

**THE ELECTORATE WITH A JANUS-FACE:
FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL DISCREPANCIES IN CANADIAN
ELECTORAL HISTORY**

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Abstract: Uniquely in Canada, electoral gaps within provinces between federal and provincial arenas are often as wide as differences among provinces. This paper provides a macro-level account with a unified dataset dating back to the first decade of the 20th century. One force in play involves the appearance of niche parties, mainly in provincial elections, in provinces that sit uneasily in a Canada-wide partisan framework. The second force reveals both the power and the limits of Duverger's Law. After an initial surge of multipartism in provincial elections, provincial party systems remained quite consolidated, as Duverger would predict, even as the federal electorate continued to fractionalize. This discrepancy was especially marked where the CCF/NDP made inroads. Growth in the left vote induced strategic consolidation on the centre-right, but did so only in the provincial arena. The identity of the centre-right beneficiary varied over time and place, reflecting historical accident and path dependency. At the same time, provincial elections are a key counterfactual in explaining why federal elections are difficult to square with Duverger.

Keywords: federal elections; provincial elections; Canadian political history; electoral fractionalization; electoral strategy

*Iago: Those are the raised father and his friends.
You were best go in.*

*Othello: Not I; I must be found.
My parts, my title, and my perfect soul
Shall manifest me rightly. Is it they?*

Iago: By Janus, I think no.

The Canadian party seems as poorly integrated within provinces as across them, and the pattern seems unique to Canada. But such intra-provincial discrepancies are hardly universal even in Canada, nor do they always persist. Although controversies abound on sources and consequences of the discrepancies, there appears to be no recent macro-level accounting for long-term patterns. This paper fills the vacuum with a unified dataset dating back where possible to the first decade of the 20th century.

Two basic forces are in play. One involves the appearance of niche parties, especially in provincial but also in federal elections. Such parties appear in provinces—Quebec and certain Western ones—that sit uneasily in a Canada-wide partisan framework. The second process reveals both the power and the limits of Duverger’s Law. After an initial surge of multipartism, provincial party systems remained quite consolidated, as Duverger (1963) would predict, even as, *contra* Duverger, the federal electorate fractionalized. This discrepancy was especially marked where the CCF/NDP made inroads. Growth in the left vote induced strategic consolidation on the centre-right, and did so much more efficiently in the provincial than in the federal arena. The identity of the centre-right beneficiary varied over time and place, reflecting historical accidents.

Accounting for the Canadian pattern requires a combination of functionalist argument, which points toward causal mechanisms, and historical claims, which stay closer to description but have path-dependency as a systematic feature. The historical account is frankly inductive, and requires tempering of explanatory parsimony with faithfulness to the facts.

THE SCOPE OF DISSIMILARITY

The existence of serious gaps between federal and provincial elections has been on the record since at least the 1940s (Dawson, 1947). Systematic documentation has been spotty, however, and the last full-scale accounting seems to be Johnston (1980). And there is no prior attempt to scale the Canadian pattern to obvious comparators. The first steps, then, are to update the record and situate it. The most obvious comparison is with Australia, the federation most like Canada in geographic scope and parliamentary organization.

Figure 1 effects the comparison by decade since 1901, the first year of the Australian federation. Starting in the 1900s enables the Canada-Australia comparison, but it also captures the effective start of continent-wide party politics and mass suffrage in Canada. Only in the 1900s did the Prairie provinces take their present form, British Columbia’s politics were officially nonpartisan before then, and the formation of the Laurier Liberal government in 1896 facilitated the emergence of *de facto* manhood suffrage. The indicator of the gap is a “dissimilarity” score

(Duncan and Duncan 1955)¹ for each federal election within a province or state paired with the closest provincial or state election:

$$Dissimilarity_{it} = 0.5 \sum_i |p_{i-fed,t} - p_{i-prov,t}|,$$

Where:

$p_{i-fed,t}$ denotes the i -th party's share in the federal election in year t ; and

$p_{i-prov,t}$ is the same, i -th, party's share in the provincial election closest to the federal one in time, whether earlier or later.²

Index values can be interpreted as the minimum percentage of the electorate that would need to shift among parties to transform one distribution into the other. The figure depicts distributions of dissimilarity for each decade's arena-election pairs.³ The format is a box plot (Tukey 1977), where the box bounds the 25th and 75th percentiles, the interquartile range. The "whiskers" that extend vertically from each box are slightly more exotic. The values represented by the horizontal bars at the end of the whiskers locate adjacent values, the observations closest to the "inner fences." The upper inner fence is the point whose distance between itself and the 75th percentile is 1.5 times the interquartile range. The lower fence is the corresponding value for the 25th percentile. Note that although fences are necessarily symmetrical, adjacent values are not. Points above or below the adjacent value, called outside values, are observations higher or lower than their respective fences.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Where in Australia gaps quickly shrank after the first decade, in Canada they grew. By the 1920s, Canadian median values were consistently higher than those in Australia. In the 1990s, Canadian values soared, with a partial retreat in the new century. But medians hardly tell the full story. In the 1920s, Canada's 75th percentile exceeded 20 percentage points, with outside values close to or over 50 points. In five of the last seven decades, the 75th percentile's value was over 40 points; by implication 25 percent of all scores were larger still. In four of the last five decades, outside values are over 80. In Australia, in contrast, no outside value has been greater than 30 since the 1940s. Without exception, Australian *extreme* values are below Canada's 75th percentile, and sometimes below Canada's median.

Canada's pattern did not go unnoticed. Indeed, it supplied early grist for the "divided government" mill that has come to preoccupy scholars in the US and elsewhere. Canadians were early to venture dynamic explanations for the gaps. Underhill and Ferguson (1955) and Wrong (1957) seem to be the first to argue that self-conscious balancing by voters is the key. Erikson (1988) credits these sources in his early application of balance theory to the US and later made

¹ Arithmetically, this is identical to the Volatility index proposed by Pederson (1979). Pederson's terminology seems to dominate in political science but it is important to give credit where credit is due, and Duncan and Duncan (1955) remains the canonical discussion of the index's properties in relation to the Lorenz curve.

² Not every provincial election is paired with a unique federal one and vice versa, depending on the timing and relative frequency of elections at each level.

³ With fewer states but more frequent elections, Australia produces about as many federal-state election pairs per decade as Canada does. Time units are dates of national elections.

his own contribution to the Canadian debate (Erikson and Filippov 2001). Even earlier, Dawson (1947) noticed the pattern and offered a different and simpler interpretation: the rise and decline of federal coalitions were anticipated in the provincial arena. The evidence is kinder to Dawson than to the others (Cutler et al. 2011). Notwithstanding disagreement about the exact mechanism, however, each interpretation focuses on short- or medium-term dynamics and each posits that voting in one arena reflects some reckoning about the other arena. But the sheer scale of discontinuity is far greater than necessary to enable balancing or to foreshadow turnover. Gaps on this scale more plausibly reflect long-term, structural factors.⁴

HISTORICAL LEGACIES

The key historical claim has five parts. Large parts of the argument are about differences among regions, not itself the central focus of this paper. But these have to be gotten through before we can fully cash history out for divergences between arenas within provinces.

The first part is that *the federation developed sequentially*, in contrast to Australia's Athena-like birth in 1901. Until the first decade of the 20th century, the four Western provinces were somewhat fictional: Manitoba and British Columbia had tiny electorates and were fiscal wards of the central government; Alberta and Saskatchewan did not exist until 1905. But the region came of age suddenly, such that by 1911 Saskatchewan was Canada's third largest province. Although subsequent decades saw demographic shuffling within the region, the West as a whole thenceforth rivaled each of Ontario and Quebec in demographic weight.

The second part is that *the template for politics in the largest parts of the federation, Ontario and Quebec, was set in the years before the West was called into existence*. Indeed the central Canadian pattern congealed even before the geographically confined federation of 1867 was proclaimed (Cornell 1962). Passions may have been less inflamed in Atlantic Canada, but divisions in that region echoed those in Ontario and Quebec. Events of the 20th century, the World Wars in particular, further catalyzed the Eastern Canadian mix and episodically made it spill over into the West. The exact makeup of issues shifted but the shifts did not alter the fact that the issues were basically cultural—a compound of language and religion—and were certainly pre-industrial.⁵ Western Ontario was a partial exception to this rule, as even in the 1850s its political economy and its politics anticipated those of the agrarian West (Brown 1957).

This is not to deny that cultural politics, Eastern-style, were irrelevant in the new region. As Table 1 and Figure 1 show, the Canadian pattern for the first two decades is basically indistinguishable from the mature Australian one. At this point, just as federal politics carried much the same charge in all regions, so were provincial politics still basically aligned nationwide with the federal arena. And some of the great cultural battles that disturbed Eastern politics concerned choices made in or for the West: the Riel Rebellions, bilingualism in the Northwest

⁴ Indeed Cutler et al. (2011) acknowledge this, making first differences in party shares the dependent variables in their analyses.

⁵ For an attempt to parse the cultural mix as it evolved and for further references, see Johnston (2011).

Territories, and Catholic educational rights in each of the Prairie provinces.⁶ The first governments of Alberta and Saskatchewan were creatures of Liberal federal governments.⁷ And the seismic shock that undid the West's version of the Eastern party system was, at bottom, cultural: the 1917 conscription crisis. Pressures for conscription may have been driven by geopolitical concerns (Willms 1956), but response to the issue was existential (Granatstein and Hitsman 1977): how British was Canada and what did it owe the Empire?

Even before the Great War, however, signs of tension with the old cleavage lines were evident. The 1911 election was the first continent-wide one to turn on an economic issue, protectionism versus free trade (Ellis 1939). That election was the last one dominated, coast to coast, by the same two parties. The Liberal party, backed by most Western voters, lost. Moreover, most of the Western Liberals elected in 1911 joined the Conservatives in advocating conscription and fought the 1917 election under a coalition label. With the end of the war, the old divisions could not be re-established everywhere in the West. Coalition weakened the Liberals' credibility an alternative to the Conservatives and the Conservatives themselves were now basically unacceptable. The most prominent ingredient in displacing the old cleavage line was agrarian insurrection, this time by farmers acting on their own. The critical federal election was in 1921.

This is when, according to Figure 1, the arenas began to diverge seriously. The median dissimilarity value for the 1920s is the highest for the next 60 years, and higher than any subsequent one in Australia. Figure 2 shows the legacy this created for the Western provinces. Median values for all four Western provinces are higher than for all provinces to the east, except Quebec (of which more in a moment). No less striking than the median values are the outside ones: the three westernmost provinces have featured elections where essentially the entire provincial party system comprised players that were absent from the federal scene, and vice versa.

[FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The third historical claim is that *the old politics of Eastern Canada had its own centrifugal dynamic*. Questions of language and religion make for hard bargaining, but in the late 19th and early 20th century both Liberals and Conservatives made a stab at it. Whether or not the old pattern was sustainable indefinitely, the Great War ended it. The Unionist coalition adopted conscription for overseas service and Liberals who stayed out of the coalition campaigned against it. The effect was to erase almost all of what remained of the Conservatives' legitimacy in Quebec, an exaggerated mirror image of outcomes in the West, and for mostly opposed reasons (Johnston 2008). This left the field open for opposition to Liberals, and made Quebec a site for nationalist third-party entry. This too is reflected in Table 1 and Figure 2.⁸

⁶ To be sure, political interests could diverge between a party's provincial wing and its Canada-wide apparatus, as with the Manitoba and federal Liberals during that province's schools crisis in the 1890s. But centripetal intra-party mechanisms still pulled against provincial forces with considerable success. See Crunican (1974) and Hall (1981).

⁷ In Saskatchewan, the Liberal implant was so successful that the Conservatives were scarcely able to mobilize and such opposition as appeared was a Saskatchewan-specific growth. See Table 1.

⁸ Although Quebec's distribution is more dispersed in the interquartile zone: more dissimilarity values between 60 and 70 points but also more at the low end, between 10 and 20.

The argument so far is mostly about differences among provinces, especially to distinguish the West and Quebec from the rest. This brings us to the fourth claim, which is specifically about within-province dissimilarity. *The centrifugal pressures within federal politics also produced wedges within provinces between arenas.* At the critical initial moment for party-system breakdown, two conditions amplified short-term divergence between arenas:

- ***The nature of the insurgents.*** Although the impetus to change was sector-wide, farmers' response to the crisis was weakly coordinated. If farmers were gravely distressed, their political expression verged on self-defeating. Farmers tended to reject party politics as such, much like their counterparts on the US Great Plains (Morton 1950; Lipset 1968). In each case where a farmers' party entered Parliament, the identity of the leader was not established until after the election. When handed power, farmers assumed it reluctantly. And agrarian insurgents approached electoral coalition-building in province-specific ways. Where the United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) were generally sympathetic to labour, the United Farmers of Ontario (UFO) were ambivalent and the United Farmers of Manitoba (UFM), actively hostile. The Saskatchewan group never really got out of the blocks. As a result, the character of agrarian insurrection was quite province-specific.
- Some of this was a matter of ***timing.*** Temporal links between Canadian federal and provincial elections are generally weak. As a Westminster system, election calls are somebody's strategic choice, in contrast to the mandated cyclicality of US elections. Canadian parliaments, provincial as well as federal, can last five years. Discretion over timing thus has considerable scope, in contrast to the tighter bounds around most Australian parliaments. For my argument, the critical point is that electoral impact from a given external shock can be highly contingent on accidents of timing. The sector-wide shock that drove Western farmers to action was the collapse in the price of wheat in mid-1921. In June of that year, the Liverpool price stood about 90 shillings per quarter (eight bushels), a gain of some 20 shillings over the year before. Over the next six months the price dropped in half, to the 40-50 shilling range, and recovery over the next four years was feeble.⁹

Meanwhile, agrarian mobilization was under way before 1921, more quickly in some places than others. This creates a kind of natural experiment. Elections before July 1921 yielded meagre returns:

- Ontario held the first postwar election in July 1919 and saw the first agrarian breakthrough. Western Ontario was still an important grain-producing region and the UFO awakened to find itself in government. It won a plurality of seats and formed a weak Farmer-Labour minority government. The UFO was in power when the price of wheat collapsed and was driven from power in 1923.

⁹ For this period Canadian producers were price takers in the Liverpool market (Marr and Paterson 1980). The price series is from the National Bureau of Economic Research, *Macroeconomic History: IV. Prices*, <http://www.nber.org/databases/macroeconomichistory/contents/chapter04.html>, series m04002, *Great Britain Wheat Prices 09/1845-10/1934*. Coding conventions for this series are at <http://www.nber.org/databases/macroeconomichistory/rectdata/04/docs/m04002.txt>. Prices are quotes from the end of the month and are not seasonally adjusted.

- Manitoba went to the polls on June 1920 as the price was rising. Notwithstanding profound unrest associated with the Winnipeg general strike of 1919, the Liberal government won reelection, although only as a minority. The next election came in July 1922, when the price was about 50 shillings. The Liberals lost and a UFM government replaced it.
- Saskatchewan's first postwar election came on June 1921, just as the price of wheat peaked. The Liberal government was returned with a handsome majority. Although farmer candidates won all but one of the seats they contested, the critical fact is that they contested few.¹⁰ The Liberals held on in 1925 with roughly the same vote as before. By 1925, however, the steam was going out of the national agrarian movement and there seems to have been little energy left over for organizing in Saskatchewan.

Elections from July 1921 on were a completely different story:

- Alberta's moment came on 18 July, as the price of wheat was dropping swiftly. The election returned a UFA majority. By the next Alberta election in 1926, the UFA had consolidated its position.
- The 1921 federal election arrived on 6 December, just as the price of wheat hit bottom. Although the federal wing of the agrarian movement was as reluctantly partisan as its provincial counterparts, agrarian distress was such that its candidates swept the field. The old parties were all but shut out of the Prairie West; indeed the region elected as many labour candidates as old-party ones. The province-wide vote for farmer candidates varied from 42 percent in Manitoba to 62 percent in Saskatchewan.

Accidents of timing thus produced massive discrepancies between adjacent federal and provincial outcomes in 1921. Accidents also had implications for the long run. The two provinces with elections during or after the global downturn in wheat prices yielded agrarian governments with no lasting counterparts elsewhere in the country.¹¹

The party-system crisis of the early 1920s then set up the fifth historical claim: in the West, there ensued for many decades a pattern that combined *idiosyncratic dominance and systemic febrility* (Blais 1973). Without fail, a province-specific insurgent survived by dominating the local party system from the moment of its birth. Such insurgents are not well-equipped for a system with orderly succession in office, however. Once they cease to dominate, they tend to disappear. The most spectacular example is the UFA. It governed from 1921 to 1935 and made Alberta the favourite province for progressively minded observers, including those sympathetic to organized labour. The UFA hosted the Calgary Convention, where the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was founded. In 1935, however, the UFA was consigned to the dustbin of history, a victim of the Great Depression. Its successor was Social Credit, which dominated the

¹⁰ Indeed, Lipset (1960, p. 157) argues that this is the key to the different trajectories in Saskatchewan and Alberta (*vide infra*): the Saskatchewan Liberals called their election before farmers could fully organize; in Alberta, the Liberals hesitated and when they did call the election, it was too late.

¹¹ For enduring patterns of divergence, temporal gaps between arenas are *not* important. For instance, adding a temporal-gap term to an estimation like that in Table 3 leaves the other coefficients undisturbed and adds no power to the overall estimation. The time gap is critical for explaining shorter-term reward or punishment of incumbent governments, however (Cutler et al, 2011).

provinces politics until 1971 and which would never be mistaken for a progressive force. The provincial pattern more generally is visible in Table 1. The UFM hung on for the 1920s but survived only by coalescing with the Liberals, something that was unimaginable for their Alberta counterparts. Social Credit jumped to British Columbia in 1952 and dominated the province's politics until 1991. Saskatchewan seemed immune to province-specific insurgencies. But starting in 1964, the old parties took turns mobilizing against the NDP and each provided a government of singular incompetence. By the 1990s it seemed necessary to start afresh, and the result is the Saskatchewan Party, currently the dominant player in the provincial system.

Quebec bears some resemblance to the West, in that a province-specific insurgent emerged in the 1930s only to fall apart as it ceased to be the top party in the 1960s. This was the Union Nationale, which yielded to the Parti Québécois. But the comparison should not be pressed further. Each Quebec party occupied the nationalist pole appropriate to its time. As the possibility of some form of secession became more plausible, a shift in the identity of the nationalist party might have been inevitable. Additionally, the nationalist-federalist dimension carries an ideological charge, but the polarity of the charge reversed in the 1960s. Before 1960 nationalism was clericalist and conservative; after 1960, it opened to the left (Behiels 1985).

Most of the action just described occurred in the provincial arena. The extent to which this is so is captured in Figure 3. The left panel, denoted "Dissimilarity," contains just the party-specific components of the total dissimilarity index values. These are absolute values and show the extent to which party support is different between arenas. Consistent with the argument so far, one group with particularly great dissimilarities is the heterogeneous "others," the most consequential of which are province-specific actors.¹² I refer to these parties variously as "niche" parties and "insurgents." Notwithstanding their heterogeneity these parties tend to operate on a single dimension—defence of a declining economic group or of an ethnoregional interest—and to have weak coalitional potential. The point is sharpened by reference to the right panel, labelled "Gaps." Here the data points are the signed components in the dissimilarity index, that is the difference for a province-election unit between a party's federal share and its provincial share. A positive value indicates that the party is stronger federally than provincially, and vice versa. Although the median value is slightly negative and outliers can be found among positives as well as negatives, the preponderance of values is in the negative. (The positive outliers reflect the distinctively federal insurgency of the Reform party and its parthogenetic child, the Alliance, in the 1990s.) The gap between the median and the 75th percentile (mostly positive values) is tiny, in contrast to the gap with the 25th percentile (all negative values). And the density of extreme values is much greater in the negative.

[FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 4 makes this more concrete by juxtaposing federal and provincial vote distributions by decade. The critical element in the plot is the top end of each box. For all decades before 1990, the 75th percentile value for "other" parties is higher in provincial than federal elections, in most decades much higher. This is even more the case with outside values. So it is not that insurgents

¹² The other is the Conservative party. This is one manifestation of the party's self-immolation in the 1910s and 1920s.

always fare better in the provincial arena. In many provinces there is next to no experience with insurgency. But where insurgents do appear they do best provincially. The exceptions are the 1990s and, weakly, the 2000s, the Reform/Alliance moments. Even in those years, extreme values are higher provincially than federally. The existence of the federal framework, then, permits partisan innovation in the provincial arena, without requiring that its successful products leak into the federal arena.¹³

[FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE]

The figure also extends the point about the durability of province-specific parties to insurgency as such. Although examples of such parties exist to the present, their overall incidence has clearly declined. It is tempting to infer that institutionalization as such—basically the duration of uninterrupted democratic elections—inhibits insurgency, as argued by Gerring (2005). The primary locus of insurgency was the newest parts of the federation, and perhaps they have outgrown it. It does not do to exaggerate this point, however. The Saskatchewan party is of only recent vintage, and insurgency persists in the oldest jurisdiction of them all, Quebec.

INVASION FROM THE LEFT

As the century advanced, a different dynamic came into play: the rise of a party of labour. This stage in the argument combines historically grounded idiosyncratic elements with functionalist logics familiar to students of other party systems. In a sense, farmers cracked open a door that a labour party was able to push through. The early stages of left mobilization thus partook of many of the idiosyncrasies that characterized the agrarian insurgency, including some of its ironies. As the decades advanced, however, the left party came to look more and more like those in other countries.

As with farmers, workers' early candidacies were sporadic and poorly coordinated. They tended to appear in isolated single-industry towns, especially in Alberta and British Columbia. The pattern was altogether similar to that identified by Lipset (1960, pp. 232-6, p. 249). Winnipeg and Vancouver were the major urban locales. The competing fragments of the union movement disagreed over the proper course of action; some of the most important, relatively speaking, were outright revolutionaries (McCormack 1977). Things began to settle down in the 1920s, as the farmers' electoral success was accompanied by a handful labour MPs. Actually being inside the corridors of parliament focussed minds and set the stage for a nation-wide party (Young 1969).

In the 1930s, the fragmented left—farmers' organizations, unions, socialist societies, various micro-parties, and socialist parliamentarians—congealed as a labour party. Even so, the full process required a further 29 years, from the initial founding of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) in 1932 to its refounding as the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. Although the CCF's beginnings as a federation testify to the fissiparousness of the early left, by 1937 the CCF was functioning as a quite unitary entity, more than its first leader, the prophetic J.S. Woodsworth, wanted (McNaught 1959; Young 1969). Outright marriage with organized

¹³ This proposition should not be confused with a more general one about the existence of federalism and the success of minor parties in national elections. See for example, Willey (1998), Chhibber and Kollman (2004), or Gerring (2005).

labour was delayed by conflict between class and industrial unions and their respective federations (Horowitz 1968), by awkward relations between international and Canadian unions, and by enfilading fire on the Communist flank (Abella 1973). But by 1961, these impediments were no longer in play. Since that year the new party grew more often than it shrank and presented itself as a Canada-wide actor.

For years, however, the partisan left was a disproportionately Western phenomenon. If in absolute numbers its Ontario base was larger than any other and its national office was quite focused on central Canadian issues, its base was largest in British Columbia, where it formed the official provincial opposition as early as 1933, and in Saskatchewan, where it first won power in 1944. Even after 1961, NDP support tilted West; only in the 1990s did this arguably cease to be true. This is consistent with the pattern identified by Bartolini (2000): cultural resistance to a secular, social democratic party was historically greatest in Catholic-dominated places (Johnston, 2012, Figure 7).

But where episodic growth and decay characterizes most province-specific parties, the NDP pattern has mainly been one of diffusion. Once the party reaches the inner circle, it tends to stay there. The NDP's geographic evolution is clear in Table 1. In the 1930s, British Columbia was the one province of real strength. In the 1940s, Saskatchewan joined the ranks, with the party forming the government for two decades after 1944. In Manitoba, the party ascended to opposition status in the 1940s but then sank to third. There things stood until the 1970s, when the NDP clearly established itself as one of the two central players. The NDP ascended to second place in Alberta in the 1980s but shrank in the following decades. In Ontario, the party attained rough parity with the old rivals in the 1990s, but then slipped back. The 1990s also brought an NDP breakthrough in Atlantic Canada: in Nova Scotia, the party ascended to rough equality with the Conservatives in opposition. In the new century the NDP pushed the Liberals aside.

Even so, the NDP remained more of a provincial than a federal phenomenon. Figure 3 shows this in the "Gap" panel. The median gap is zero, or slightly below zero if elections before 1935 are excluded. The distance from the median to the 25th percentile is nearly twice that to the 75th. But as with province-specific parties in Figure 4, so with the CCF/NDP. In many decades, the federal median is commonly above the provincial one. But the distributions' vertical reach is generally greater for provincial than for federal ones. Put in plain language, where the NDP is strong, it is stronger provincially than federally. But the opposite is also true: where it is weak, it is weaker provincially than federally. Federal elections certainly channel centrifugal forces, as Cairns (1968) reminds us. But the federal arena also features centripetal pressures, and however weak they may be, they are stronger in the the federal than in the provincial arena.

DIFFERENTIAL PRESSURE FOR CONSOLIDATION

The final piece in the puzzle reflects the Canadian system's failure to conform to Duverger's Law. Canadian multipartism was observed early and helped underpin how Duverger (1963) was ultimately received in the political science mainstream. The currently canonical statement is Cox (1997), which asserts that Duverger's Law applies at the constituency level only. System-wide bipartism requires an additional layer of coordination, in this case across constituencies. The standing derivation of Cox as applied to Canada is Chhibber and Kollman (2004), who argue that

Canadian exceptionalism proves Cox’s rule by showing that coordination failure falls mainly across constituencies. Locally, and indeed at the province level, bipartism prevails.

Well, no, it does not. Johnston and Cutler (2009) show that about half the total fractionalization in the national party system has come from breakdown at the local level. Figure 5 gives a sense of this by plotting the effective number of parties (ENP) (Laakso and Taagepera 1979) by decade in the federal and provincial arenas. The critical series for the moment is the federal one. As with the other box plots, province-years are the unit of analysis, so the distributions are for *province-specific* values. Provinces are not constituencies, of course, but practically speaking and on the Chhibber-Kollman logic, they are much closer to the local level than all of Canada is. The system’s initial bout of fractionalization came in the 1920s, and the subsequent upward trend in within-province fractionalization is not unbroken but is unmistakable. Where before 1920, the typical province featured two parties in federal elections, in the 1960s that value ascended to over 2.5 and by the millennium it was close to 3.0. Provinces varied quite a bit in this, of course.

[FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE]

For provincial elections, in contrast, the picture is decidedly more Duvergerian. In the 1920s and 1930s, province-level systems broke down as much as or more than their federal counterparts. This is consistent with the theme of party-system volatility and fissiparousness of earlier parts of this paper. Across later decades, however, no further trend is visible. If anything, provincial arenas are less fragmented now than they were 80 years ago, and the current median ENP is about 2.6. This is still more than the canonical 2.0, but it leaves a typical within-province between-arenas ENP gap of one-half an “effective party.” Duvergerian processes may not be wholly effective in the provincial arena, but they are strikingly more so there than federally.

In one sense the gap has grown because of fragmentation at the federal level. And federal fragmentation at the local or provincial level reflects the growth of the NDP. But the NDP has grown provincially as well, as Figure 4 shows. Indeed, in some provinces it has grown mightily. But there is essentially no relationship between NDP provincial strength and province-level fractionalization.¹⁴ How can this be?

The answer is that in provinces where the NDP has grown to major-party status, the shaded entries in Table 1, the rest of the party system has reacted just as in other countries: anti-socialist forces consolidated. In British Columbia, consolidation began as a Liberal-Conservative coalition, including Australian-style flirtation with a preferential ballot to facilitate anti-socialist coordination. The coalition was supplanted by insurgent Social Credit in 1952, a situation that lasted four decades. Social Credit was in turn supplanted by a resurgent Liberal party. In Saskatchewan, as mentioned, three different parties challenged the NDP—one at a time. In Manitoba, Liberal-Conservative contestation yielded to a Conservative-NDP system. The three provinces now look like the Britain-Australia-New Zealand complex in miniature: a standard-

¹⁴ Depending on the period for the time series and whether the setup deploys fixed or random effects, a bivariate time series-cross section regression indicates that a unit increase in the federal NDP share increases the federal ENP in a province by 0.25 to 0.30 points. Corresponding estimations for the provincial arena yield coefficients in the range of 0.0 to 0.005. Both sets of coefficients are overestimates, but the point stands.

issue labour party polarized against a local alternative whose identity is something of an accident of history. This has not happened—not yet at least—at the federal level.

Table 2 takes the anecdotes and presents an estimation across all cases. For each arena, the independent variable is the CCF/NDP share and the setup is a quadratic. The dependent variable requires a bit more explication. It is the second-to-first (SF) ratio for the two largest non-NDP parties. The logic of the ratio derives from Cox (1997), who uses the ratio to analyse runners-up. The expectation is of a negative relationship between NDP strength but a linear representation is not consistent with the logic of plurality. Critically, the logic is less impeded by other considerations in provincial elections than in federal ones. All the action is in the provincial estimation. On the federal side, neither the linear nor the quadratic term is larger than its standard error. On the provincial side, the quadratic term burns through.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Figure 6 turns this into a visual rendering, accompanied by a scatterplot. The contrast between arenas is complete. In federal elections, the relative standing of the old parties is essentially unaffected by NDP strength. The share for the second largest is on average about 70% as large as its rival's share, across the board. On the provincial side that ratio is basically the intercept, and the 95-percent confidence bands around the lines cease to overlap when the NDP share reaches 20 points. To circle back to an earlier observation, NDP growth in the federal arena basically fragments the vote. On the provincial side, it does no such thing; instead it forces its competitors either to coalesce or play a game of chicken. How coalescence or chicken play out reflects forces outside the model. Once it does play out, the result can sharpen differences between arenas within the province. It is one thing to observe, say, that Social Credit is stronger federally than provincially in British Columbia. It is another thing to find that Social Credit has won a non-socialist showdown and utterly marginalized both parties that dominate federal elections.

[FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE]

The provincial pattern is well known to the comparative study of elections. It epitomizes electoral shifts like those chronicled by Cook (1975) and stylized by Cox (1997). It goes to the heart of the logic of electoral reform—and its absence—as proposed by Boix (1999). The deviant pattern is the federal one. Accounting for it is not the task of this paper. For now, it suffices to note its existence.

EMPIRICAL SUMMARY

Three main sources of federal-provincial divergence have been identified. First on the scene were the insurgent parties. The earliest among these were farmers' parties, which embodied a program of sorts but which struggled to coordinate across provinces. Later insurgents were ideologically inchoate and usually confined to a single province. Next up was the CCF and its successor, the NDP. Of this party two things are relevant. One is that its entry was geographically constrained. Although it eventually overcame many of those constraints, for most of the 20th century it bore the marks of its origins. But, notwithstanding the propensity in Canadian

scholarship to think of the CCF/NDP typologically as a minor party,¹⁵ that is not the only way to see it. It ought equally to be seen as the local instance of a British-style labour party. Careful reading of the party's organizational development (Young 1969) makes this clear. And just as the rise of Labour in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand forced a reckoning on the old parties, so did the rise of the CCF/NDP in certain provinces. More often than not, non-socialist consolidation widened federal-provincial gaps.

These elements are brought together in Table 3. Each independent variable corresponds to data already introduced. The critical additional point is that each variable is the *provincial-arena* reading. Obviously, both levels must enter into the calculation of the federal-provincial dissimilarity. The question is which level drives variation in dissimilarity readings. On the logic of this paper and, frankly, on alternative tests, the level is provincial. For robustness, two estimations appear, one for the full 20th century and beyond and one for the years since the emergence of the CCF/NDP. The latter is a sterner test than the former, in that the initial appearance of the CCF is denied its effect and overall variance on the dependent variable is correspondingly compressed. Both estimations are additionally stringent in embodying fixed effects, which focuses variance on the longitudinal component.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

Even so, the patterns are clear and quite stable. Niche parties, province-specific or nearly so and lacking a firm ideological focus, dominate the landscape. Each percentage point of niche share translates into nearly a point of federal-provincial dissimilarity, other things equal. The impact of the CCF/NDP is one-half to two-thirds as great. The impact of provincial ENP cannot be translated into comparable quantities, but here too the effect is impressive. The basic point is that the greater the effective number of provincial parties, the *less* the federal-provincial dissimilarity. Recall that this effect is operating against a background of increasing federal *deconsolidation*. The less the provincial party system travels down that path of *deconsolidation*, the wider the gap between arenas.

DISCUSSION

In sum, the deep structural discontinuities between Canada's federal and provincial party systems are a compound of three sources. Most important is that provincial elections in certain provinces have been hospitable to niche or insurgent parties. The earliest insurgency featured principle and policy, in representing an agrarian interest and claiming a transcendent ideology. But in a pattern familiar from the US history of insurgency, voters commonly intended something less—or more?—than might be deduced from the party's official platform. Just as the deeply conservative Oklahoma yielded the largest share for the US Socialist Party (Lipset 1960, pp. 26-7), so did Alberta seem to anchor the left of the Canadian spectrum, only to move, seemingly, to the other end in 1935. Alberta is an extreme case but it has echoes in British Columbia and Manitoba. Quebec has its own history of parties ethnopolitical defence.

The second element is the geographical localization of the CCF and NDP. The CCF was quite confined to the West, proportionately speaking. Although the NDP was explicitly committed to a

¹⁵ See, for instance, the still-relevant stylization of the Canadian “textbook theory” by Sniderman et al. (1974).

Canada-wide presence, over most of its history it too tilted to the West. Critically the tilt was steeper in provincial elections than in federal ones. Unlike the niche parties, the CCF and NDP had staying power. Its trajectory was not always upwards but its electoral history was *not* of directionless volatility.

The third element built on the first two. As happened elsewhere, a show of electoral force by the CCF/NDP provoked a strategic reaction on the other side. The stronger the CCF/NDP the more its competition consolidated. This alone would produce gaps with the less consolidated federal arena. If the winner among the non-socialist rivals happened to be a province- or region-specific party, as happened with Social Credit in British Columbia or with the Saskatchewan party, the provincial-federal gap was only compounded.

Of course, this only begs the question of why a similar pattern has not prevailed at the federal level. At bottom, this reflects the continuing power of ethnocultural issues in the federal arena. But then, other systems, including Westminster ones, have been able to assimilate cultural politics into a basically bipartisan framework. Suffice it to say here that the key is Quebec and its role in sustaining a party of the centre, the Liberals (Bakvis and Macpherson 1995). Thanks to decades of Liberal dominance predicated on bloc-like behaviour in Quebec, voters in the rest of the country did not face the dilemma of rallying to the right to defeat the left, or vice versa. This era may have ended. But all this is a question for another paper.

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Table 1
Dominant Parties in Provincial Politics

Decade	BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NL
1900	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	
	Lib	Con	PrRt ^a	Con	Lib	Con	Con	Con	Con	
1910	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	
	Lib	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	Con	
1920	Con	Lib	Lib	UFM	Lib	Lib	Lib	Con	Con	
	Lib	UFA	Con	L:C	Con	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	
1930	Lib	SC	Lib	LPr g ^b	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	
	CCF	UFA	Con	Con	Con	UN ^e	Con	Con	Con	
1940	Lb:Co ^c	SC	CCF	LPr g ^b	Con	UN	Lib	Lib	Lib	
	CCF	Unity ^d	Lib	CCF	Lib	Lib	Con	Con	Con	
1950	SC	SC	CCF	LPr g ^b	Con	UN	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib
	CCF	Lib	Lib	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	Con	Con	Con
1960	SC	SC	NDP	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Con	Con	Lib
	NDP	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	UN	Con	Lib	Lib	Con
1970	SC	Con	NDP	Con	Con	Lib	Con	Lib	Lib	Con
	NDP	SC	Lib	NDP	Lib	PQ	Lib	Con	Con	Lib
1980	SC	Con	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	Con	Lib	Lib
	NDP	NDP	NDP	NDP	Con	PQ	Con	Lib	Con	Con
1990	NDP	Con	NDP	Con	Con	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib	Lib
	Lib	Lib	Lib	NDP	Lb:ND	PQ	Con	Co:ND	Con	Con
2000	Lib	Con	NDP	NDP	Lib	Lib	Con	Con	Con	Con
	NDP	Lib	Sask ^g	Con	Con	PQ	Lib	NDP	Lib	Lib

Entries indicate the two strongest parties in provincial elections, in order of strength, by province and decade. Cells outlined in bold feature a niche party. Shaded cells indicate strong CCF or NDP presence.

- a. Provincial Rights party, later absorbed into Conservatives.
- b. Liberal-Progressive coalition
- c. Liberal-Conservative coalition
- d. Liberal and Conservative joint slates, 1940 and 1944.
- e. The Union Nationale did not congeal until 1936 but many of its elements were visible in the 1935 election.
- f. The three parties were near parity in Ontario in the 1990s.
- g. Saskatchewan Party, formed 1997.

Table 2
Left Threat and Right Consolidation, 1900-2011

	Provincial	Federal
<i>CCF/NDP share</i>		
Linear term	-0.0006 (0.003)	0.0017 (0.0029)
Quadratic term	-0.00016 (0.00007)	-0.00004 (0.00009)
Intercept	0.70 (0.02)	0.68 (0.02)
Overall R ²	0.17	0.003
ρ	0.38	0.28
<i>N</i>	237	289

Note: Dependent variable is SF Ratio (Cox 1997) for parties of the centre-right. Time series-cross section estimation by GLS with fixed effects. Asymptotic standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3
Province-Level Sources of Federal-Provincial Divergence

	1900-2011	1935-2011
Niche parties' share	0.85 (0.05)	0.71 (0.07)
CCF/NDP share	0.55 (0.07)	0.39 (0.10)
ENP	-9.63 (2.20)	-8.78 (2.48)
Intercept	28.37 (5.31)	32.08 (6.63)
Overall R ²	0.72	0.75
ρ	0.08	0.26
N	244	193

Note: Dependent variable is federal-provincial dissimilarity score. Time series-cross section estimation by GLS with fixed effects. Asymptotic standard errors in parentheses.

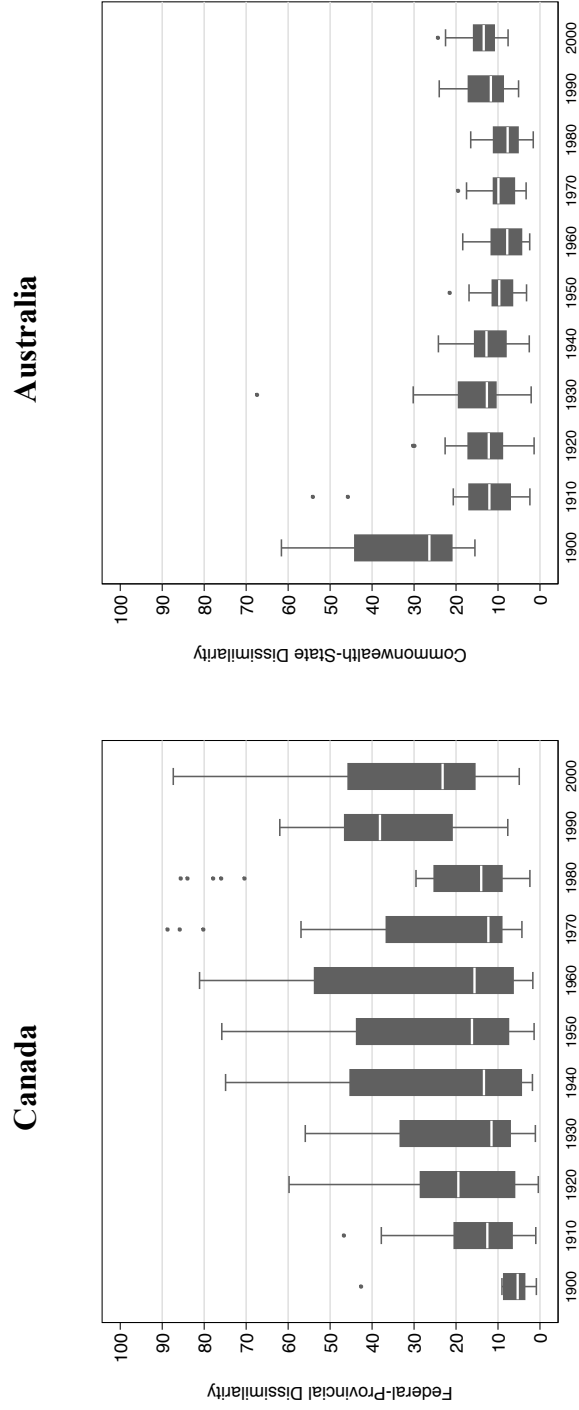


Figure 1

Electoral Divergence between Arenas, Canada versus Australia

Entries are distributions for the Index of Dissimilarity by decade. See text for calculation identities. Typical number of data points per decade: Canada = 30; Australia = 24.

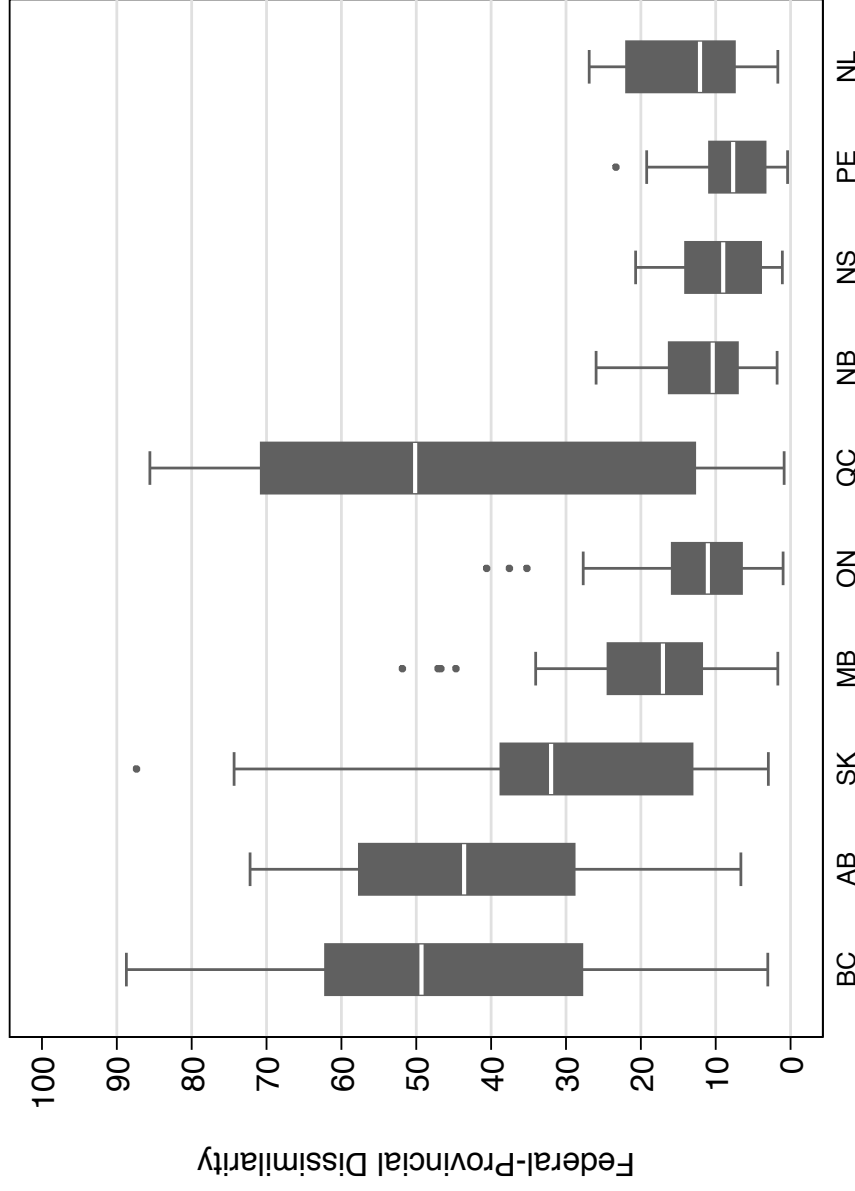


Figure 2
Dissimilarity by Province

Entries are distributions for the Index of Dissimilarity by province. See text for calculation identities. Typical number of data points per province = 25, NL = 17).

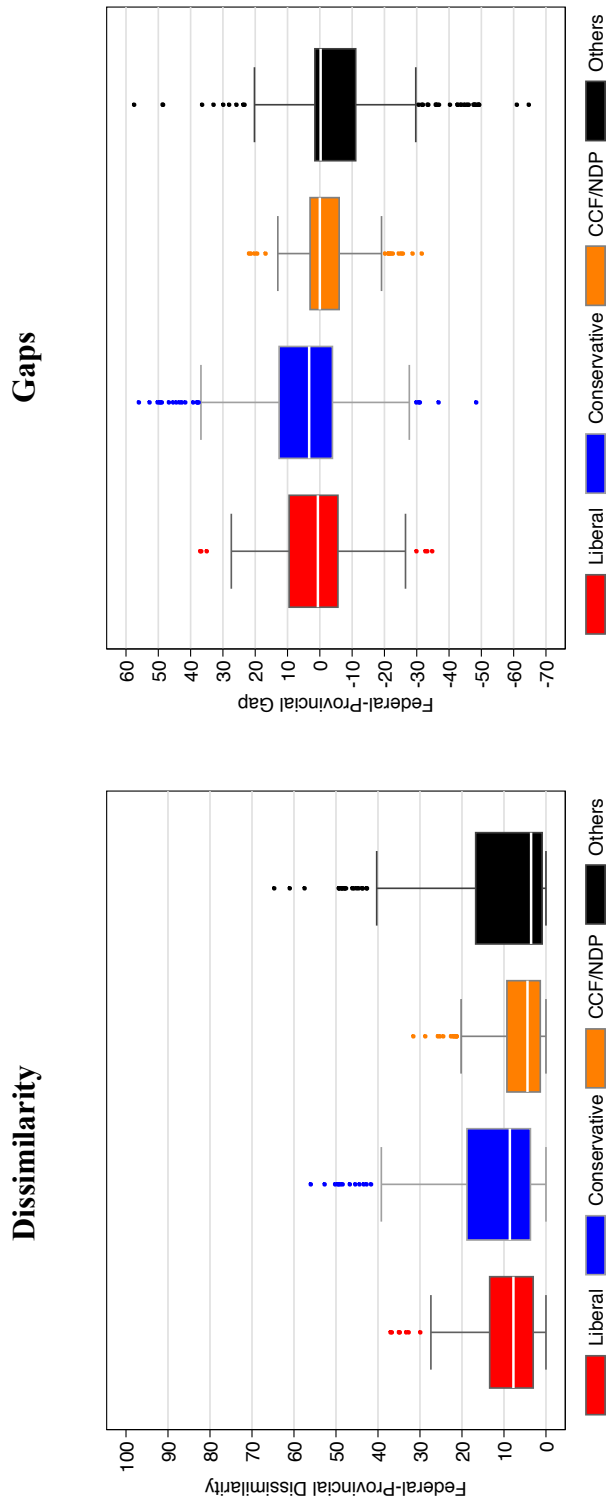


Figure 3
Dissimilarity and Gaps by Party

Entries are distributions for the Index of Dissimilarity by party. See text for calculation identities. Typical number of data points per party = 250; CCF/NDP = 208.

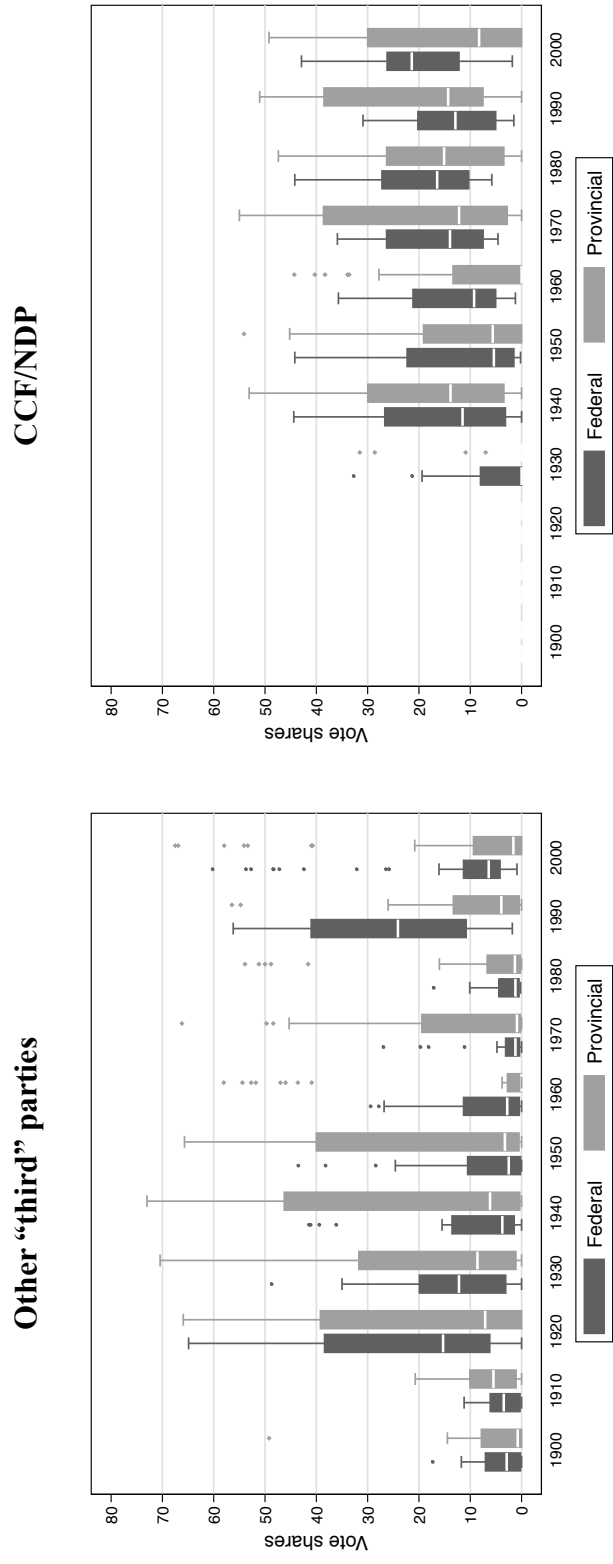


Figure 4
CCF/NDP and "Other" party shares, federal and provincial by decade
 Entries are distributions of party shares in provincial electorates.

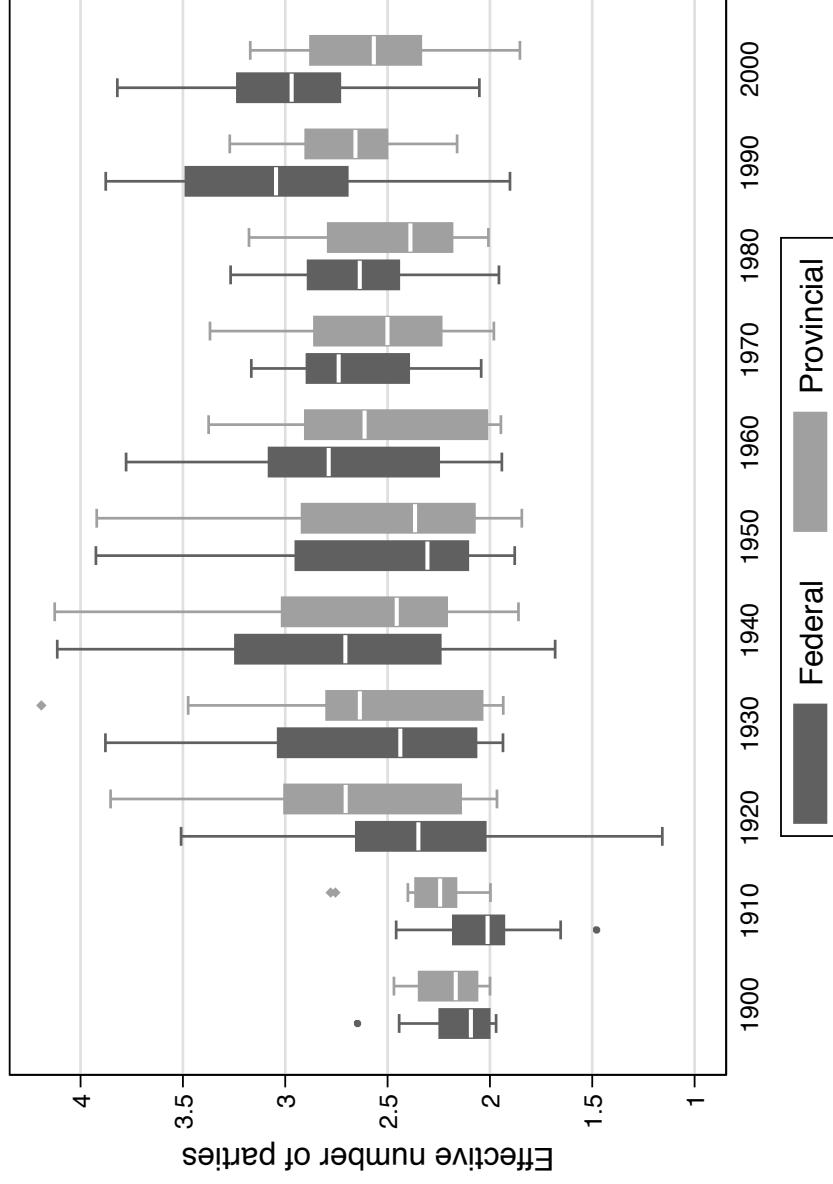
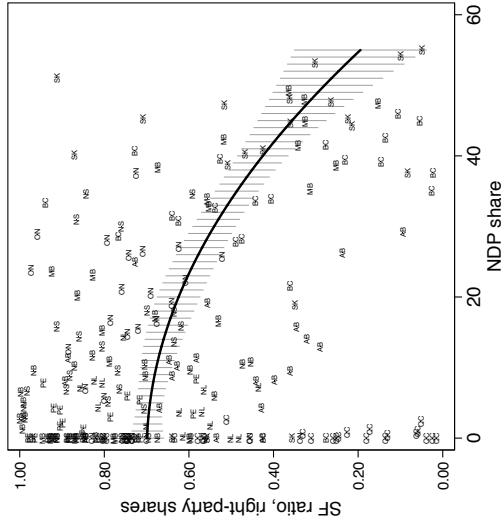


Figure 5
Effective Number of Parties, Federal and Provincial by Decade

Note: Entries in box plots are Laakso-Taagepera (1979) ENP values for the popular vote by decade.

Provincial



Federal

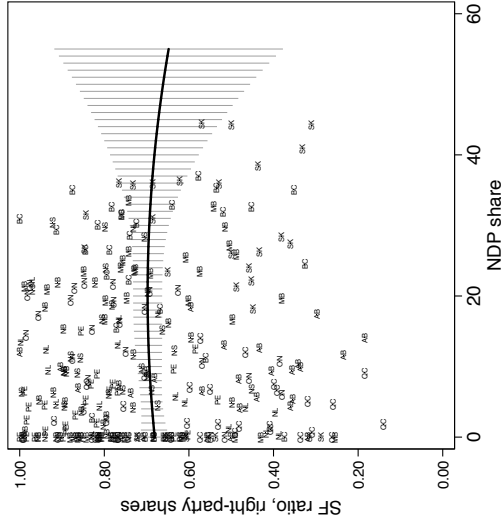


Figure 6
CCF/NDP Strength and Centre-Right Consolidation

Note: based on estimations in Table 2