

**From Socialism to Liberalism?: New Democratic Party Activists at the Half Century Mark**

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**Paper prepared for presentation at the annual meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Edmonton, Alberta, June 13-15, 2012**

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In June 2011, the New Democratic Party (NDP) held its fiftieth anniversary convention in Vancouver. There was much to celebrate. In the 2011 federal election held one month prior to the convention, the NDP, led by the popular and charismatic Jack Layton, surged in popular support and won a record number of seats, leapfrogging over the Liberal Party and forming the Official Opposition for the first time in its history. Since its founding in 1961, the NDP had hoped to emulate the situation in Britain where the Labour Party squeezed out the Liberals and became the main party of the centre-left; the party's founders believed that this required not only increasing support for the NDP among workers, but also winning over middle class "liberally minded" Canadians (Whitehorn, 1992: 51). The victory was in many respects, however, bittersweet; the right-wing Conservative government of Stephen Harper obtained a majority government, and Layton, who had won the hearts of many Canadians for his vigorous determination in the face of cancer, died two months later.

What attracted most attention at the convention was a proposed change to the preamble of the party's constitution that would remove references to socialism and social ownership written by the party's senior staff. While Layton had stated in 2003, shortly after his inauguration as party leader, that he was "proud to call myself a socialist" (Gindin and Panitch 2003), in 2010 he had changed his tune, stating that: "I'm not into labels, but I prefer the description 'social democrat.' I am the leader of Canada's social democratic party and proud of it" (Ivison, 2010). Although the resolution was not adopted and tabled for further revision, it does illuminate the evolution of social democracy in Canada and raise the question of what social democracy means in the present-day context.

Much has been written about the shift in the NDP in terms of policy and electoral strategy, situated in the broader context of the trajectory of social democracy in general over the past two decades (Stanford, 2001; Sheldrick, 2002; Carroll and Ratner, 2005; Laxer, 2006; Parker and Stephenson, 2008; Wiseman and Isitt, 2007). The general consensus has been that NDP has continued to moderate its policy positions, and that the party has increasingly distanced itself from its traditional base of support, trade unions and the working class. This was particularly true under the leadership of Layton, who revitalized the party after poor electoral showings in the 1990s, and led the party to a major breakthrough in the 2011 election, forming the Official Opposition for the first time.

There has been less study, however, of the ideological outlook and social composition of party activists. With the toning down of ideology by the party, has the membership too become less ideologically distinctive than in the past? My work follows on the work of Keith Archer and Alan Whitehorn (1997), who administered a series of interviews of convention delegates at the party's 1983, 1987 and 1989 conventions. Admittedly, my contribution is rather modest, based on interviews with 46 convention delegates at the party's 2011 policy convention in Vancouver, just after the party's remarkable showing in that year's federal election. Given modest resources, my findings can at best be said to be suggestive, rather than representative. Nonetheless, it is my hope that my findings can shed light in terms of the extent to which party activists have been impacted by the changes of the past two decades.

## **Modernization, Post-Materialism, and the Third Way**

The NDP, Janine Brodie and Jane Jenson observe, “resembles other social democratic parties in terms of its membership, financial base and formal links to the trade-union movement. Yet it enjoys nowhere near a majority of support of its claimed constituency – working people” (1988: 3-4). Compared to other advanced capitalist countries, class-based voting is less pronounced in Canada, as the impact of class on voting behaviour has been overshadowed by regional and linguistic differences (Nevitte et. al., 2000: 105). Even union members, at least prior to the 2011 breakthrough, have never given a plurality of their votes to the NDP (Parker and Stephenson, 2008: 2).

The social composition of the social democratic electorate in advanced capitalist countries has changed significantly since the postwar years (Clift, 2005: 5). As Gerassimos Moschonas notes, the relative weight of the core constituency of the social democratic vote – the manual working class – has diminished significantly for two reasons: (1) the number of manual workers decreased in both relative and absolute terms and (2) a decline in working class support for social democratic parties, although the former is more significant. The salaried middle strata have emerged as an increasingly important if not central constituency of social democracy, helping offset their traditional working class base. In particular, social democratic parties receive significant support from employees in the public and para-public sector and (the somewhat overlapping) intellectual professions who assert a significant cultural influence on the left (Moschonas, 2002: 111-13).

The influence of the salaried middle strata has been far more significant, however, among party members and activists, who have come to form the majority of the membership in social democratic parties (Padgett and Patterson, 1991: 90-94). Moschonas remarks that “[t]he ‘de-proletarianization of the social democratic membership base is spectacular” and that “the imprint [of the salaried middle strata] on the membership *far exceeds* their salience in the social-democratic electorate (where working class-popular representation remains strong), affecting the social and cultural identity, and fundamental structure, of socialist organizations” (2002: 120). The case of the Labour Party in Great Britain is illustrative. In 1987, while 64 percent of the Labour electorate was made up of manual workers, foremen and technicians and just 14 percent were senior managers, teachers and members of liberal professions, the educated strata represented 49 percent of its membership, and the ‘working class’ just 31 percent. Notably, about two-thirds were employed directly or indirectly in the public sector (Moschonas, 2002: 121).

This highly educated group – often referred to as the new middle strata – includes such professions as teaching, social work, health and the arts. Ideologically, they are characterized by their “cultural liberalism” and “post-materialist” values (Moschonas, 2002: 47-8). The concept of post-materialism was developed by Ronald Inglehart, who found that Western public opinion was shifting “from an overwhelming emphasis on material well-being and physical security toward greater emphasis on the quality of life” (1990: 5). Changing values and new issues such as feminism and ecology have expanded the scope of what constitutes the Left beyond traditional class-based politics (Inglehart,

1990: 374-5). And with the rise of neoliberal ideology social democratic parties, Moschonas observes, “have doubly ‘retreated’: they have become simultaneously more ‘neoliberal’ and ‘new left’” (2002: 157).

By the 1980s, electoral support for the NDP had expanded beyond its traditional labour base. Post-materialism had emerged as a significant predictor of partisan support, while the salience of class had lessened even further (Brym et. al., 2004: 311).<sup>1</sup> As Nelson Wiseman and Benjamin Isitt observe, in response to “currents spawned out of the New Left and demands from diverse social groups for recognition and equality, social democrats moved away from established institutions and embraced more fluid forms of issue-based coalition politics” (2007: 581). With disastrous electoral showings in the 1990s, the courting of new constituencies became a higher priority for the party. At the same time, the party’s organic links with labour continued to loosen (Wiseman and Isitt, 2007: 583).

Jeffrey Parker and Laura Stephenson (2008) view the changing electoral base and party platforms through the lens of post-materialism. As support for the NDP from its traditional labour constituency has been limited, the NDP has sought to broaden its appeal to other constituencies. The electoral strategy that resulted in strong showings for the party under Ed Broadbent in the 1980s could not be replicated under his successors Audrey McLaughlin and Alexa McDonough in the 1990s. The party’s poor showings in the 1993, 1997 and 2000 elections led to a rethinking of party strategy, which involved appealing to new constituencies as well as maintaining its support base. With more Canadians adopting a post-materialist worldview, the NDP courted two constituencies in which post-materialist values are particularly prevalent – namely, voters concerned with environmental issues and young people. This was particularly true under the leadership of Layton (Parker and Stephenson, 2008: 7-8). Examining party platforms from the 1988 through 2006 elections, Parker and Stephenson note that there was a shift in terms of issues prioritized. The 1988, 1993 and 1997 platforms prioritized labour and employment issues, while labour issues were less emphasized in the 2000 and especially the 2004 and 2006 platforms. In contrast, education and environmental issues received less attention before 2000, but were especially prominent in 2004 and 2006 (Parker and Stephenson, 2008: 4-6).

To what extent did the targeting of these new constituencies have on the social composition of the NDP electorate? Remarkably, in examining the Canadian Election Studies (CES) between 1988 and 2006, Parker and Stephenson found that the proportion of voters concerned with environmental issues remained stable and that the proportion of young voters actually declined. Meanwhile, union membership remained a significant predictor of NDP support throughout this period, with the relationship being most pronounced in the 2006 election (Parker and Stephenson, 2008: 9-12). Thus, the NDP

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<sup>1</sup> In 2005, “post-materialists” represented 28 percent of the Canadian population, up from 16 percent in 1980 (Basanez, Inglehart and Nevitte, 2007: 27).

<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Autoworkers union (CAW), for instance, adopted a policy of ‘strategic voting’, of endorsing the Liberal or NDP candidate most likely to defeat the Conservative

has retained if not solidified its support among its traditional labour constituency, while the inroads into new constituencies have been limited.

The process of ‘modernization’ accelerated under Layton, with the party centralizing its communications capacities, more aggressively making use of polling and marketing, and imposing tighter control over the party’s message (Cooke, 2011). And in the policy area, Lynda Erickson and David Laycock observe that

...the NDP’s new approach has primarily entailed aggressively engaging rather than retreating from economic issues, not proposing either tax increases or deficits, simplifying the content and appeal of the economic platform, and making a serious for the environmental vote. This policy modernization for the NDP is conditioned by efforts to do all of this consistent with social democratic principles of social equity and social justice (2009: 125).

The road to modernization was not initially a smooth one. In 1998, the party leadership under Alexa McDonough began a makeover of the party that attempted to emulate the electoral successes of Tony Blair’s “New Labour” and other “Third Way” social democratic parties in Europe. This attempted makeover was controversial – creating a rift between “traditionalists” and “modernizers” – but was largely unsuccessful (Stanford, 2001: 85-6). The party also faced a challenge from the New Politics Initiative (NPI), which called for the dissolution of the NDP and its replacement by a more left-wing and activist party, with a focus largely on post-materialist issues (Parker and Stephenson, 2008); the NPI proposal received the support of nearly 40% of delegates at the party’s 2001 convention. The acceleration of modernization and moving the party to the political centre under Layton, Murray Cooke argues, was aided by two factors: (1) Layton’s previous history of involvement in social movements and support from key NPI leaders allowed him to successfully coopt the party left; and (2) unions, which played a key role in blocking the attempted Third Way makeover under McDonough, were politically in disarray (Cooke, 2011).<sup>2</sup> From 2004, trade unions were less visible in NDP campaigns (Whitehorn, 2005; Erickson and Laycock, 2009: 111-12).

How have the changes over the past two decades impacted party members and activists? William Cross and Lisa Young (2002), surveying the membership (rather than just convention delegates) of Canada’s (then) five major parties, found that NDP members were ideologically distinctive in terms of much greater support for government intervention in the economy. Yet the impact of the acceleration of “modernization” under Layton on party activists still remains in question. Has there been a pronounced “de-social democratization” of the party’s activist base? Does the more “liberal” orientation of the NDP attract a differ sort of member? Should we expect NDP convention delegates to have become both more “neoliberal” and “post-materialist” in their ideological outlook?

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<sup>2</sup> The Canadian Autoworkers union (CAW), for instance, adopted a policy of ‘strategic voting’, of endorsing the Liberal or NDP candidate most likely to defeat the Conservative candidate in a particular riding. The NDP was also impacted by changes to the election financing laws in 2004, which banned union donations to federal parties and limited the amount that one union (and not union locals) could give to candidates and riding associations (see Jansen and Young, 2005).

## **Methodology**

A survey was conducted of convention delegates at the party's 2011 convention, held June 17-19 in Vancouver. The survey took about ten minutes to complete and was interviewer-administered. A total of 46 delegates were interviewed. For the purposes of historical comparability, a selection of questions from Archer and Whitehorn's surveys were repeated. Most questions were based on a Likert scale in which respondents were given a statement and expressed whether they strongly agreed, agreed, were uncertain, disagreed or strongly disagreed. In most cases, results will be compared with the 1987 survey, from which most data is available.

It bears repeating that given the small sample size – about 1500 delegates attended the convention – the results of this survey should be seen as suggestive rather than representative.

## **Demographic Profile, Subjective Class Location and Ideological Composition**

Given the convention's location in Vancouver, it is not surprising that a plurality of respondents (46%) resided in British Columbia or Yukon Territory. Significant proportions also came from Ontario (28%) and the Prairie provinces (20%). There were three delegates from Quebec in the sample (7%); no delegates from Atlantic Canada were in the sample. Nine out of ten interviewees spoke English at home. Although young people were very well represented at the convention, they were almost certainly overrepresented in the sample, with nearly two-fifths being under 30 years of age. Males were almost certainly overrepresented as well, outnumbering females by a two to one margin.

NDP convention delegates are a highly educated group. Of those who had completed their educations, the majority (63%) had a university degree, and more than a quarter (28%) had a postgraduate degree (i.e. MA, Ph.D., law degree). Nearly all respondents (93%) had at least some college or university education. This corresponds with Archer and Whitehorn's findings of the high educational attainment of NDP activists – nearly four-fifths of delegates in both 1987 and 1989 had attended college or university (1997: 16). They observe that “[t]his...suggests that delegates are more likely to be recruited from the articulate ‘haves’ in society than from the least skilled and educated strata” (1997: 18).

One out of four respondents worked in what can be classified as professional occupations – more than a third if students and retirees are excluded – which further suggests the middle class nature of delegates. The significant representation of trade union officials (7%), is representative of both the middle class nature of activists but also the party's historic ties to the trade unions. More than one third of respondents were currently union members, rising to over half if retirees and students are excluded. The occupational profiles of the 1983 and 1987 conventions (the occupation question was not included in 1989) were already heavily tilted toward the middle class (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 16).

Incomes among respondents were not especially high – half of respondents reported household incomes of less than \$50,000 and just over one-sixth reported household incomes of \$100,000 or more. It is highly likely that incomes among

convention delegates were higher, given the high representation of young people and retirees in the sample. The demographic characteristics of the 2011 sample are included in Table 1. Overall, it can be said that the educated middle strata are especially well represented among party activists, as was the case in the 1980s, with the high level of union membership likely suggesting high representation in the public and para-public sectors.

In terms of subjective class location, respondents identifying as middle class (63%) outnumbered those who identified as working class (33%) by nearly a two to one margin. Only a small number of respondents (9%) identified as “upper middle class.” Interestingly, delegates in the 1980s were much more likely to identify as middle class; if we look back further to surveys of 1970s delegates, roughly one-third identified as working class, the same as among 2011 respondents (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 19; Whitehorn, 1992: 110).

With regard to ideological self-description, a plurality (46%) identified as “socialists” (including “democratic socialists”), slightly outnumbering those who identified as social democrats (37%). Three respondents (7%) stated that they were left of centre, centre-left or “small-“l” liberal. With the toning down of ideology by the party, the preference for the more radical “socialist” identification is somewhat surprising. Indeed, a plurality of respondents in the 1980s preferred the term “social democrat.” Perhaps the socialist identification was heightened by the debate over the constitutional preamble at the convention.<sup>3</sup> The ideological self-description of delegates surveyed since the 1980s is included in Table 2.

The remainder of the survey, for discussion purposes, will be organized into three sections. The first section will assess responses to questions about the NDP. The second deals with delegates’ views on an array of policy questions including trade union rights, provincial rights and Quebec, criminal justice, foreign policy, public ownership and economic policy. The third deals with spending priorities in various areas. The survey results for these sections are included in Tables 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

## **Views on the NDP**

A majority of respondents (59%) agreed with the statement that “the party “should move more clearly to the left”, while just under a quarter disagreed. The proportion had increased significantly from 1987, when delegates were closely divided on this question (40% agreed and 38% disagreed). A slight majority (54%) agreed that there are significant differences between the left and right in the party, while a significant minority (30%) disagreed. The perception of an ideological divide appeared to be greater

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<sup>3</sup> It could also be suggested that the disproportionate number of young people in the sample, who are perceived to be more radical, tipped the balance in favour of “socialist” over “social democrat” identification. However, age was not a significant factor in determining whether one identified as a socialist or social democrat. The most significant factors were union membership – with union members preferring socialist by a two to one margin and non-union members evenly split, and gender – with women preferring the “social democrat” label.

in the 1980s (63.3% in 1987), with only about one fifth (19.3%) disagreeing (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 21).

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) agreed with the statement that “the NDP is a socialist party.” This represents a decline from the 1980s, when more than three-quarters answered in the affirmative in both 1983 and 1987 (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 20). Given that the party’s identification with the socialist movement was in question at the time of the survey, the decline is not surprising, although an identity with socialism remains important to many party activists.

The majority of respondents (65%) disagreed with the statement that “the NDP should become more of a social movement and less of a political party,” but the proportion that agreed with this statement (26%) was up significantly from 1987, when just under one-sixth (16%) agreed (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 21).

In terms of the NDP’s relationship with trade unions, respondents overwhelmingly disagreed with the premise that unions exert too much influence in the party (70%), with just one-sixth agreeing. This does not represent a significant change from 1987 (where just 15% agreed and 74% disagreed) (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 21). Most respondents (57%) expressed satisfaction with the current relationship between the NDP and unions (“keep about the same”), while a significant minority (39%) stating that they wanted the relationship to be strengthened (just one respondent wanted the relationship to be weakened). In contrast, 1987 delegates were more divided: a near-majority (48%) felt the NDP’s relationship to unions should be strengthened, with a slightly smaller proportion (44%) opting for the status quo (8 percent wanted them to be weakened) (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 60). Thus, in spite of a loosening of ties to unions, party activists today appear satisfied with the current relationship.

Two questions dealt with the question of women and the NDP. Virtually all respondents (91%) agreed that the party should ensure a significant percentage of candidates and party officials should be women, while over three-quarters (78%) agreed that women should make up 50 percent of the party’s federal council. As expected, attitudes have become more liberal since the 1980s – with 48% and 63% agreeing with this statement in 1983 and 1987, respectively (Whitehorn, 1992: 131; Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 21).

## **Policy Attitudes**

In order to further examine the ideological outlook of delegates, respondents were asked if they agreed with the statement: “The central question of Canadian politics is the struggle between labour and capital.” A majority of respondents (63%) expressed agreement and just under a quarter (24%) disagreed. Interestingly, respondents in the 1980s (54% in 1987; 52% in 1983) were less inclined to agree with this statement (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 152; Whitehorn, 1992: 131).

The higher proportion embracing a class-based perspective of politics corresponds with more ‘pro-labour’ responses on questions of collective bargaining rights. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed (76%) that an NDP government should never interfere with free collective bargaining, and the same percentage agreed that the right to strike should never be restricted. The comparison with the 1980s is quite striking. Only about half (49%) of 1987 respondents agreed with the latter statement, and even fewer



(42%) agreed with the former (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 59). Responses were likely impacted by current events – at the time of the convention, the Harper government had recently announced its intention to introduce back-to-work legislation in the Canada Post contract dispute and thus curtailing collective bargaining rights.

The question of federalism and Quebec are particularly interesting, given that the party's historic breakthrough there in the election just prior to the convention. A majority (61%) supported special status for Quebec, a slight drop from the two-thirds support in 1987 (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 69). With regard to Quebec's right to self-determination, a new, more specific was asked, namely: "Quebec should be allowed to secede from Canada by a simple majority vote" rather than a more generic statement about self-determination (and thus is not directly comparable with the 1980s surveys). Here respondents were more divided, with those opposed (46%) edging out those who agreed (39%). It should be noted that the NDP officially endorsed a '50% + 1' position in its 2005 Sherbrooke Declaration.

The Quebec breakthrough also raises questions about provincial autonomy. Respondents overwhelmingly rejected (72%) the right of provinces to opt out of federal programs, with less than one fifth agreeing; the corresponding figures in 1987 were 30% and 46%, respectively (nearly a quarter were uncertain) (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 70). Thus it appears party activists have become even more strongly 'federalist' in orientation. The traditional social democratic position in English Canada has supported a strong federal government for universal social programs, but the Quebec Left mostly supports provincial autonomy as a means of defending Quebec's more progressive regime.

On the question of crime, respondents overwhelmingly disagreed (70%) that the justice system was too lenient, and just 13% agreed. This represents a significant shift from the 1987 survey, when less than half (46%) expressed disagreement and a significant minority (33%) agreed (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 153). One question about foreign policy was asked, about Canada's membership in the NATO alliance.<sup>4</sup> Just over half of respondents (52%) opposed Canada's membership in NATO, while nearly one in three (30%) were supportive. The corresponding figures in 1987 (57% opposed, 28% supportive) were roughly similar (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 164).

Three questions addressed public ownership. More than three quarters of respondents (76%) disagreed that public ownership is less necessary than was the case in the Great Depression of the 1930s; a majority (57%) *strongly* disagreed. A similar proportion (78.6%) expressed disagreement in 1987. More than two-thirds (70%) supported the nationalization of key resource industries. This represents a slight decline from the 1987 figure (74%), but perhaps more notable is the increase in the proportion that disagreed (from 10% to 22%). Virtually all respondents (94%) believed that more public ownership was needed. This was higher than the nearly four-fifths (79%) that agreed in 1987 (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 134-5), although more of the Canadian economy was under public ownership at that time.

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<sup>4</sup> Incidentally, just prior to the convention, the NDP voted in Parliament to support the intervention of NATO in Libya. The party's historic opposition to NATO, which the party began to water down in the 1980s (see Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 161), had long been abandoned.

A majority (61%) agreed that an NDP government should seek to reduce government deficits as much as possible, while more than one of four (26%) disagreed. The proportion expressing agreement is higher than was the case in the 1980s (50% in 1987, 57% in 1983). This could be interpreted as a shift to the right and an embrace of neoliberalism by party activists, although it should be noted that this has long been an issue of contention among Canadian social democrats (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 138-9; Whitehorn, 1992: 131).

Indeed, as was the case in the 1980s, there is no inconsistency between support for reducing deficits and support for greater government spending to enhance equality and social programs, supported overwhelmingly by delegates. There was unanimous support for raising taxes on the wealthy (70% strongly agreed), and near-unanimous support (96%) for a guaranteed annual income (52% strongly agreed). Both of these ideas received near-unanimous support (98% and 89%, respectively) in 1987 as well. In contrast, there appears to be a significant shift in terms of delegates' views on the issue of full employment. A majority believed that full employment (63%) was a realistic goal, while one out of five disagreed. This is down significantly from the 1987 survey where there was near-universal agreement (90%) (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 153). A probable explanation for this shift is that support for full employment was a central issue for the NDP in the 1980s (Levitt, 1996), but the party, as has social democracy in general, retreated on this issue.

A significant minority – one out of three respondents – agreed that “a means test may be necessary for some social programs, with a slight majority (57%) disagreeing. The figures for 1987 (29% and 60% agreeing and disagreeing, respectively) are similar. This does suggest that there is not a consensus among NDP activists in supporting universality in social programs (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 153-4), although it should be noted that there was some confusion regarding this question, as several respondents

### **Spending Priorities**

The final set of questions addressed the question of spending priorities in six areas: education, housing, welfare, health, foreign aid, the arts, the military (defence), and police. This again involved use of a Likert scale, with respondents being asked whether they wished to see spending in said areas greatly increased, slightly increased, kept about the same, slightly decreased, or greatly decreased. As was the case in the 1980s, respondents were most supportive of increased spending for the redistributive and ‘nurturing’ side of the state, and supportive of cutting back the ‘coercive’ side (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 140-1).

All respondents wanted increased spending in the area of education, and nearly all (91%) wanted spending to greatly increase. There was near-universal support for increased spending in housing (96%) and health (94%), with majorities (74% and 67%) wanting spending to greatly increase. Nine-tenths (89%) supported increased spending on welfare, but support was somewhat more lukewarm, as less than half (39%) believed welfare spending should be greatly increased, while one-tenth felt spending should be kept at about the same level. The corresponding 1987 figures for support of increased spending in education, housing, welfare and health were 91%, 89%, 87% and 83%, respectively (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 140).

In the areas of foreign aid and arts funding, majorities again expressed support for increased spending (74% and 85%, respectively), but fewer than half wanted spending to greatly increase for either (35% and 44%, respectively). Support for increased arts funding has gone up significantly from the 1987 survey (66%), while the proportion support an increase in foreign aid (77%) is similar (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 140).

With regard to military and police spending, a majority of respondents (63%) supported cuts to military spending, with most of the rest (28%) supporting current spending levels and fewer than one in ten (9%) supporting increased spending. 1987 delegates expressed similar levels of support for defence spending cuts (60%), but the proportion supporting increased spending (22%) was notably higher. On police spending, delegates were split evenly (39% each) between supporters of spending cuts and retaining current spending levels, with more than one in five (22%) supporting an increase in police spending. In 1987, virtually the same proportion (22%) supported an increase in spending, while one in three (31%) supported less spending and a near-majority (47%) took the 'status quo' position (Archer and Whitehorn, 1997: 140). It appears that support for the coercive side of the state has dwindled even further among NDP activists, although it can be suggested with the 'tough on crime' policies of the Harper government coming under much scrutiny from Canadian progressives, this may have had an impact on the attitudes of respondents.

## **Conclusion**

The "modernization" and "de-social democratization" of the NDP in terms of policy, ideology and strategy has been more clearly documented. The changes in terms of the ideological outlook of members have been less documented. The results of this survey suggest that there has not been a significant "de-social democratization" in outlook, while the "de-proletarianization" was already well under way in the 1980s. On the whole, there is only slight evidence of a simultaneous "neoliberal" and "post-materialist" shift in outlook, and a majority could be said to adhere to traditional social democratic values. Respondents were even more socially liberal than in the 1980s, were more favourable to a more social movement-oriented party, were more inclined to identify as socialists rather than social democrats, took a more 'radical' stance on labour rights, and remained largely committed to public ownership. Perhaps the most notable shift, in line with the "de-social democratization" thesis, is the much lower proportion viewing full employment as a realistic goal, compared to near-universal agreement in 1987, when the commitment to full employment was a central issue.

With a small sample size, the findings of this survey are hardly definitive, and can hardly be split down demographically to examine age, gender, region, etc. Although it is only possible to draw inferences from this survey, the fact that its findings do largely square up with earlier studies suggests there is compelling evidence that these results are reliable. An examination of whether members who have joined the party within the last decade after the "modernization" process accelerated could have been helpful. And many policy areas were neglected, such as environmental issues. Certainly, more thorough research on the current views of party activists is needed.

**Table 1. Selected Demographic Characteristics, 2011.**

	%
<b>Region</b>	
British Columbia/Yukon	45.7
Ontario	28.3
Prairies	19.6
Quebec	6.5
Atlantic	0.0
<b>Age</b>	
20-29	39.1
30-39	13.0
40-49	10.2
50-59	13.0
60+	23.9
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	67.4
Female	32.6
<b>Language spoken at home</b>	
English	89.1
French	4.3
Other	6.5
<b>Educational attainment*</b>	
High school or less	7.5
Some college or university	30.0
Bachelor's degree	35.0
Postgraduate degree	27.5

**Table 1 (cont'd.)**

**Occupation**

Professional	23.9
Retired	19.6
Student	13.0
Technical or paraprofessional	13.0
Party official	8.7
Trade union official	6.5
Manager	4.3
Unskilled	4.3
Unemployed	4.3

**Household income**

Less than \$30,000	15.2
\$30,000-\$50,000	34.8
\$50,000-\$75,000	23.9
\$75,000-\$100,000	6.5
\$100,000-\$150,000	10.9
\$150,000 or more	6.5
Uncertain	2.2

**Union membership**

Yes	37.0
No	63.0

\*Excludes current students who have not completed their educations.

**Table 2. Selected Ideological Characteristics, 1983-2011**

	1983	1987	1989	2011
<b>Subjective class location (open-ended)</b>				
Upper	0.5	0.3	0.7	0.0
Upper middle	11.1	14.6	20.5	8.7
Middle	45.1	40.7	47.3	37.0
Lower middle	14.2	14.5	12.1	17.4
Working	27.7	24.7	18.2	32.6
Lower	1.3	1.6	1.3	2.2
<b>Ideological self-description (open-ended)</b>				
Socialist	29.6	27.6	N.A.	45.7
Social democrat	44.6	48.4		37.0
Liberal/small-'l' liberal	1.5	0.9		2.2
Left of centre/centre-left	--	--		4.3

**Table 3. Views on the NDP, 2011.**

Statement	% Strongly agree/ agree	Uncertain	Strongly disagree/ disagree
The NDP should be more of a social movement and less of a political party.	26.1	8.7	65.2
The NDP should move more clearly to the left.	58.7	17.4	23.9
There are significant differences between the left and right in the party.	54.4	15.2	30.4
The NDP is a socialist party.	65.2	6.5	28.3
Provincial sections of the NDP should have the right to develop policies of fundamental importance independent of the federal party.	60.8	6.5	32.6
Trade unions have too much influence in the NDP.	17.4	13.0	69.6
The NDP should ensure that a significant percentage of its candidates and party officers are women.	91.3	6.5	2.2
Fifty percent of the federal council should be composed of women.	78.3	8.7	13.0
	%Strengthen	%Keep the same	% Weaken
Should the relationship between the NDP and unions be strengthened, weakened or kept about the same?*	39.1	56.5	2.2

\*One respondent was uncertain.

**Table 4. Policy Attitudes, 2011.**

Statement	% Strongly agree/ agree	% Uncertain	% Strongly disagree/ disagree
<b>Ideological outlook</b>			
The central question of Canadian politics is the struggle between labour and capital.	63.0	13.0	23.9
<b>Unions and Labour</b>			
An NDP government should never interfere with free collective bargaining.	76.1	4.3	19.6
The right to strike should never be restricted.	76.1	4.3	19.6
<b>Quebec and Provincial Rights</b>			
No special status for Quebec.	21.7	17.4	60.9
Quebec should be allowed by a simple majority vote.	39.1	15.2	45.7
Provinces should have the right to opt out of federal programs.	19.6	8.7	71.7
<b>Criminal Justice</b>			
The courts have been too lenient in handing out sentences to criminals.	13.0	17.4	69.6
<b>Military and Foreign Policy</b>			
Canada should remain in NATO.	26.1	17.4	52.1



**Table 4 (cont'd.)****Public Ownership**

Public ownership is less required today than it was during the Great Depression of the 1930s.	15.2	8.7	76.1
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Canada should nationalize key resource industries.	69.6	8.7	21.7
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**Deficit and Debt**

An NDP government should seek to reduce the government deficit as much as possible.	60.9	13.0	26.1
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**Inequality and Social Programs**

The rich should pay more in taxes.	100.0	0.0	0.0
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Full employment is a realistic goal.	63.0	17.4	19.6
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All Canadians should have the right to a guaranteed annual income.	95.7	2.2	2.2
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A mean test may be necessary for some social programs.	32.6	10.9	56.5
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**Table 5. Attitudes Toward Government Spending in Selected Policy Areas, 2011.**

Policy Area	% Greatly/slightly Increase	% Keep about the same	% Greatly/slightly decrease
Education	100.0	0.0	0.0
Housing	95.7	4.3	0.0
Welfare	89.1	10.9	0.0
Health	93.5	4.3	2.2
Foreign aid	73.9	19.6	6.5
The arts	84.8	15.2	0.0
Military	8.7	28.3	63.0
Police*	21.7	37.0	37.0

\*Two respondents were uncertain.

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