

THE COLLECTIVE CENTER:
SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND RED TORY POLITICS IN MANITOBA

Jared J. Wesley

jjwesley@ucalgary.ca

PhD Candidate
Department of Political Science
University of Calgary

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Abstract

While often depicted on opposite sides of the political spectrum, red Tories and social democrats share a number of common political attitudes. Whether in terms of their support for the modern welfare state, their progressive view of social communities, or their belief in a positive role for the state in society, in many ways red Tories and social democrats have more in common with each other than with other political groups, like liberals or neo-conservatives. These overlapping, collectivist values create opportunities for political parties to bridge the gap between left and right on the political spectrum and to build large – if fragile – electoral coalitions in the political center. This paper examines how two political parties – the provincial New Democrats and Progressive Conservatives in Manitoba – have been striking such alliances for over half a century, creating a competitive, two-way competition for power. As an ideational analysis, it draws upon an examination of party platforms from the 2003 Manitoba election, lending empirical evidence to the claim that – in Manitoba, at least – the party that is able to capture the “collectivist center” is able to secure power in the provincial legislature.

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After eleven years in opposition, the Manitoba New Democrats regained control of the provincial legislature in 1999. Their victory ended the Tories' longest term in office in over twenty years, and has been attributed to many factors: a faltering and scandal-ridden Conservative government; a public desire to end a decade of social spending cuts; the popularity of NDP leader, Gary Doer; or simply the continued cycling of Manitoba's two-party-plus party system. While each of these played a significant role in the rise of the NDP, another factor – *ideology* – appears especially persuasive in terms of explaining the party's recovery.

Not coincidentally, the change in New Democratic fortunes came at a significant turning point in the party's ideological approach. Abandoning the Keynesian paradigm and shedding the party's connection with tax-and-spend politics had been challenging for leaders Edward Schreyer and Howard Pawley throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Chorney & Hanson, 1985; Netherton, 2001). More recently, the party's association with the failings of Bob Rae's Ontario government – whether perceived or real – served to depress support for the Manitoba NDP. A decade in opposition gave the party ample opportunity to craft a new message, however, and the Doer New Democrats confronted the turn of the century with a fresh image for the Manitoba public. Theirs was a third way approach to government, mixing elements of traditional social democracy with those of neo-liberalism to create a more flexible and palatable center-left platform. The Manitoba electorate appears to agree with the change, rewarding the New Democrats with their first two majorities since 1986.

This was is not the entire story, however. As the following analysis illustrates, the NDP's conversion to the third way was accompanied by the Conservatives' wholesale adoption of neo-liberalism. All but abandoning its ties to red toryism, the PC party effectively vacated the "collective center" – the fertile middle-ground upon which both major parties had built electoral success throughout the twentieth century. Among other reasons, this ideological shift has allowed the New Democratic Party to increase its support in Tory bastions like South Winnipeg, and has pushed the Conservatives deeper into their rural base. While tempered by its acceptance of market principles, the NDP remains the only party offering a truly collectivist vision of politics in the province. A respite in the struggle between social democracy and red toryism has changed the nature political competition in Manitoba, with the former ideology, and its partisan standard bearer, in firm control of politics in the province.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of the use of ideas in political analysis, noting the importance of separating ideological "indicators" – like policy motives – from their "consequences" – like government programs or partisanship. Next, the study outlines the concept of the "collective center", the ambiguous nature of which leaves much room for ideological interaction and electoral competition. Specifically, the

common ground between red tory conservatism and third way social democracy is mapped, noting the parallels and inconsistencies between the two streams of thought.

These two ideologies and their primary partisan carriers – the Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats of Manitoba – are examined in this context. (For a complete discussion of Manitoba's third party, the Liberals, see Wesley, 2004: chapter 5.) Historically, the success of each party appears linked to its ability to promote a moderate, collectivist platform. For the Conservatives, this has meant retaining the party's 'tory touch', while New Democratic success has been based on its restraint from straying too far from the liberal core of society.

The study reveals major changes in the party system since 1999, however. The collective center has been occupied almost entirely by the third way ideology of the Doer New Democrats, while, having largely abandoned red toryism as an element of its campaign programme, the Conservative Party remains in the opposition benches. Wary of monocausality, the study concludes with a discussion of the potential implications of these findings, arguing that the success of each party may depend on its ability to introduce broad, yet moderate, collectivist policies aimed at capturing support on both sides of the political center. In sum, the future of social democracy, red toryism, and the two major parties in Manitoba appear inextricably linked.

Ideology as a Heuristic Device

Despite recent innovations, the value of "ideational analysis" remains under question throughout much of the political science community (Hanson, 2003). Berman (1998: 19) describes such a development as a "vicious circle" in which "ideas have been seen as problematic variables largely because political science has lacked proper ways of conceptualizing their role and influence – which has been due, in turn, to the lack of attention paid to the subject." Nonetheless, according to her, "In order to be useful independent variables, ideas must be able to be clearly identified and associated with specific political actors" (1998: 19). This is a challenge taken up by the following paper.

At its core, an ideology is a belief system that provides its adherents with an interpretation of political reality. Ideologies act as filters, such that behavior is structured by the way actors perceive their own goals and the appropriate means to achieve them (Blyth, 2002: 3-11, 18-45; Berman, 1998: 29-31). In this way, whether consciously or subconsciously, political actors are affected by the principles underlying ideologies in ordered and observable ways (Peffley & Hurwitz, 1986). Of course, ideas, themselves, are one of many structural variables affecting political behavior; like all others, they, too, may have root causes (Finbow, 1993; Berman, 1998). Nonetheless, in applying a neo-institutionalist approach to behavior, this analysis assumes that ideas act to constrain and motivate political behavior among actors.

Under this definition, the use of ideas in explaining political phenomena is a matter of supplying order to the thoughts and actions of political actors (Christian &

Campbell, 1990). Accordingly, ideology acts as a *heuristic device* for describing and explaining political outcomes. This is less an *imposition* of artificial constructs to political reality, than an attempt to *uncover* the ideational structures underlying political life. As discussed below, separating ideological from pragmatic or electorally-expedient factors can be challenging. Political actors base their behavior on a number of different factors. Yet, if political behavior is rooted at least partly in ideology, as this paper asserts, then one task of political scientists must be to reveal the values and norms governing that behavior.

This requires analysts to search actively for Canadian political ideology at work. Yet, in doing so, they must be cautious not to confuse *indicators* with *consequences* of political ideology. Specific policy positions and government programs should be considered carefully in this light, as they are often the products of ideology, not an indicator of it (Dewar, 1983). As Wiseman (1998: 59-60) argues, “ideology represents the *rationale* for policy [and] policy by itself does not necessarily reveal a specific ideological impulse.” He cites public health care as a prime example of how adherents to different ideologies can be supportive of a policy for very different reasons: conservatives out of a sense of community, liberals in the interests of equitable opportunity, and socialists for its universality. In this light, Wiseman warns, “when a policy is cited as evidence of an ideological inclination... be skeptical. Apply the litmus test. Did the governing party nationalize an industry to redistribute wealth (socialism), or to help other industries, private ones, to grow and profit (liberalism), or for the purpose of nation building (possible toryism)?” Hence, when using policy to measure political ideology, analysts must examine the *reasoning* and *motivation* behind specific promises and programs, rather than making inferences from their existence (Christian & Campbell, 1990: 116).

These challenges should not be viewed as insurmountable, however. Ideas and ideology may be “fuzzy”, in that they are difficult to operationalize and measure. Nonetheless, reliable and valid indicators are available, including elite level surveys (Wesley, 2004, 2005) and party platforms. Examining the latter, the following study analyzes the philosophical principles underlying the most public of political activities: election campaigns. As its main focus, the present analysis dissects on the 2003 platforms of the Conservative and New Democratic parties, analyzing them in terms of their substance and rhetoric. Particular attention is paid to the relevance of collectivism versus individualism in these documents.

The Collective Center: Where Right Meets Left

As an ideological space, the political center consists of a mixture of different ideologies and values. In Canada, as elsewhere in the Western World, the center features as its most prominent elements a combination of right-wing market liberalism and left-wing social progressivism (Clark & Hoffman-Martinot, 1998). In this environment, “new combinations of policy preferences” have emerged, with people adopting ideological positions many of which contradict the traditional, dichotomous understanding of the

political spectrum (Giddens: 2000: 41-42). Red toryism and third way social democracy fall under this description.

Despite being labeled at opposite ends of the political spectrum, the two ideologies share a number of common elements. By accepting the main tenets of capitalism and seeking to mitigate its negative effects, some critics accuse red tories and third way social democrats of abandoning or diluting the core principles of conservatism and socialism. Yet, when as discussed below, both red toryism and the third way represent a brand of collectivism that stands on par with, if in contrast to, the neo-liberal worldview. While by no means dominant, both ideologies nonetheless constitute important ‘touches’ in the otherwise liberal landscape of Manitoba.

Red Toryism

As a label, “red toryism” was coined by Gad Horowitz in his 1966 study of “Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada”. There, he defined a red tory as, at a basic level,

...a Conservative who prefers the CCF-NDP to the Liberals or a socialist who prefers the Conservatives to the Liberals, without really knowing why. At a higher level, he is a conscious ideological Conservative with some ‘odd’ socialist notions (W.L. Morton) or a conscious ideological socialist with some ‘odd’ tory notions (Eugene Forsey) (Horowitz, 1966: 158).

As a unique mixture of seemingly disparate philosophical elements, “red toryism” has attracted criticism as being vacuous, non-ideological, politically-expedient, patriotic, unscientific, and even mythical. To some critics, for all its usage in political circles, mass media, popular culture, and academia, the term “red tory” remains too vaguely defined (Dewar, 1983; Preece, 1977).¹

Despite these criticisms, the principles of “red toryism” do conform to the characteristics of ideology employed in the present analysis. Granted, it may be a “recessive strain” in Canadian political ideology (Christian & Campbell, 1990: 9; Stewart, 1994: 78-80), but even its harshest critics have noted the continued resonance of red toryism as an explanation of politics in Canada (Forbes, 1987: 305; Ajzenstat & Smith, 1998: 84). Regardless of its disputed origins and uncertain future, as a concrete *belief system that provides its adherents with an interpretation of political reality*, the term remains useful to Canadian political scientists – provided it is properly defined (Taylor, 1982: 115).

What is red toryism? The wide range of responses to this question is largely responsible for its lack of acceptance among critics. Yet – despite the variety of definitions – a number of key themes emerge from a review of the literature on the topic. While many are associated with “tory conservatism”, in general, a ‘reddish hue’ is

detectable in several areas.² In particular, four (4) interrelated principles underlie “red toryism” as an ideology:

1. *Tradition & Incrementalism*: The tory philosophy is one in which society evolves gradually, remains stable but not static, and relies on tradition as a guide for the future (Balfour, 1925: 103; Christian & Campbell, 1990: 142; Grant, 1997: 106).

2. *Organicism & the Social Fabric*: Core to the red tory ideology is the belief that society is more than a sum of its parts. It was Burke who invoked the term “social fabric” as a metaphor to describe society as a collection of individuals who, when woven together like threads, produce a much stronger and grander entity (Ball et al., 2006: 83).

3. *Ascription & Imperfection*: The very essence of toryism is rooted in the belief in human imperfection, and the existence of a ‘natural hierarchy’ in society such that only the most capable should assume positions of authority (Ball et al., 2006: 80-81). For red tories, while the social ladder still exists, it is still accessible to those with lower social status, who may climb it gradually through their lifetimes or over the course of several generations (Buck, 1975: 27).

4. *Paternalism & Noblesse Oblige*: In essence, then, toryism is a belief system that combines elitism and collectivism through the concept of ‘noblesse oblige’. In the tory view of community, one discovers a sense of mutual obligation – of duties and privileges, rights and responsibilities – such that those in positions of privilege owe concern to those of lower social and political status, while the latter owe deference to elites. Labeled “tory democracy”, this set of values may help to explain the ebbing of red toryism in an age of declining social and political deference (Nevitte, 1996).

Overall, red toryism implies an easy acceptance of, but a low tolerance for, economic and social inequality, and displays a paternalistic concern for the care of the less-fortunate in society. Since the expansion of the role of government in the mid-twentieth century, red tories have become increasingly comfortable extending this care through the mechanisms of the modern welfare state. However, as Christian & Campbell (1990: 131) note, unlike the tenets of liberalism, the principles of red toryism do not aim to increase the *freedom* of the less-fortunate. Nor do they aim to foster greater *equality* in society, as under socialism. Rather, toryism seeks to increase the *security* of those of lower status, thus ensuring the *stability* of the community as a whole.

Third Way Social Democracy

As a brand of social democracy, the “third way” coalesced into a coherent ideology in the late twentieth-century. Granted, many of its core principles had surfaced decades earlier (Broadbent, 1999: 75; Green-Pedersen et al., 2002), and the term “third

way” has been applied in other – often right-wing – contexts (Giddens, 2000: 19). Yet, by shifting focus away from full employment and government largesse as its ultimate goal, and comprehensive state planning as a means to that end, the emergence of the third way movement marked a turning-point in the history of social democracy (Kitschelt, 1994: xiii).

Ultimately, the third way amounts to an opposition of the New Right and dissatisfaction with the Old Left (Powell, 2002; Green-Pedersen et al., 2002). Giddens (2002: 2) calls it “a different framework, one that avoids both the bureaucratic, top-down government favored by the old left and the aspiration of the [new] right to dismantle government altogether.” As its two most famous proponents, Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroder (1999: 1) characterize the third way as striving to meet old goals, like social justice, through new means, including “economic dynamism”; this involves ‘support of a market economy’ without becoming a ‘market society’. The resulting outlook is an attempt to unite the two main forces of the left – liberalism and socialism – under a shared ideological outlook and, in many instances, a common partisan banner.

Not unlike red toryism, the heterogeneity of the third way has drawn criticism from academics and politicians, alike. Labeled an “amorphous political project, difficult to pin down and lacking direction”, or conservatism wrapped in left-wing garb, the status of the third way as a viable political ideology remains in dispute (Giddens, 2000: 22-25). In particular, detractors complain that third way is grounded more firmly in politically expedience and partisanship, than core philosophical principles (Gray, 2004: 42-43).

The following analysis tests these critiques and finds them lacking. The third way *does* consist of a coherent system of inter-related beliefs which, while drawing from across the traditional political spectrum and motivated by partisanship in many cases, serves as a useful heuristic device in studying politics (Hombach, 2000: xiv; Evans, 2002: 147-148). Like red toryism, the third way lacks a “single guiding philosopher” whose works specify its core tenets; instead, researchers must seek themes in the wide range of literature on the topic (Hombach, 2000: xi). Four, in particular, will be discussed in this analysis:

1. *Equality & Social Justice*: A belief in human equality and the pursuit of social justice lie at the heart of all brands of social democracy. What distinguishes the third way from other variants of social democracy, however, is its precise conception of “equality”, which combines some elements of liberalism with those of socialism. As Hombach (2000) argues, third way social democrats have abandoned the pursuit of ‘equality as an end result’, attempting instead to create the widest *possible* ‘equality of opportunity’ throughout society.³

2. *Community & Mutual Obligation*: As Broadbent (2001: 9) explains, whereas a “liberal sees an individual’s life as unfolding in a society that stands in an antagonistic relationship to the state and in which citizens are essentially in competition with one another... social democratic individualism incorporates cooperation.” Just as human beings have individual and common goals, they also

share certain responsibilities and rights. Thus, whereas the old left viewed social equality as relatively unconditional, third way social democracy attaches duties to these claims.

3. *A Harnessed Market*: The third way's acceptance of the market economy as an important element of modern society is not particularly novel for social democracy (Green-Pedersen et al., 2002). What is new, however, is the emphasis placed on the market as a positive force in fostering social justice. It is not viewed as a 'necessary evil', as under previous modes of social democracy, but rather a 'necessary good' to be harnessed for the benefit of the community. In a phrase coined by French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, the third way says "yes to the market economy, but no to the market society" (in Hombach, 2000: xvii).

4. *Democratic Renewal*: Third way social democracy holds that, regardless of its political stripe – left or right – a homogeneous political elite is ill-equipped to act on behalf of an entire community. The exclusion of many groups in society from positions of political power – including women, ethnic minorities, and the poor – is not only a form of discrimination; according to the tenets of third way social democracy, it hampers the ability of a people to improve the community they govern collectively (Carlsson, 1999: 27).

The Contours of the Collectivist Center

There are obvious differences in the principles underlying these two ideologies. While starker when one compares the broader concepts of "tory conservatism" and "social democracy", the divisions between red toryism and the third way are visible, nonetheless:

- At its core, each ideology revolves around a distinct vision of society. As Leonard (in Hombach, 2000: xvi) explains, the tory view of "humanity as fallen, as naturally wicked and needing to be restrained by authority" contrasts with the social democratic premise that humankind is altruistic and perfectible.
- The two ideologies are also divided over the nature of equality. While toryism holds that a natural hierarchy exists in society, and that social condition is more or less ascriptive, social democracy views status in much more fluid terms (Giddens, 1998: 40).
- Out of these conflicting views of human nature springs disagreement over the nature of democracy. With a less optimistic view of human nature, tories are less trustful than social democrats when it comes to "grassroots" or "direct" democracy. By the same token, social democrats are less deferent to authority than tories.

- Similar disagreements arise over the nature of state intervention. Whereas toryism holds a modest view of what is possible for a society, its members and its governments, social democracy places somewhat more faith in “progress, perfectibility and planning” (Ball et al., 2005: 97-107).
- Overall, these tendencies make tories more likely to turn to the past and precedent for guidance, while third way social democrats may have more faith in the future (Crosland, 1962). The two may ultimately arrive upon similar conclusions, in which case, to corrupt a classic Canadian cliché, social democrats are akin to red tories ‘in a hurry’.

These distinctions notwithstanding, there is considerable overlap – or *congruity* – in the core principles underpinning the two ideologies. Indeed, the similarities between the two belief systems led Beer (in Preece, 1980: 6) to compare toryism to a form of “paternal socialism”, and Gray (2004: 39) to refer to the third way as “a genuflection to a defunct One Nation Tory tradition.” In the Canadian context, Horowitz (1966: 159) was among the first to note that “the tory and socialist minds have some critical assumptions, orientations, and values in common so that from certain angles they may appear not as enemies but as two different expressions of the same basic ideological outlook”. Elements of this congruity constitute the collective center in Manitoba politics, and include the following:

- Fundamentally, both share an inclusive, organic view of society, including a belief in the necessity of mutual obligation to bind together members of the community. This view conflicts with the atomistic, liberal notion of society as a collection of competing individuals.
- Both red toryism and the third way treat society and the market as separate, but interdependent. For red tories, this is embodied in the desire to put politics before economics when necessary; for social democrats, it means striving to prevent a market society from evolving out of a market economy.
- In this vein, both ideologies also view the state as a positive instrument in society, and promote government intervention in the economy when necessary to promote the interests of the community (red toryism) or achieve social justice (the third way).
- Yet, both are rooted in what Giddens (1998: 66) calls “philosophic conservatism,” and stand opposed to revolutionary changes to society and its political institutions. Rooted in a strong distrust or dissatisfaction with the type of sweeping social plans embodied in socialism, red toryism and the third way advocate progressive, incremental reform.

An Ideational Analysis of Manitoba Politics

Applying this framework to Manitoba political history reveals considerable ideological similarity between the province's two main parties, with the Conservatives and New Democrats converging on the collective center (Chorney & Hansen, 1985: 13). Throughout much of the twentieth century, both parties maintained a common commitment to public works and mega-projects; to public ownership in support of economic development and rural communities; to the enhancement of economic competitiveness in the province; to relatively moderate, progressive tax regimes; to the provision of public services like healthcare; and – above all – “to lessen, rather than increase, peoples’ dependence on the state” (Wiseman, 2002: 226; see also: Netherton, 1992, 2001; Chorney & Hansen, 1985; Wesley, 2004). Granted, there were subtle, but real, ideological differences in the New Democratic and PC programmes. In broad terms, the NDP used economic development as a means to achieving social justice, whereas, to the Conservatives, economic development was often a province-building measure. Thus, whether in the interpretation of Keynesianism or, years later, neo-liberalism, each party placed its own, unique, predominantly collectivist spin on the politics of the time. (Netherton, 2001; Wesley, 2004: 29-71).⁴ Nonetheless, the similarities were notable, with both the Tories and NDP having nurtured a sense of collectivism within a predominantly liberal political environment. Each remained loyal to its respective tory and social democratic roots, and each alternated with the other in government on a regular basis. It appeared as if the collective center was a prime location to build the foundations of political success.

Indeed, it was not until very recently that the two major parties began to diverge greatly in terms of their fundamental vision of Manitoba society. Granted, under the leadership of Walter Weir and Sidney Spivak, the provincial Conservatives were more liberal than tory – more individualistic than collectivist (Wesley, 2004). Moreover, the party began its first experimentation with neo-liberalism under Sterling Lyon in the late-1970s. These exceptions only prove the rule, however. Prior to Stewart Murray, Sidney Spivak was the only leader of the modern Manitoba Conservatives never to become premier, and Weir and Lyon spent the least amount of time of any Tories in that office.⁵ Moreover, as in Conservative parties across Canada, the influence of red toryism has declined within the Manitoba PC party for decades (Christian & Campbell, 1990; Stewart, 1994; Grant, 1997; Patten, 2001). Yet, toryism remained a visible – if minor – element in Conservative policy-making throughout this period. It was not until the final term of Gary Filmon’s Conservative government that toryism began its most recent and precipitous descent in Manitoba politics. The move has left the New Democrats alone in the ‘collective center’ and – whether as a direct result or not – in firm control of political power in the province. The following sections trace the evolution of each party’s ideology over the past three decades.

The Pawley New Democrats and Old Left Social Democracy: 1981 to 1988

After the Conservatives' first flirtation with neo-liberalism under Premier Sterling Lyon (Stewart & Wesley, forthcoming), the New Democrats' traditional pledges to safeguard social programs, expand public ownership and refocus attention on employment appeared appealing to most Manitoban voters. Elected in 1981, NDP Premier Howard Pawley immediately raised taxes, froze university tuition, and implemented rent and wage controls to cover investments in public housing, daycare, healthcare, and education. The New Democrats also attached sexual orientation to the Human Rights Code in 1986.

Meanwhile, Premier Pawley's fiscal policies were based largely on those of the Saskatchewan NDP, whose efforts to establish government as a "resource entrepreneur" had proven successful (Netherton, 1992: 194). In the lead-up to the 1986 election, the New Democrats threatened to nationalize the province's natural gas sector, a bluff that resulted in lower rates without having to assume public ownership. Pawley did establish ManOil and other northern crown corporations to fuel resource development, however, which allowed Manitoba to buck the recession felt elsewhere on the Prairies. Ultimately, these and other policies were designed to re-establish the mixed economy and social democratic governance in the province. Unfortunately for the New Democrats, a combination of external forces and an impatient electorate cut short the party's long-term agenda.

Two forces, in particular, combined to constrain the New Democrats' plans. First, Premier Lyon's rate freezes had strapped numerous crown corporations with high debts. By 1987, Premier Pawley was forced to lift the freeze on Manitoba Hydro rates to keep the company solvent, while Manitoba Public Insurance (MPIC) and Manitoba Telecom Services (MTS) made similar hikes of their own accord. The sudden, simultaneous impact of these rate increases jolted the public, drawing attention to what critics perceived as the New Democrats' chronic inability to efficiently manage the province's finances. Second, Prime Minister Mulroney's neo-liberal policies resulted in cutbacks to Manitoba's transfer payments. The result saw the provincial deficit reach \$500 million in 1987, a projection that prompted two New Democrats to cross the floor to defeat their own party's budget. It marked the first time in Canadian history that a majority government had been defeated by the vote of one of its own members (Dyck, 1996: 416).

Pawley resigned in the face of these challenges, though not before calling the 1988 election. This left new NDP leader Gary Doer to manage an ill-fated campaign. In subsequent weeks, NDP support levels plummeted to pre-Schreyer levels, while the province's other two parties made up considerable ground. The Conservatives, led by Gary Filmon, had softened their neo-liberal stance and pulled largely onside with the Mulroney programme of privatization and deregulation. Manitobans, who appeared to warm at least somewhat to neo-liberalism under the Conservative Prime Minister, rewarded Filmon with a minority government.

The Filmon Conservatives and Neo-Liberalism: 1990-1999

As premier in a minority government from 1988 to 1990, Gary Filmon's early approach was one of cautious conservatism, making minor cuts to the size of the provincial bureaucracy and attracting investment in the Manitoba economy (Wesley, 2004: 62-63). It was not until the 1990 election campaign that Premier Filmon turned his party further to the right, switching the government's focus further away from social policy toward economics, and playing upon the perceived fiscal weaknesses of the New Democratic platform. The strategy proved successful in the short-term and, once returned to office, the Conservatives set about shrinking the size of government and restructuring its role in the globalized economy.⁶

So comprehensive were the changes that, as Netherton (2001: 225-229) points out, Premier Filmon had enacted his own Klein- or Harris-like revolution in Manitoba. The 'New Right' had established priority over red toryism in provincial politics throughout the country, and Manitoba was no exception to this trend (see also: Stewart, 1994; Bruce et al., 1997; Boychuk, 1998; Williams, 2001; Ruff, 2001; Brownsey & Howlett, 2001; DeClercy, 2005).

Nonetheless, as had been the case since Duff Roblin's leadership at mid-century, the Conservatives retained a tory touch in their policy-making. The party's positive stance toward bilingualism, established somewhat grudgingly by Sterling Lyon in the early-1980s, was made more explicit under Filmon. His increased funding of immersion schools and the introduction of 100 percent French curriculum constituted major strides in this direction. The Premier also sided with concerns brought forth by the province's Aboriginal population, including the formation of official inquiries into the Helen Betty Osborne and J.J. Harper cases. By far the most progressive, however, was Filmon's 1994 agreement with the federal government to dismantle the *Indian Act* in Manitoba, thereby establishing the basis for long-term Aboriginal self-government in the province. These community- or group-based policies challenged the more individualistic elements of the Conservative agenda, helping to preserve the party's tory roots.

These collectivist elements aside, by the outset of the Conservatives' third term in office, an all-party consensus was developing around the principles of neo-liberalism. In particular, the balanced budget legislation introduced by the Filmon government in 1995 received a generally warm reception from all party leaders. Indeed, it appeared that all parties had come to accept a series of fundamental values underlying Manitoban politics: the welfare state, liberal democracy, prudent government spending, and a mixed – but relatively unfettered – economy.

Yet, the Conservatives' third round of protracted restraint had left many Manitobans unsettled. Just as in 1969 and 1981, a combination of federal and provincial cutbacks had led many voters to decry the decay of social services, including healthcare and education. Filmon's response – a 1999 election budget containing both \$500 million in tax cuts and \$500 million in social spending increases – was perhaps 'too perplexing' or 'too late' in the minds of the Manitoba electorate (Netherton, 2001: 229-230). Either

way, following allegations of scandal surrounding the Conservatives' financing of independent Aboriginal candidates in the North – a failed attempt to split the NDP vote in the region – Filmon and his party entered the 1999 election in a vulnerable position.

The Doer New Democrats and 'The Third Way': 1999 to 2003

Veteran New Democratic Party chief Gary Doer, leader since 1988, exploited this opportunity. By the late-1990s, combating the 'New Right' with his own version of 'New Left' doctrine, Doer had transformed his party's opposition to the three-term Conservative government into a moderate, third way platform of moderate social democratic reform under neo-liberal constraints. The result, according to Netherton (2001: 201), has been a re-convergence of ideology and policy among Manitoba's two major parties – only this time, *outside* the collectivist center. Much as Roblin and Edward Schreyer offered differing versions of Keynesianism (McCaffrey, 1986), so, too have today's New Democrats and Conservatives developed competing visions of the neo-liberal paradigm – the former stressing a collectivist version, the latter adopting a distinctly individualist bent (Netherton, 2001).

By the 1999 election, the NDP had abandoned the big-government, Keynesian values of the Schreyer and Pawley governments, replacing them with a third way acceptance of efficiency, prudence and transparency in the public sector. As mentioned, Premier Doer fully accepted the Conservatives' 1995 balanced budget legislation, and instituted the most stringent campaign finance legislation in the country, banning both union and corporate donations to political parties (Wesley & Stewart, 2006). Overall, these self-imposed restrictions limited the New Democrats' ability and motivation to pursue an overly activist agenda.

In health care – the major issue in the 1999 campaign – the NDP moved quickly to recruit new doctors and nurses for the province, while undertaking hospital expansions and technological improvements throughout the province. The government also froze both university tuition and auto insurance rates. Public investments in hydro development continued, as well, with the New Democrats re-securing Ontario's commitment to pursue the Conowapa project in northern Manitoba. Aside from these gains, however, the Doer government's first four years in office appeared rather uneventful, typical, one might argue, of a third way party that valued prudence and incrementalism. The 2003 Election Campaign, with its noticeable lack of energy and dominant issues, appeared to pay testament to this fact.

The Manitoba Political Spectrum: 2003 and Beyond

The New Democratic Party

Polls leading up to the 2003 election predicted a landslide victory for the governing party, whose positive image as ‘Today’s NDP’ was as much a product of their revamped platform as the popularity of their leader. Nonetheless, the apparent move to the center seemed to strengthen the party’s popularity in the city of Winnipeg, where the New Democrats were expected to make their greatest gains in 2003. In rural areas, the Third Way programme seemed to be making inroads as well, especially through its promises of tax relief for farmers and the improvement of health services outside city limits. All told, forecasts predicted the New Democrats would increase their majority in the legislature, winning long-time Tory seats in South Winnipeg and Southern Manitoba by wooing progressives away from the Conservatives. Meeting these expectations proved difficult, but the NDP’s pragmatic, third way approach did much to strengthen the party’s already-firm grip on government.

While the party made markedly fewer campaign promises than the Conservatives, an examination of the 2003 NDP platform reveals its strong left-wing flavour. From start to finish, the New Democratic campaign offered evidence of the party’s conversion to third way values, striking a balance between liberal individualism and social democratic collectivism.

For instance, the New Democratic platform concentrated on the importance of offering all Manitobans quality access to post-secondary education. The party promised a \$4 million increase to its bursary and scholarship fund, while continuing both the freeze on university tuition rates and the 10 percent fee rebate for Manitoban undergraduates. Such social democratic policies stood in contrast those proposed by the Conservatives, whose platform was more individual- than community-based when it came to funding university education. Funding was also promised to other post-secondary institutions, including expansions to both the Assiniboine and Red River Community Colleges. Finally, addressing the issue of geographic accessibility, New Democrats pledged to improve distance education courses to allow rural students to complete up to two years of university while living in their home communities. This focus on post-secondary education may be seen not only in terms of improving equality of opportunity among Manitobans, but also as a long-term investment in the provincial economy.

Along these lines, the NDP also demonstrated its neo-liberal affinity for state support of the market. In place of public ownership and strict regulation, the Third Way pointed to research and development, and education and training as the government’s key roles. The New Democrats’ “Building Manitoba” program, for instance, promised \$1 million for the training of Manitobans for the construction industry, while the party’s commitment to the agrarian sector was strengthened through targeted scholarships for graduate students in agriculture. All of these elements pointed to the Doer government’s commitment to investing in human capital as a means of driving economic growth.

Perhaps the most prominent sign of their ties to the neo-liberal elements of the 'Third Way', however, lay in the New Democrats' wide-scale tax relief program. In a move that would have shaken Old Left social democrats, the NDP pledged to reduce the middle income tax rate from 14 to 13 percent by 2005, while adjusting bracket thresholds. In these and other respects, the party's platform actually resembled that of the right-wing Conservatives. The NDP promised, for instance, to reduce education property taxes by 10 percent for homeowners, plus an additional 10 percent on farmland. The New Democrats also guaranteed a 1 percent reduction on small business taxes, and a more moderate 0.5 percent break on general corporation income taxes. By targeting the middle and working classes, these and other measures aimed to extend "opportunity for all" and improve the province's overall economic competitiveness. In doing so, the tax relief portion of the NDP platform marked the clearest departure from the Old Left philosophy of 'tax and spend', offering perhaps the strongest signal of the Doer government's third way approach.

In spite of this neo-liberal tenor, traditional elements of social democracy did persist as a key element in the NDP programme. In particular, the party promised increased funding to address many of the unique challenges facing children and youth in the province. This included a \$1.25 million pledge to expand the Reading Recovery Program and create five hundred new nursery school spaces. Such funding was in addition to the \$240,000 targeted toward doubling the number of community 'Lighthouse' programs, which provide access to gymnasiums after school hours. Further demonstrating the party's commitment to collectivism, \$1 million was to be set aside for the establishment of provincial and national recreation trails over the next four years. To *protect* Manitoban communities, the New Democrats pledged to hire more Crown prosecutors and police officers. Furthermore, the NDP's commitment to environmental protection – whether through its investment in hydro, ethanol or other clean energy industries – demonstrated the value the party placed on the New Left concept of societal responsibility. In all these ways, the New Democrats maintained their ties to the community-based, social democratic virtues of the third way.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the party's commitment to public health care, long-considered by New Democrats as a fundamental social right in Canadian society. According to federal NDP activist Sheldon Glouberman (2001), the issue is closely related to the 'Third Way' philosophy, as a whole. "One of the major flaws in health policy," he writes, "is to see health as an end in itself." Rather,

It interacts with the larger objectives of social justice and well-being. Medicare contributes to these larger objectives not simply by delivering health care to all. It is also an instrument of fair redistribution of resources which is widely approved of by Canadians. (Glouberman, 2001: 162).

Thus, the NDP's promotion of universal access to publicly-provided health care may be interpreted in terms of the collectivist, social democratic elements of third way thinking. In its 2003 Manitoba platform, for instance, the party established a lengthy list

of promises to recruit, educate, train, and hire more doctors, nurses and health care professionals; to provide more efficient service and shorter waiting lists for treatment and diagnosis; to expand hospitals and research centers across the province; to increase funding for home care and mental health; and to upgrade facilities and technologies – all of which firmly committed the state to providing what New Democrats viewed as an essential public service. On health care, the NDP drew a line, opting to pursue social democratic ends through public financing. In their minds, New Democrats saw a role for the government in this sector, and focused on providing quality, efficient health care under fiscally-responsible guidelines.

The Manitoba NDP's platform fell noticeably short in two areas of third thought, however. First, the party remained relatively silent on issues of "equal worth" – including topics like women's rights, sexual orientation, multiculturalism, and other civil liberty concerns. This was especially surprising, given the pressure on governments across Canada to endorse same-sex marriage in the summer and fall of 2003. Second, since introducing amendments to the province's *Election Finances Act* in 2000, the Doer government has remained virtually silent on issues of democratic reform (Wesley & Stewart, 2006). Whether a conscious decision to avoid debating divisive issues, or the perceived lack of province-level relevance of such concerns, the NDP programme contained little substance in these New Left areas.

Nonetheless, the New Democrats' "five priorities for the next four years" spoke volumes of the balanced, third way nature of their programme. Their simplified, pragmatic platform committed the party to: (1) "improve our health care system"; (2) "make it easier for young people to stay in Manitoba"; (3) "strengthen and diversify our economy"; (4) "make our communities safer and more secure"; and (5) "make Manitoba an even more affordable place to live" – all of which signalled a drastic departure from the more programmatic, idealistic agenda of the Old Left. In its place, New Democratic leaders like Gary Doer felt they have drafted a more "realistic and achievable" third way platform, one that blended the pragmatism and fiscal caution of neo-liberalism with the social objectives of the left. "Our commitment to the electorate," reads the party's Statement of Aims, "is to be forthright about our long-range goals as well as practical about our short-term political activities." Pledges such as these leave little doubt of the New Democrats' connection with the pragmatic doctrine of the third way, and the party has done little to dispel this characterization in the years since the 2003 election.

The Conservative Party

Since leaving the government benches in 1999, the Conservative party has consolidated its position on the political spectrum, firmly establishing itself as the province's 'New Right' option. In doing so, the party has crafted a platform similar to those of the now-defunct federal Progressive Conservatives under Jean Charest (Patten, 2001), or the new Conservative Party under Stephen Harper: one that stresses the economic principles of neo-liberalism, while abandoning much of the tory tenor of earlier Conservative platforms.

The Progressive Conservatives entered the 2003 Manitoba election with their lowest level of support in nearly three decades. Pre-election polls all but precluded a Conservative government, and all but assured the public of an increased NDP majority. The poor Conservative numbers were perhaps as much due to the popularity of the Doer government as they were to the faults of the Conservatives, themselves. Nonetheless, with the 2000 resignation of Gary Filmon, who had been a visible figure throughout the highly-publicized constitutional debates of the 1990s, the party lost its most recognizable symbol. In his place, the Conservatives selected rookie candidate Stuart Murray, a leader for whom 2003 marked an introduction to provincial campaigning.

The 2003 PC programme was unmistakably right-wing in its principles. Stressing “the paramount value of the individual, and individualism”, the party’s programme retained its historic ties to classic liberalism. Among its chief “aims and objectives”, the Conservatives reasserted “the importance of the individual and his or her basic right to be free of unwarranted Government interference... In other words,” according to the party’s statement of beliefs, “a Conservative believes in the ethic of ‘Live and Let Live’.” At the same time – reflecting the party’s tory roots – the PC platform promised to “provide for the benefit of members of the community those services and functions which individuals cannot reasonably provide for themselves, while assuring personal freedom and personal initiative and alleviating personal misfortune.” This statement notwithstanding, the Conservatives overwhelmingly committed themselves to maintaining a limited role for the state in Manitoban society. “Unlike other political parties in Canada,” they argued, “the Progressive Conservative Party believes that it is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL that Government at all levels be limited in size and maintained as close to the people as possible, so that Canadians can truly be involved in their own public affairs.” Furthermore, they contended, “there are many things in human affairs that Government simply cannot do, and many other things that Government will never do very well. Therefore, Government should remain focused on what it can and should do to ensure Manitobans receive the best and most efficient services possible without mortgaging our children’s future.” From an ideological perspective, the Manitoba Conservatives’ 2003 platform was far from ambiguous: Stuart Murray and his team had positioned the party firmly to the neo-liberal right of the political spectrum.

These principles echoed throughout the list of PC campaign promises. On the topic of social assistance, for example, Murray pledged to revive work-for-welfare programs, placing his party in opposition to the left-wing New Democrats. The Conservative policy was anchored in the party’s statement of beliefs, which held that a “person with a job is a person with dignity and self-respect.”

Numerous other election vows were similarly rooted in right-wing philosophy. For instance, Conservatives held their aggressive tax-relief strategy at the forefront of their campaign. “Unlike other political parties,” according to the PC platform, “the Progressive Conservative Party opposes a tax system that discourages initiative and penalizes growth and productivity.” In accordance with these principles, Murray and his team pledged a series of comprehensive tax cuts, aimed primarily at eliminating

education taxes from residential property and farmland. The Conservatives also promised a six percent income tax cut for the middle class in 2004, followed by a further seven percent cut in 2005; an increase in the low-income threshold from \$30,500 to \$35,000; and the removal of provincial sales taxes from all diapers and incontinence products. True to his neo-liberal philosophy, Murray pledged these tax reductions – estimated by the party at \$200 million – would be covered through administrative savings and the resulting economic activity generated by the cuts, themselves.

Similar liberal principles anchored the Conservative health care strategy. Rejecting opponents’ “two-tier” criticisms, the PC’s promised quality, universal public health care by paying the private sector to provide certain health services. The policy was aimed at ensuring that each Manitoban citizen received adequate, timely care, while increasing the accountability of the government in providing such services. The party’s “Patients First” plan, for instance, included a requirement that the government produce an annual report detailing where health dollars were spent and how health outcomes had improved. In addition, the Conservatives pledged to amalgamate cardiac surgery and care in one center of excellence – the Manitoba Heart Institute. This would be done to decrease wait times for procedures and increase taxpayer savings. Further to this end, the Conservatives promised to build a website listing the wait times for every procedure at every health facility in the province, so as to help Manitobans determine where they could receive the most timely treatment. While tempered by the desire to retain universalism as an essential element of the health care system, the Conservatives’ strategy was succinctly developed around liberal concepts of the individual’s place in Manitoba’s modern democracy.

The public education system was an unwitting, indirect casualty of the 2003 PC platform. Considering its commitment to small government, and with the province assuming 100 percent of public school financing, cutbacks loomed under a Conservative government. As part of his plan, Murray pledged to work with school divisions to restructure Kindergarten to Grade 12 spending. Specifically – in one of the more controversial elements of the Conservative platform – Murray called for a comprehensive public review of the tenets of “basic education”, including an evaluation of physical education, art, music, performing arts, and other specialized programs as parts of the Manitoba school curriculum. In sum, critics like the Manitoba Teachers Society found the Conservatives’ \$60-million funding increase, intended to shrink class sizes and expand special needs services, inadequate in the face of much larger cutbacks. A further \$5 million to establish a professional development fund for teachers did little to placate those in the public school community, whose distaste for cost-cutting Conservative education programs dated back to the Filmon era. With a budget to balance and greater priorities placed on tax relief, the right-leaning Murray Conservatives faced harsh criticism for their perceived lack of concern over education funding.

Conversely, the PC platform did promise significant investment in post-secondary education. Although promising to discontinue NDP plans for the University College of the North, Murray and his team pledged to increase funding to individual students in rural and remote areas. In addition, the Conservatives vowed to restructure the current student

assistance program to encourage young Manitobans to complete their studies in high-demand occupations, such as nursing. Furthermore, as part of its tax relief strategy, the PC platform included a twenty-five percent tax break for college and university graduates remaining in Manitoba to work for four consecutive years following completion of their studies. Such measures were certainly compatible with the liberal concepts of “equality of opportunity” and “individual achievement”, and fit well with the rest of the Conservative’s right-wing programme.

The party also promoted a strong anti-crime agenda. When added to his \$1.2 million pledge to hire twenty new Crown attorneys, Murray’s \$2.0 million commitment to add forty new officers to the Winnipeg police service signified a substantive move to curb criminal activity. In addition, the Conservatives promised to introduce new anti-gang legislation and pursue maximum penalties for gang-related offences. This tough stance on crime stood as a strong statement of the party’s conservative commitment to social order.

Aside from these anti-crime policies, and a seemingly obligatory pledge to “maintain our system of parliamentary democracy based on loyalty to the Crown and the Constitution”, few tory-based principles remained in the 2003 Conservative programme. Gone was the party’s open support for province-building measures like the hydro mega-projects, or public administration of key services, including health care. Under Filmon, the Manitoba PC’s sold off Manitoba’s original crown corporation – MTS – and threatened to privatize its most lucrative public utility – Manitoba Hydro. In addition, Murray remained virtually silent on ethnic community issues during the 2003 election campaign, avoiding concerns like Aboriginal poverty and the preservation of Franco-Manitoban culture. Ironically, Murray’s emphasis upon individualism aligns him more closely with the founders of the Liberal-Progressive Party, like Bracken and Garson, as opposed to the father of his own party, Duff Roblin (Wesley, 2004: 47-52).

Such was the platform on which the Progressive Conservatives stood during the 2003 provincial election. Ideologically-coherent, the programme proved to be more straightforward than popular, however. For, if the Manitoba electorate rejected Premier Filmon’s version of neo-liberalism in 1999, voters were even less enamoured with Murray’s adaptation of the platform four years later. Forced to focus precious resources on holding previously-safe seats in Southwestern Manitoba, the Conservatives could not devote enough energy to maintain control of three urban constituencies. In the end, Conservatives retained all but one rural seat, losing Gimli to the surging New Democrats. The same was not true in the urban constituencies of Fort Garry, Seine River and St. Norbert, however, where NDP victories disturbed a long-time PC monopoly in South Winnipeg. For whatever reason, previously-Tory voters in these constituencies had abandoned the party in 2003.

What is more, overall election results demonstrated these voters were not alone. For one, the Conservatives’ share of the overall popular vote dropped over four percent, from 40.6% in 1999 to 36.0% in 2003.⁷ Moreover, not all PC candidates bought into the party’s brand of right-wing liberalism. As the results of a recent survey attest, there were

significant differences of opinion among the party's politicians, with many candidates displaying classic, red tory tendencies. Far from united, the PC campaign slate epitomized the nature of the 'divided right' in Manitoba (Wesley, 2004, 2005).

These divisions appeared to play little role in the Conservatives' most recent leadership race, however. Stuart Murray – whose supporters lauded as having erased the party's debt since taking office in 2000 – was ousted after receiving only 55 percent support at the party's annual convention in March 2006. The coup, orchestrated by the party's executive and a corps of sitting MLAs, sparked a race that lacked the big names and publicity of previous Conservative leadership contests.

Following the announcement that red tory and early front-runner Brian Pallister, would remain in Ottawa as MP for Portage-Lisgar, the race lost much of its ideological tenor and public appeal. The resulting contest saw party insider and strategist Hugh McFadyen defeat Ron Schuler, a veteran, right-of-center tory MLA, and former Neepawa mayor Ken Waddell on the first ballot. The month-long campaign was devoid of any serious policy debate among the candidates – certainly much less than those of the 1970s and 1980s (Stewart & Wesley, forthcoming) – focusing instead on the leadership qualities of the three nominees. Whether these factors contributed to the relatively low level of media attention to the contest is uncertain, but – because of this lack of public salience – it is unlikely that the race has boosted Conservative popularity significantly in the short-term.

To this end, it is too early to determine precisely how the selection of McFadyen as leader will impact Conservative Party ideology and fortunes in Manitoba. If McFadyen's roots in the party are any indication, however, one might expect a continued decline of red toryism within the party; as Premier Filmon's chief-of-staff in the late-1990s, McFadyen oversaw many of the neo-liberal reforms that helped establish the province's New Right. As discussed below, such a strategy may be ill-advised considering the history of Manitoba politics and the New Democrats command of the collectivist center.

Discussion and Conclusion

One must be wary of over-interpreting these findings. Ideational analysis cannot 'prove' that ideas 'cause' political change. It cannot reveal whether the NDP's recovery was due entirely to its conversion to the third way, as opposed to the personal popularity of its leader. Nor can it prove that the Conservatives' abandonment of red toryism is more responsible for its relegation to the opposition benches than, say, its inability to raise enough funds to run an effective campaign under new campaign finance regulations (Wesley & Stewart, 2006). Such conclusions rely too heavily on monocausality, and are difficult to test without comprehensive public opinion polling.

Ideational analysis can only suggest *correlations* between changes in ideas and behavior. In the case of Manitoba politics, this results in a compelling argument,

however: The arrival of the third way and disappearance of red toryism *coincided* with shift the balance of power in Manitoba party politics. These events may well be related. If space in the collective center is limited to one party at a time, the New Democrats' popular brand of social democracy may have left little room for the Tories. Conversely, the PC choice to emphasize neo-liberalism over red toryism in its platform may have left room for the NDP's tempered version of social democracy, an opening exploited by the latter at the close of the twentieth century. Whatever the case – as seems to be a pattern in the history of Manitoba politics – the party promoting a moderate, collectivist vision of the province is also the one controlling the legislature.

This suggests that a proper ideological balance in either of the two major parties platforms is crucial to its success. Conservative fortunes appear highest when the party's programme features a certain 'tory touch'. Duff Roblin's decade-long term as Premier, the early years of the Filmon government, and the limited success of more liberal-minded leaders like Walter Weir, Sidney Spivak, Sterling Lyon, and Stewart Murray are cases-in-point. Regaining ground in the collective center may not be sufficient to return the Conservatives to power, but – if history is any indication – recapturing at least a portion of the party's red tory roots may be a necessary element to future success.

By the same token, when the New Democratic platform leans too much toward tax-and-spend, "Old Left" social democracy, the party's electoral success has appeared limited. In this sense, the third way has pointed the Manitoba NDP toward a level of electoral prosperity it never experienced, even under the 'mixed economy' approaches of Edward Schreyer and Howard Pawley. Although the duration of the party's electoral success – in particular, the extent to it can be maintained in the face of an economic downturn – remains questionable (Giddens, 2000: 13), the Doer New Democrats appear to have achieved a popular, third way balance between liberalism and social democracy.

In these ways, the trajectory of social democracy in Manitoba is closely associated with that of red toryism. Similar in terms of their belief in community, incrementalism and an active role for the state in society, historically the two ideologies have created a significant central battleground in the province's political spectrum. Ideology is certainly not the only factor determining the nature of the Manitoba party system. Yet, as demonstrated, it is crucial to our understanding of politics in the province.

Endnotes

¹ To Gibbins & Nevitte (1985), the term has been used as a symbol of patriotism, invoked by analysts seeking to establish Canada's uniqueness in relation to the United States. In this sense, red toryism is seen as a myth wrapped in the Union Jack or Maple Leaf: an artificial means of distinguishing Canada's British heritage from a 'purer' brand of American liberalism (Forbes, 1987). In this vein, critics of red toryism argue that, as a mode of political thought, it is closer to Whig liberalism than to the traditional toryism of feudal times (Preece, 1977; Ajzenstat & Smith, 1997), and that the Canadian 'right' has much more in common with American conservatism than the 'myth' portrays (Gibbins & Nevitte, 1985; Grabb et al., 2000).

² Patten (2001: 136-137) refers to this distinction as one between "high toryism" – an older, more elitist and paternalistic brand of conservatism – and "red toryism" – a more democratic and exclusive variety.

³ Tony Blair refers to this as creating "opportunity for all" – "the widest *possible* spread of wealth, power and opportunity" – as opposed to some absolute, "abstract equality" through social leveling (1998: 3; emphasis added). To Ed Broadbent (2001: 2-5), former leader of the federal New Democratic Party of Canada, this conceptual shift involves thinking of equality in terms of 'freedom of choice' rather than in terms of social entitlement. "To act freely is to make choices," he argues. "The less cash, the less choice; the less choice, the less freedom" (2).

⁴ The Liberals, meanwhile, have remained a party with little ideological room to manoeuvre. Having adopted a classic liberal position in the early half of the twentieth century, the party moved uneasily to the center as its success dwindled. Once there, the party platform – which borrowed elements from both sides of the political spectrum – was overshadowed by those of the Conservatives and New Democrats, whose regional support bases ensured better results at the polls. Without a distinct ideological or regional identity, the Liberals have languished in recent times, displaced both geographically and politically by the province's two dominant parties. For more on the Liberal Party in Manitoba, see: Wesley (2004: 47-50; 69-71; 136-160).

⁵ The "modern" Progressive Conservative Party in Manitoba emerged from the coalition government in 1958. The list of modern PC leaders does not include Bonnie Mitchelson, who acted as interim Conservative leader from May to November, 2000.

⁶ The Conservatives' 1993 Framework for Economic Growth focused efforts around developing skills, training and infrastructure to feed the province's burgeoning aerospace, telecommunications and agrifood processing sectors. In addition, lower taxes and relaxed regulations were seen as a means of positioning the province in the new free trade community. Moreover, the party privatized MTS in 1995, placed a freeze on public sector salaries, and introduced a wage-reduction program known to civil servants as "Filmon Fridays". The party was forced to weather a 1991 nurses strike, as a result of these and other restrictions placed on the healthcare industry. Undeterred, the Conservatives continued their neo-liberal reforms, further reducing the number of tax credits available to non-profit groups and eliminating child dental coverage. And, most notably in the 1995 campaign, the PC's promoted a socially-conservative view of society, stressing the importance of family values.

⁷ Information compiled from: Manitoba Legislative Assembly. *Elections Manitoba Website*. <http://www.electionsmanitoba.ca> (accessed: May 21, 2004).

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