as a percentage of the provincial economy than under the Roblin-Weir governments. Under its watch, Manitoba was accorded its highest ever credit rating on the international bond market. Its taxation regime was less burdensome for the poor and the middle-class than those in relatively wealthy Alberta, British Columbia, and Ontario, leading the *Edmonton Journal* to declare, "Overtaxed? Move to Manitoba." (1977: 10). Wesley (2004) oddly associates affordable government with neo-liberalism yet Schreyer's

government, like Doer's government, consistently generated balanced budgets while Sterling Lyon's Conservative administration generated Manitoba's largest budgetary deficit.

Intriguingly, Wesley argues that the ideological key to electoral success in Manitoba is to capture the province's "collectivist center" and that "the trajectory of social democracy in Manitoba is closely associated with that of red toryism" (2006: 20). Deploying the triad of ideological constellations of classical conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, he adopts Gad Horowitz's dialectical ideational connection between toryism and socialism (1966b) – their common belief in the state's positive role for the "common good." He contrasts that with neo-liberal and neo-conservative suspicion of the state. Wesley paints a picture of a primarily liberal provincial ideological landscape with tory and social democratic touches, reflected by the Roblin and NDP administrations. Both were committed to economic development – the Conservatives pursued mega-projects while the NDP looked to crown corporations – but for different reasons: "the NDP used economic development as a means to achieving social justice, whereas, to the Conservatives, economic development was often a province-building measure." (2006: 9).

From a political economy perspective, Alex Netherton has argued that a Keynesian modernization paradigm of the state's role drove both the Roblin and Schreyer/Pawley regimes, but that they offered alternative visions of it (2001). With Keynesianism's unravelling, Gary Filmon's Conservatives and Doer's NDP similarly proposed competing visions of an emergent neo-liberal "globalization" paradigm. The NDP offered a more nuanced collectivist stance, however, in contrast to the Conservatives' greater faith in the free-enterprising individual. Doer supported the Conservatives' 1995 balanced budget legislation but also identified with Tony Blair's "Third Way" philosophy: state support for the market economy by cutting business, property, and individual income taxes in conjunction with public investment in human capital as a means of propelling economic growth. After Filmon's departure, the Conservatives shifted further to the right under a leader who, in a reverberation of the United States' Republicans and to the benefit of the NDP, stressed downsizing government. He called, for example, for workfare legislation, a welfare cheat hotline,

and jettisoning a planned northern University College to pay for tax cuts (Lett, 2003: A3: Rabson, 2003: A1). This left the NDP to occupy the strategic "collective center" by "striking a balance between liberal individualism and social democratic collectivism." (Wesley, 2006: 13).

In Wesley's schema, ideological divisions among the parties complement intra-party differences within them. NDPers express an amalgam of "social democratic, reform liberal, 'New Left', and neo-liberal attitudes" with leftism defined as support for welfare, civil liberties, and the environment (2004). This wide net underplays social democracy's underlying egalitarian, communitarian ethic and vision of social solidarity. The party's 2008 convention, for example, adopted resolutions that dealt with enhanced aboriginal health programs, improved wage equity for women, investments in worker safety, support for rural businesses and apprenticeship programs, and maintaining the Wheat Board's marketing monopoly (*Today's NDP*, 2008b). For some, however, the NDP's socialist credentials fall short. Cy Gonick for example, a Schreyer-era backbencher, dismisses the party as an unreliable agent for social transformation and labels Doer "a quintessentially small-'l' liberal" who "doesn't have a socialist bone in his body." (2007: 12). This is a common critique of social democrats among more left-wing socialists. Gonick points to Manitoba's relatively high proportion of low-wage jobs, its relatively high rates of child and family poverty and, from his vantage point, inadequate social welfare allowances. His appraisal, however, does not acknowledge Manitoba's relative "have-not" status, broader national economic and social conditions, and the variety in provincial natural and human resource endowments. They shape the welfare of a province's residents as well as the stripe of the party in power.

The Future of the NDP

It is more challenging to foretell the NDP's future than to retell its past. The proposition that the NDP is Manitoba's natural governing party, its political hegemon – in light of its electoral successes over the past four decades – is as questionable as it is plausible. The party's prospects in the rest of the twenty first century are no less contingent on a variety of unpredictable factors than were its past fortunes. This paper has suggested that no single agent or element accounts for its success. While the cases of

Schreyer and Doer intimate that leadership has been important, Pawley's victories despite his flawed performance indicate that it has been incidental. The NDP's fortunes will continue to be determined by both agency – the party's ideas, mobilization efforts, and the skills of its leaders – and conditions – Manitoba's shifting socio-economic realities.

Conditions surrounding every election are unique, however striking the parallels with other elections. The NDP's 1969 breakthrough was dependent on a number of coincidental factors that favoured the party. They included Schreyer's selection in the midst of an election campaign in which the party's opponents had swerved programmatically, and the NDP benefitting from the first-past-the-post electoral system in the context of a more equitable distribution of legislative seats. Inexorable urbanization, technological changes in communications, and Manitoba's greater political and social integration all aided the party. Once in power, its legitimacy grew: in losing office in 1977, it still secured more support than in its 1969 victory. Dangerously weakened in 1988, the party subsequently benefited from the Liberals inability to maintain their official opposition status in 1990. This contributed to their subsequent marginality and the NDP's increased credibility as the only viable alternative government to the Conservatives.

Political vagaries – scandals, leaders' skills, and societal change will continue to mould the contours of Manitoba politics. Past or repeated success and favourable economic conditions are no guarantors of continued success. Witness the Saskatchewan NDP's defeat in 2007 in the midst of prosperity while less affluent Manitobans were content to maintain their NDP government. After a long bout of one-party rule, some voters will feel that a partisan change in regime is democratically healthy. If a future government adopts proportional representation, the NDP's prospects would almost certainly be compromised. PR could resurrect the Liberals at the NDP's expense. It would certainly provide incentives for new parties to form; some may splinter the NDP and, indeed, feed its demise.

Policy disjunction between NDP and Conservative governments is perhaps less striking than policy continuity. The NDP, however, has been more innovative. Policy convergence does not mean ideological conjunction. Both parties have an interest in drawing contrasts in how they view society. The Conservative leader in 2006 charged

that the Pawley government "found its inspiration in socialist and communist ideas that were [once] in vogue in eastern Europe", presumably because it included former Communist Roland Penner (Pona, 2003: A13). In contrast, Doer finds it useful to depict the Conservatives as "a party that only governs for a privileged few on every issue of priority." (Rabson, 2005: A3). The NDP's campaign slogan in 1973, "Keep Your Government Yours", similarly tried to brand the Conservatives by implying that Conservatives rule on behalf of the wealthy few. This is not the kind of partisan sparring common in most provinces. Both sides wrangle ideologically in Manitoba partly because they hope to keep the party system polarized at Liberal expense. In federal politics, the chronic issue of national unity traditionally benefits the Liberals; this does not obtain provincially where other issues are more salient. Manitoba's regional tensions, between city and countryside, favour the NDP and the Conservatives.

CCF platforms drew heavily on those of the British Labour party and Doer's thinking identifies with Blairite Britain's "new" Labour. A British template also informs the evolution of the Manitoba party system. NDPers, like CCFers before them, wished to see both Canada's and Manitoba's party systems simplified and crystallized, envisioning one party clearly on the right and another unambiguously on the left engaged in a democratic class struggle of "haves" and "have-nots". Their strategy for gaining power was to squeeze and then displace the centrist Liberals as had occurred in Britain in the early decades of the twentieth century. Lloyd Stinson, the CCF's leader in the 1950s and a New Party organizer, articulated this perspective for a foreigner: "If there is any logic in Canadian affairs, now is the time when there should be a good chance for a third party to slip in and take the place formerly occupied by the Liberals against the older Conservatives." (Alexander, 1960: 59).

The separate strategic calculations that drive voting in federal and provincial elections, if they persist, will continue to benefit the provincial NDP. It is in its interest to keep the Liberals marginalized in a polarized party system because the key to victory is to capture the votes of federal Liberals who see little prospect for their provincial counterpart. Continued Liberal feebleness aids both the NDP and the Conservatives. Allen Mills writes of the unspoken, informal alliance between Doer and Filmon in the 1990s "to dish the Liberals." (2007: 168). The party's historical bastions in the poorer

north, central, and east Winnipeg districts, among aboriginals and in the North, allude to socio-demographic and economic factors less influenced by leadership change. The ability of the party to project a non-threatening image to middle- and upper class voters is important too for, although Manitoba is a "have-not" province, substantial middle class support is a requisite to elect and keep any party in power.

A trend that is likely to continue is divergence in the policy postures of the federal and provincial NDP, especially when the provincial NDP is in power. An example is proportional representation, an objective the federal party has pursued aggressively, but which is not mooted by the Manitoba NDP for it does not serve its interests as it does that of the federal party. As provinces have expanded their technical and bureaucratic capacities since the 1960s and insisted on protecting and extending their jurisdictional spheres, NDP governments have been no exception. The CCF's nationally centralized public policy prescriptions (League for Social Reconstruction, 1935) slowly gave way to accepting, accommodating, and defending provincial policy particularisms when the NDP, as in Manitoba, governs. As a "have-not" province reliant on federal largesse however, Manitoba, whatever party is in power, will continue to look relatively favourably upon Ottawa exercising national powers and implementing policies to which other wealthier provinces, including those with NDP governments, object.

The NDP's organization turns Manitoba's supplicant status in the federal-provincial governmental arena topsy-turvy. The federal NDP is a federation of its provincial parties and it is dependent on them. There is no federal NDP membership per se; to join the federal NDP one must purchase a provincial membership. The federal party's subordinate organizational status is evident in elections. It is from the provincial NDP's office that federal as well as provincial elections are coordinated because the provincial party is responsible for federal electoral activities in the province. The federal NDP's inferior status is accentuated when the provincial party is in power.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan are English North America's social democratic heartland. Winnipeg, given its twentieth-century experience, is its spiritual hub. It is so by virtue of its connection to the social gospel, the General Strike, the long tenure of John Queen as its mayor, the electoral base it provided between the 1920s and 1980s for Woodsworth and Stanley Knowles, and as the location where the Winnipeg Declaration

displaced the Regina Manifesto as social democracy's statement of principles. The relative wealth, power, and growth of Winnipeg, its steadily increasing share of the legislature's seats in the only province where one city accounts for more than half the population, have helped the provincial NDP grow in tandem with the city. These factors, along with the party's ideological repositionings and pragmatism, the deftness of its leaders, the decline of the Liberal party, and the steady growth of an aboriginal constituency sympathetic to the NDP, have all contributed to make the NDP appear as Manitoba's natural governing party.

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