

Signature Page

Past and Present Populism and Protest in the Labour Party and New Democratic Party:

Comparisons and Contrasts

By  
Sydney Ann Hull

A Thesis Submitted to  
Department of Political Science  
Saint Mary's University, Halifax NS  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Honours Political Science

April 2017, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Approved: Dr. Alexandra Dobrowolsky.  
Professor, Department of Political Science  
Saint Mary's University

Date: 21 April 2017

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**Abstract:**

Recent election campaigns in several prominent liberal democracies have seen the rise to prominence of both right and left-wing populist candidates. While significant media and scholarly attention has focused on the former, this thesis examines the less studied but equally prevalent resurgence of left-wing populism through a comparative analysis of two populist movements in Britain and Canada, Momentum and Leap, that are respectively associated with, and have served to challenge, the British Labour Party and the Canadian New Democratic Party. My thesis poses the question: which movement will be more successful and why? Through a social movement-inspired analysis, and an examination of historical and contemporary primary and secondary resources, including pivotal manifestos, I contend that, despite these two left-wing parties' commonalities, important differences rest on the preeminent ideas and identities in each country that shape the corresponding political organizations that they have produced. A study of the divergent ideas and identities that influence these party institutions across time, serves to support my conclusion that Momentum is more likely to have a lasting impact in Britain, as compared to Leap in Canada.

Date Submitted: 21 April 2017

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## **I: Introduction**

### **Ideas, Identities, and Political Organizations in Britain and Canada**

Our party is on the brink of becoming a mass movement again, with over half a million people participating in this election. Party membership has grown by 50% since the general election, and we must encourage every supporter to become a member too, and build on that momentum. - Jeremy Corbyn (Labour Party, 2016)

We call for town hall meetings across the country where residents can gather to democratically define what a genuine leap to the next economy means in their communities. Inevitably, this bottom-up revival will lead to a renewal of democracy at every level of government, working swiftly towards a system in which every vote counts and corporate money is removed from political campaigns. - Leap Manifesto, 2017

2015 and 2016 were turbulent political times for democratic nations in North America and Western Europe. Political analysts and pundits alike were unable to predict some of the biggest shocks to the status quo as partisan political campaigns in several leading liberal democratic states diverged from accepted norms in terms of the rhetoric presented, the proposed policies at stake, and the populist support involved. For example, Britain voted to leave the European Union in June 2016. The pro-Brexit forces, not unlike Donald Trump's 2016 campaign in the United States<sup>1</sup>, largely found success by exploiting xenophobic scare tactics and protectionist economic policies (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 5-6). The tactics employed by both the Leave and Trump campaigns resonated broadly in a time of economic uncertainty. Attention has since shifted to far-right parties in Europe such as France's Front Nationale and the Swedish Democratic Party (Shuster, 2016). Together, these developments,

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<sup>1</sup> The most glaring example was, perhaps, the 2016 Presidential Election in the United States. Donald Trump secured the Republican nomination, and later, the presidency, by pandering to politics of fear, uncertainty, and pledging to *Make America Great Again*. Arguably, Trump's outsider status and populist-style promise to discredit the political elite in Washington motivated American voters to rally behind him in the general election.

underpinned by right-wing populism, have shaken the liberal international world order to its core.

However, along with the resurgence of right-wing populism, left-wing populist campaigns have also recurred in liberal democracies. The 2016 American Presidential election saw the latter as well with Democratic hopeful Bernie Sanders' campaign. Sanders' grassroots-focused brand of democratic socialism amassed considerable support and challenged the Democratic National Committee's (DNC) preferred candidate, Hillary Clinton. Highly critical of Wall Street and unrestrained capitalism, Sanders advocated for an expanded social safety net. His candidacy was widely supported by young, college-educated Americans (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 5). While vastly different from Trump, both candidates disrupted the political status quo through anti-Washington rhetoric that resonated deeply with members of the American public (Inglehart & Norris, 2016, p. 5). Presently, Sanders continues to campaign against the Washington "elite" and President Donald Trump through his Our Revolution movement (Our Revolution, 2017).

Similarly, in Britain, Jeremy Corbyn's bid for Labour leadership was endorsed and supported by the left-wing populist Momentum movement. Hundreds of new members joined the Labour party to support Corbyn, who, in almost every respect, was deemed an unlikely pick for the Labour leadership as he is significantly further left than his recent predecessors, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and Ed Milliband (Stewart and Waller, 2016). With Momentum's support, Corbyn secured the leadership nomination and, to date, Momentum continues to support both Corbyn and the Labour Party (Momentum, 2017). A significant number of Labour's new members were young, progressive, educated people who chose to rally behind a leftist, populist lifetime politician, not unlike Bernie Sanders' campaign in the

United States (Yakabuski, 2016). Moreover, Corbyn, like Sanders, was largely rejected by the establishment party and his fellow Labour politicians as sitting MPs refused to join his shadow cabinet (Waldie, 2016).

On the surface, Canada's 2015 election appeared to bypass these tendencies. And yet, this country also experienced the effects of a left-wing protest movement in the form of a collective that introduced the Leap Manifesto, a policy document that focuses on traditional leftist concerns, along with environmentalism, the rights of Indigenous Peoples of Canada. Drafted in early 2016, Leap will be voted on by the NDP at their next policy convention in 2018. By and large, Leap represents a potential shift back to the left for the NDP, a party that has campaigned in the centre in recent decades (McGrane, 2016). Moreover, as will be discussed below, federal politics in Canada have historically, and continue to, produce a number of left-wing and right-wing populist protest parties (Belanger, 2007).

In this thesis, however, I use an analysis of the limitations and opportunities associated with left-wing populist challenges in Canada and Britain in order to shine light on current left-wing movements in both countries. My thesis explores how, historically and currently, ideologically left movements have challenged and continue to influence the leading left-wing parties in Britain and Canada, the Labour Party and the New Democratic Party respectively.

I do this through a comparative analysis of the ideas, organizational structures, and identities found in the Labour Party and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation/ New Democratic Party (CCF/NDP) over time, in order to assess the recent success and future potential of the two aforementioned left wing populist movements, Momentum and Leap, that currently pose fundamental challenges to the Labour Party and the NDP, respectively.

In addition, the promise and pitfalls of these contemporary left-wing populist movements will be evaluated vis-à-vis pivotal, historical precursors.

I will argue that, despite significant commonalities between Labour and the CCF-NDP, distinctive ideas and identities have shaped each party and inform how they operate, organizationally, across time in different contexts of Britain and Canada. These differences help to explain why Momentum is apt to have more of a lasting influence on Labour than Leap will for the NDP.

To elaborate, while Britain and Canada share a number of similarities when it comes to partisan politics, an important difference rests on the prevalence (or lack of) ideological doctrine espoused by electorally successful parties in each nation. Britain's major political parties have been highly programmatic and have historically adhered to set political ideologies. Typically, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party have campaigned the left and the right, respectively (Foote, 1985, p. 6). The divide between left and right is generally associated with working class and middle/upper class, positioning class as the predominant political identity in Britain that routinely supersedes other identities. In turn, this two-party, closed class system is dominated by conventional left-wing and right wing ideologies, forcing populist parties to the margins.

On the other hand, Canada's federally successful parties, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, have historically avoided ideological campaigns in order to broker votes across Canada's diverse locales (Carty, 2011, p. 10). "Brokerage" parties are ones that avoid campaigning on ideological grounds, and in the Canadian context, they represent a narrow range of identities, typically those associated with region and language with the intention of nation-building in order to maintain national cohesion. In response to the prevalence of



brokerage politics, “third party” challengers have a long history of contesting the main parties in Canada by embracing populist appeals and representing other identities that are typically on the margins, and thus, not brokered by the two dominant parties. Therefore, in Canada, as compared to Britain, more left-wing and right-wing populist parties have emerged on both sides of the political spectrum as a challenge to the dominant brokerage parties. Further, class does not get “brokered” by leading parties, as even the NDP’s articulation of class, as the leading left-wing party, has been tenuous at best (Brodie and Jenson, 2007). Instead, Canadian parties have focused on regional and cultural identities whereas British political campaigns have been dominated by the country’s closed-class system of political identities.

To justify my choice of case studies, I apply most similar systems design, a comparative method best used for case studies with a number of similarities. My initial comparison of Britain and Canada was justified by this model as both countries share a colonial history and are governed by similar electoral systems and democratic institutions. Britain and Canada are both Westminster-style constitutional monarchies, as Canada’s parliament was modelled after the original in Britain. Thus, both countries share similar government structures and, in recent years, both have also seen multi-party (albeit two-party dominant) systems (Krieger, 2013, p. 78).

However, despite the foregoing similarities in their institutional structures, the leading left wing parties, Labour and the NDP, are defined by a number of differences. Labour, historically the working class party, is one of two major parties in Britain. Major, or governing, parties are ones that have formed a government, and, since several Labour governments have been elected in Britain, it constitutes a major party (Kreiger, 2013).

Indeed, for most of the twentieth century, the Labour Party exercised a formidable influence over the British labour movement, which played a pivotal role in the party's electoral success (Leys, 1983, p. 193).

On the other hand, governing political parties in Canada do not campaign on class cleavages as they have typically addressed regional tensions and identities (Bickerton, 2016, p. 56). Even the CCF-NDP's articulation of class has been attenuated by its regionally concentrated support base, and further, by the broader array of identities it has encompassed across time. For instance, the CCF-NDP was historically supported by alienated farmers in select Canadian regions (Laycock & Erickson, 2015, p. 15). In more recent decades, the party has been supported by a "rainbow coalition" of identities, including women, youth, and civil society groups and activists (Laycock & Erickson, 2015).

Whereas the Labour Party's links to organized labour were foundational, ties to the Canadian labour movement only became explicit when the CCF became the NDP. Thus, it was not until the 1960's that the NDP sought to entrench union support through the establishment of Labour-style ties to Canadian unions. To date, these attempts have been relatively unsuccessful despite the NDP's status as the left-wing, ostensibly working-class party (Laycock and Erickson, 2015, p.49, McGrane, 2016, p. 178). A major difference between Labour and the NDP, then, is the nature of their relationship with organized labour.

The NDP's regionally concentrated support, historically in the West and Ontario, paired with the party's overall failure to connect with Canadian workers, has prompted it to broaden its base to encompass a wider array of identities. Recently, the NDP's national presence in Canadian federal politics can in part be attributed to encompassing multiple identities, and thus, a more diffuse appeal. The first NDP Members of Parliament (MP)'s

elected in Quebec and Atlantic Canada were major milestones for the party as it succeeded in running successful campaigns in areas outside of its traditional support base (Laycock & Erickson, 2015). Nonetheless, these developments marked a continuation of regionalized support for the NDP, only now, it lay in different regions than its historical strongholds. For instance, the 2011 election saw a surge of NDP support in Quebec where the party won 43 percent of the popular vote and 2/3's of the provinces' seats (Laycock & Erickson, 2015, p. 72).

As a consequence of the NDP's either regionalized or diffuse support, it remains a federal third party unlike the Labour Party in Britain (Belanger, 2007 p. 86, Krieger, 2013, p. 76). The opposite of a governing party, third parties have remained in opposition (Belanger, 2007, p. 185). In the Canadian party system, the NDP is a third party relative to the governing Conservative Party and Liberal Party. Federally, the Conservatives and Liberals have ruled Canada since Confederation in 1867 (Belanger, 2007, p. 83). While it is worth noting that NDP governments have been elected in seven of Canada's thirteen provinces and territories, they have yet to win a federal election. As I focus on federal parties here, I hold that the federal NDP remains a third party.

To reiterate, Britain's two-party system is dominated by two major ideological parties, Labour and the Conservatives, whereas both of Canada's two major parties are pragmatic brokerage parties. Unlike programmatic, ideologically driven parties, brokerage parties aim to diminish conflicting interests and values in order to appeal to a strategic range of identities (and their associated ideas) (Carty, 2011, p. 11). They have no concrete political dogma, but seek instead to find electoral success through appealing to the middle ground. This difference is significant because it, arguably, over time, has produced a greater number

of populist protest parties on both sides of the political spectrum in Canada, including the CCF-NDP. In general, populist parties and politicians are ones who campaign for the common people and are critical of the “elite”. Further, these candidates and campaigns often argue that change is needed in order to avoid an imminent crisis (Rooduijn, 2014, p. 572). Indeed, the Leap Manifesto begins by proclaiming that: “Canada is facing the deepest crisis in recent memory” (2017).

For that reason, many populist parties and candidates are also protest candidates. In Canada, many of the populist parties and movements have emerged to protest against the dominant political parties in this country (Bickerton, 2016). For instance, the precursor to the CCF, the Progressive party, was an anti-brokerage agrarian protest party that was primarily based in the prairie provinces (Belanger, 2016, p. 186). The Progressives railed against the federal government’s quasi-colonial relationship with western Canada and amassed considerable support throughout the 1920’s (Belanger, 2016, p. 186). Eventually, the Progressive Party’s strength waned as its members went on to join the CCF and, later, amalgamated with the Conservative Party to form the Progressive Conservative Party. While elements of what was a protest party joined the CCF, the more moderate factions were subsumed by one of Canada’s major brokerage parties.

In addition, while the CCF represented a left-wing populist movement that, like the Progressive Party, had a profound political impact in Canada, there were also several substantial right-wing populist movements. For example, the Social Credit Party was a right-wing populist party that also played a significant role in Canadian politics provincially in the 1930’s and for several decades thereafter (MacPherson, 1953, p. 125). Moreover, the Reform Party played a substantial role in Canadian federal politics in the late 1980’s and throughout

the 1990's (Belanger, 2007). Reform not only posed a populist challenge to the governing Liberal and Conservative parties, but also the NDP, as the movement was supported by agrarian populists in the party's traditional western strongholds (Laycock & Erickson, 2015, p. 22).

On both sides of the political spectrum, protest voting has historically been predominant in the West, where voting patterns have produced a number of populist protest parties (Bickerton, 2016, p. 54). A commonality shared by the protest parties is their rejection of traditional brokerage parties due to their disillusionment with the rest of Canada and the federal political status quo, which has played a key role in the emergence of the many third parties and populist movements in Canada (Bickerton, 2016, p. 55). Indeed, as I will go on to show, the CCF-NDP began as a western-based populist protest movement.

Despite differences regarding their levels of electoral success and traditional support bases, the Labour Party and the NDP do share similarities and are defined by a number of the same challenges and opportunities. For example, both parties began as mass-based left-wing ideological parties that were movement parties. Movement parties combine elements of social movements with traditional electoral political parties, which enable and constrain them in ways that do not affect traditional parties.

Most social movements, and by extension, movement parties, have to reconcile their organizational aims with constraints placed on them by the systems they operate within. Often, this creates tension between the radical members who feel that rapid advancement of their cause is the best way forward, and those who believe that change should be made from within the system (Zakuta, 1964, p. 27, Davis, 2003, p. 49). These tensions were apparent early on in the Labour Party and CCF-NDP, and have recurred at different times in party

history. Over time, radical and reformist influences have held sway. Once heavily ideological left-wing political parties, Labour and the NDP have prioritized pragmatic electoral success over programmatic goals in recent decades (Laycock, 2015, p. 129, Leggett, 2004, p. 188). Indeed, the 1990's and 2000's saw both parties adopt mainstream electoral strategies, leading to significant structural and ideological changes within the parties.

The movement challengers studied here are generally left-wing populist interventions from the radical, movement factions, geared towards influencing party policy. Presently, Momentum and Leap are incredibly fascinating as they embody traditional left-wing goals and represent a potential shift back to Labour Party and NDP roots after the parties spent the better part of two decades campaigning in the centre.

In order to assess the potential for success and/or failure associated with Momentum and Leap; I proceed with an evaluation that is organized in five sections. The first constitutes an overview of Labour Party and CCF origins in order to showcase the continuities and changes that are embodied by the current Momentum and Leap movements. It is important to understand the identities, organizational structures, and ideas that each party has historically embodied in order to critically compare Labour and the NDP vis-à-vis Momentum and Leap in the present context. This comparative historical overview lends support to my prediction that Momentum is more likely to succeed than Leap is given the nature of the political organizations in question and the dominant political ideas and identities involved in Britain and Canada.

The second section assesses movements from the “new left” period in the 1960's and early 1970's in order to highlight how friction has persisted between radical and moderate members of both the Labour Party and the NDP. Third, movements and policies from the

1990's and 2000's are examined in order to showcase the drastic changes the parties underwent during that era, a phenomenon that is contextually important given Momentum and Leap's potential to return the parties to robust left-wing organizations. Thus, the fourth section examines the left-wing populist promise that is represented by the Momentum Movement and the Leap Manifesto.

As Momentum and Leap are relatively new developments, they have yet to be studied extensively. This represents a unique opportunity to study movements as they unfold, and, moreover, to focus on left-wing populism while much of the world remains fixated on right-wing populism. Momentum and Leap represent disruptions to the status quo and have been incredibly divisive movements within both parties. Yet, they simultaneously embody symbolic ties to each party's past while signalling potential paths forward for each party.

Concluding remarks drawn from the case studies will constitute the fifth and final section, which underscores how the divergent configuration of institutional influences, ideas and identities has shaped how the Labour Party and the NDP have historically operated and will likely continue to operate in the future. These significant differences regarding the role of ideology, the range of identities at play, and their respective organizational impact on the two parties, will serve to explain why Momentum is more likely to have lasting influence on Labour than Leap will on the NDP.

### **Conceptualizing the analysis: Social movement theory vis-à-vis key discourses**

Social movement theories allow for a complete and well rounded analysis of relationships between civil society and political organizations and thus, I draw from them here to develop a conceptual framework that studies changes to the left-wing parties in

question and their corresponding left-wing and populist challenges and challengers across time (Smith, 2014, p. xix). In particular, I employ a tiered assessment of social movements, influenced by Michael Orsini, to evaluate key identities, organizational structures, and ideas associated with the NDP and Labour. In turn, this framework allows for a multidimensional study of movement challenges (2014, p. 350).

My Orsini-inspired framework is comprised of three levels, the first of which examines the macro-level ideas that underpin movements. What were the ideologies that shaped the parties and motivated the movement challenges? The second level, meso, refers to the organizational structures involved in each movement. What were the institutional objectives for each party? How have the respective movements impacted each party organizationally? Third, the micro level focuses on the identities and individuals involved in both the party and the movement challenges. For instance, are parties class based or do other identities come to the fore? Moreover, if populist politics rally “the people”, who are 1) championing the populist cause and 2) being invoked and rallied by the movement? What are their reasons or motives for doing so? (Plattner, 2010, p. 88)

In so doing, my framework assesses the ideas, organizational structures, and identities that influence, enable, and constrain the leftist challengers to Labour and the CCF-NDP. Party history shows that success for the current left-wing challengers, in terms of becoming a national movement, is likely to occur in Britain over Canada. This is supported both by my historical justification, but further, through my evaluation of key discourses found in manifestos, party platforms, and official documents. In particular, in the Canadian context, I focus on *the Waffle Manifesto*, *the New Politics Initiative*, and *the Leap Manifesto*, whereas as



in Britain I examine party documents from the New Left era, the New Labour era, and official Momentum documents.

## **II: Social Movement Beginnings**

### **The Labour Party**

The first iteration of the Labour Party emerged in 1900, in the heyday of the labour movement, in an effort to consolidate the array of socialist, Marxist, and labourite parties that existed in Britain at the time. As we will subsequently see, although Labour was a source of inspiration for the CCF's founders in the 1930's, the Canadian left-wing party diverged from Labour in several significant respects.

To begin, when the Labour Party was founded, a broad range of socialist organizations, societies, and political parties existed in Britain (Cole, 1961, p. 10). These pre-existing left-leaning parties included far left, centrist, and social democratic organizations. One such social democratic movement was the Fabian Society, which drew from prominent left and liberal thinkers such as Karl Marx and J.S. Mill (Cole, 1961, p. 28). The Fabian movement, concerned with the injustices and inequalities that faced the people of Britain, felt an ethical commitment to principles of socialism, and yet, Fabians differed in their beliefs from Marxists, as they held that social change would be best achieved at a gradual pace (Cole, 1961, pp. 27-29).

At the same time, the labour movement, comprised of workers and socialists who were disappointed by low wages, poor working conditions, and years of economic downturn, also played a key role in Labour's development. Labourism, which, in its most basic definition, is "pure and simple trade union politics", provided the ideological underpinnings for the movement (Foote, 1985, p. 8). Many of the workers who supported the trade union

movement began to channel their grievances into political action in order to guarantee that their rights and interests would be protected in parliament, causing a major catalyst for the Labour Party (Leys, 1983, p. 172). Labourism, Fabianism, and socialism, then, were among the most prominent schools of political thought in the early Labour party.

As mentioned above, Labour emerged out of a movement to establish a coordinated left-wing force, which first produced the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in 1899. The newly formed LRC first ran candidates in the 1900 election, and support for the cohesive Labour movement was confirmed by 1906, when 30 LRC candidates were elected. Not long after, the Parliamentary Labour Party was officially created, marking a critical development in the labour movement as trade union politics were extended to the House of Commons (Leys, 1983, p. 172). For the first time, workers had an official forum to represent and advocate for themselves in government (Foote, 1985, p. 43). Thus, the LRC's electoral success played a pivotal role in consolidating labour movement and working-class support for the Labour party and, in turn, entrenching Britain's closed-class system of political identities.

Within the party, Labour's first leader, Kier Hardie, successfully reconciled competing strands of thought as he understood that the socialist factions needed the support of the rank-and-file members to achieve electoral success (Foote, 1985, p. 43). The party's affiliated trade unions provided financial and electoral support, often sponsoring individual candidates and subsidizing the party's electoral machinery in exchange for political protection of the workers (Minkin, 1991, p. 3). Traditionally a mass party, Labour's sovereign and administrative bodies saw high levels of union dominance even though a number of different groups and identities were afforded voting shares (Leys, 1983, p. 176, Minkin,

1991, p. 4). Simply put, workers and union-members were at the forefront for the Labour party given the party's financial and electoral dependence on the unions.

Interestingly, an important contradiction that arose in the Labour Party during this period was political protection and representation for unwaged labourers—particularly women. Although the Labour movement was theoretically egalitarian, women remained underrepresented in the party and its affiliated unions due to dominant discourses at the time about women's domesticity (Minkin, 1991, p. 5). Further, Labour's traditional role as a class-based workers' organization created structural barriers for women who wanted to advance feminist causes within the party as class continued to supersede gender as a dominant political identity, a trend that has continued within the Labour Party (Hannam, 2010, p. 69).

### **The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation**

The New Democratic Party's predecessor, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, was an ideologically socialist party created in the 1930's. The CCF, succeeding the Labour Party by three decades, was heavily influenced by Britain's left-wing party, leading both to share a number of initial similarities (Leys, 1983, p. 172, Zakuta, 1964, p. 7). For example, both moderate and far-left ideologies were at play in Labour and the CCF, and further, both parties began as decentralized left-wing mass organizations. However, despite the CCF's emphasis on the Labour Party model, key differences within the two parties were apparent from the outset. For instance, the CCF-NDP never developed Labour-style ties to Canadian unions, in part due to the wider array of political identities that were politicized in Canada, as opposed to Britain where class identities were predominant.

As mentioned above, the CCF, like the Labour Party, included both far-left and moderate influences. While the founding groups did not share a universal ideology, all were disenchanted with the capitalist system and were willing to rise above their doctrinal differences to incite positive social, economic and political change (Young, 1999, p. 194). A main point of unity was that all CCF members believed capitalism was responsible for the injustices that plagued their economic and social lives (Zakuta, 1964, p. 37). The radical socialist groups within the CCF were fundamental advocates for deep societal and political change who rejected the parliamentary system (Zakuta, 1964).

However, unlike in the Labour Party, the far left influences in the CCF were tempered by the predominance of several moderating forces within the party. The moderate socialist influences sided with other centre-left ideologies in the party in their resolve to win elections and change policies from within the parliamentary system<sup>2</sup> (Zakuta, 1964, p. 16). One significant moderating influence in the CCF was social gospel, a close cousin of the Fabian tradition in Britain. As a school of political thought, social gospel developed out of the widespread suffering that plagued many at the beginning of the industrial revolution. Convinced the Christian God was merciful and concerned with humans' welfare on earth, social gossellers believed that Christians had a duty to develop policies and institutions that would produce a more economically and socially just world (Lam, 2011, p. 15). Like the Fabians and moderate socialists, social gossellers believed that gradual reforms would allow them to ultimately create a more peaceful and just society. In many ways, the social gospel

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<sup>2</sup> This friction between the moderate and far-left wings of the CCF/NDP and Labour remain a defining feature within the parties to the present day. The next section of this analysis proceeds to study the manifestations of these tensions during the New Left period of mass insurgency.

tradition, like Fabianism in Britain, was aligned with the moderate faction within the CCF, and further, while these traditions were present in both parties, the social gossellers exerted a more profound influence on the CCF.

Largely, the dilution of the far-left forces occurred given the broad range of political identities that were at play in Canada. The context from which the CCF emerged, for example, shows that while class tensions were present in Canada, other identities came to the fore as well. To elaborate, the devastation caused by the Great Depression served as a major catalyst for the CCF's development (Young, 1999, p. 189). Similar to Britain in the 1890's, leaders from a wide array of pre-existing socialist and labour parties in Canada's western region began to coordinate their political action (Young, 1999, p. 190). By 1933, the CCF had held its first convention and ratified its constitutional document, the *Regina Manifesto*, which, for all intents and purposes, was a socialist document that railed against capitalism (Cross, 1974, p. 19). One of the *Regina Manifesto's* commonly-quoted excerpts proclaims: "No CCF government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation the full programme of socialized planning which will lead to the establishment in Canada of the Co-operative Commonwealth" (Regina Manifesto, 1933, Cross, 1974, p. 23).

Despite the staunchly left-wing narratives espoused by the *Regina Manifesto*, the more moderate agrarian populists also exerted a profound influence on the early party. Indeed, in stark contrast to the British Labour Party, farmers played a key role in the early CCF. During, and in the wake of, the Great Depression, Canadian farmers faced significant hardships that led them to feel that the capitalist system had betrayed them. The result was a wave of farmer-led agrarian populism and protest movements in the Canadian prairies (Zakuta, 1964, p. 35). For example, in 1925, the populist United Farmers of Alberta (UFA)

party was elected to Alberta's provincial legislature while similar trends occurred in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Canada's other western provinces (Young, 1999, p. 190). The impressive influence the agrarian populists wielded within the CCF is reflected in the party's name, as many were members of co-operatives (Zakuta, 1964, p. 36).

Further, the CCF's original organizational structure is also largely attributable to the agrarian populists, who were weary of the traditional brokerage political parties that have, and continue to, characterize Canadian politics. Instead of a brokerage party model, they advocated for the establishment of a decentralized mass party which would remain accountable to its membership and be primarily administered through local riding associations (Zakuta, 1964, p. 4). Electoral campaigns would be run by local volunteers and party activists, as in accordance with the party's populist roots, the rank-and-file members would play a key role within the party (Zakuta, 1964, p. 23, McGrane, 2016, p. 169). Thus, while both parties began as decentralized parties, the CCF's agrarian populists advocated for a mass organization in order to differentiate it from Canada's dominant (and centralized) brokerage parties.

To reiterate, the CCF's original name, The Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (Farmer, Labour, Socialist), showcased the broad range of politicized identities and ideas that originally influenced the party, including farmers, to a lesser extent, organized labour (Young, 1999). Additionally, women played a significant role as many working-class women were active in the socialist parties and organizations that existed before the CCF was founded. Like their middle-class counterparts, they too wanted to win the vote. However, these women also desired sweeping reforms to Canadian society that would improve social, economic, and political status of Canadian women (Newton, 1995, p. 3).

When compared to Labour, then, the CCF represented a broader range of ideas and identities, which is especially evident when one examines the socialist women's contribution to the CCF. Many farm and labour women felt out of place within women's suffrage movements and organizations due to the middle-class bias that was typically embedded in them. Instead, these women chose to immerse themselves in the socialist reform movement that better addressed the concerns of farmers and labourers (Bacchi, 1979, p. 90, Newton, 1995, p. 3).

Indeed, Carol Bacchi argued that organized farmers' associations, such as the UFA, were among the earliest and most dedicated advocates for women's rights in Canada (1979, p. 91). Further, a number of farm women were present at the party's founding conference in 1933 as part of women's sections of the United Grain Growers' Association and United Farmers of Canada (Evans, 1987, p.7). As mentioned above, these women saw their involvement in the socialist movement as a means of improving their position in Canadian society, and, in turn, they played a distinct role in the development of Canada's left-wing movement (Newton, 1995, p. 6). While the women's movement did constitute a minority on the Canadian left, it was able to make more of a robust impact within the CCF, as opposed to the Labour Party, where class concerns reigned supreme.

In sum, the historical beginnings of both the Labour Party and the CCF-NDP show how both parties were influenced by moderate and far-left ideologies, and further, both began as staunchly decentralized mass parties. On the other hand, the different identities that played a key role in shaping the parties were evident from the beginning. Class, the labour movement, and the trade unionists were significantly more salient within the early Labour party. Indeed, Labour was defined by Britain's closed-class system of political identities as a

party for the working class and organized labour. On the contrary, some of the most influential groups within the early CCF were the agrarian populists and male and female farmers, leaving workers and the labour movement to play less of an influential role. Although a class divide was evident in Canada, other identities also came to the fore. These foundational CCF identities were broader than those that played a pivotal role in Labour's development, which resulted in the absence of overwhelming involvement from Canadian unions and labourers. While some Canadian workers and unions did support the early CCF, unlike in Britain, the Canadian labour movement was not at the forefront of the party's development. Finally, the CCF was characterized by more populist support than Labour, given that it began as one of Canada's left-wing populist protest movements.

### **III: New Left Activism**

The push and pull between moderate and far-left members has remained a defining feature in Labour and the CCF-NDP. This has led the parties to veer periodically either to left or toward the centre. One period especially marked by extreme leftist tensions was the new left era, a time of mass insurgency and political activism in the 1960's and 1970's that emerged as the prosperity and stability enjoyed in the post-war years began to wane. Political polarization on the left and the right contributed to a period of mass activism in western democracies during the new left years (Leys, 1983, p. 65). The new left was typically contrasted with traditional "Old Left" values of state-ownership, workers' rights, class-based politics, and the redistribution of wealth. New left causes, on the other hand, included anti-colonialism protests, second wave feminism, student activism, and green environmental movements (Sears, 2014). While the new left is generally used as an umbrella term for an



array of movements that existed during the 1960's and 1970's, I focus explicitly on an anti-capitalism movement in Britain and the new left forces that produced the Waffle Manifesto in Canada. Despite their varying forms, all new left movements shared a disillusion with existing forms of political activity and political institutions (Davis, 2003, p. 40).

### **The Anti-Capitalist Movement and the Labour Party**

While the anti-capitalist movement in Britain aspired to turn the country into a socialist society, its main problematique rested on its relationship with the Labour party (Davis, 2003, p. 49). Instead of pushing the existing party left-ward, the anti-capitalist movement focused on the establishment of an independent socialist party, and as such, the anti-capitalist activists collaborated only with Labour's far-left factions (Davis, 2003, p. 49). Many within the movement saw the Labour Party as an obstacle to socialism that actively propped up the British capitalist system. Thus, they held that substantial change could not be made from within the party (Davis, 2003, p. 53).

The *New Left May Day Manifesto*, authored in 1967, highlighted contradictions between the Labour government's actions and the ideals that a Labour government is supposed to defend. For example, the governing Labour party ordered a new fleet of military aircraft while "thousands of our people are without homes, our schools are overcrowded and our health service is breaking under prolonged strain" (Hall, Williams & Thompson, 1967, p. 1). This statement highlights the inherent tensions that arise when an ideological movement party, like Labour, forms a government. While in government, Labour must balance its social democratic commitments with the realities of governing, which often results in alienating party supporters or the electorate at large. Finally, this excerpt from the *May Day Manifesto*

shows how a number of new left movements intersected with one another. While the May Day Manifesto was primarily a critique of Labour's policies, its problematization of military spending reflected its anti-war sympathies.

Organizationally, the anti-capitalist movement pushed for a "genuine, grass-roots mass social movement" (Davis, 2003, p. 51). However, its downfall was brought about by its inability to decide how to approach the existing Labour Party. By the time on-the-ground political action was proposed, the heyday of the new left had already passed (Davis, 2003, p. 51). The anti-capitalist movement in Britain had missed its opportunity to reach broad swaths of the British population, and, as such, its chance to transform the economic and social system in Britain. As it did not reverberate widely within civil society, any populist promise that the movement had was not realized.

Finally, while the new left anti-capitalist movement failed in its endeavor to push the Labour party further left, it did engage a number of different identities and social groups (Panitch & Leys, 2001, p. 1, Davis, 2003, p. 49-52). Indeed, the anti-capitalist movement was supported by youthful, energized socialist activists, many of whom were women, racial minorities, and students who took issue with capitalism and the injustices they associated with it (Panitch & Leys, 2001, p. 7). Overall, however, class remained the dominant political identity, even as a broader range of political identities were included. While a new left, second-wave feminist movement also developed during this period, it expressed itself in Marxist and socialist terms, given the class-conscious nature of British society (Bouchier, 1984, p. 56). As we will see, this was not the case in Canada, as a vibrant women's movement was able to flourish within the Waffle movement.

## **Waffling to the Left in the New Democratic Party**

Despite growth in 1930's and 40's, the CCF never mirrored Labour's levels of electoral success. As the party matured, it crept closer to the centre of the political spectrum, and, in 1956, the *Regina Manifesto* was replaced with *the Winnipeg Declaration*. As a constitutional document, *the Winnipeg Declaration* distanced the party from its fire-and-brimstone roots. Then, the CCF's slow crawl toward the centre hastened in the early 1960's when CCF leaders opted to replace the party with a new, revitalized, urban and cosmopolitan party. In 1961, the CCF merged with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to form the New Democratic Party (McGrane, 2016). In addition to broadening the CCF-NDP's electoral prospects, party leaders hoped that the merger with the CLC would facilitate the development of Labour-style ties between the NDP and Canadian unions.

Like in Britain, a number of new left movements existed in Canada. One such manifestation of new left activism in Canada was the "Waffle", a movement responsible for drafting the *Manifesto for an Independent Socialist Canada* (Cross, 1974, p. 21). The Waffle's unique name is attributed to former NDP leader Ed Broadbent, who mentioned that "if [the Waffle activists] had to choose between waffling to the left and waffling to the right, they waffle to the left" (Morton, 1986, p. 92). Akin to the anti-capitalist movement in Britain, the Waffle was socialist inspired and sought economic and societal change. The Waffle, like the party's amalgamation with the CLC, also tried to improve the party's relationship with organized labour through outreach efforts to Canadian unions (Whitaker, 1990, p. 169, Cross, 1974, p. 44).

Many far-left NDP activists, like the anti-capitalist advocates, also felt a disconnect between the NDP's status as a left-wing protest party and its policies and promises. The

activists in both movements, as well as the majority of global new left causes, were young, motivated students and visionaries. Reg Whitaker referred to Wafflers as a “new generation of political activists”, as the Waffle was profoundly impacted by student politicians and young activists who desired to see the re-establishment of a robust, left-wing party in Canada (1990, p. 68, Burstyn, 1990, p. 176).

However, a key difference between the anti-capitalist movement and the Waffle, was that the latter aimed to transform Canada into a socialist nation using the NDP’s existing infrastructure, resources, and support base. The manifesto itself reads: “[The Waffle activists’] aim as democratic socialists is to build an independent socialist Canada. Our aim as supporters of the New Democratic Party is to make it a truly socialist party” (Cross, 1974, p. 43). Indeed, while the new left movement worked on the fringes of the Labour Party and sought the establishment of an entirely new, far-left party, the Waffle aspired to change the NDP from within.

Yet, as the newly rebranded NDP wanted to distance itself from the socialism associated with the CCF, key actors within the party dismissed the movement as too radical (Cross, 1974, p. 44, Mahon, 1990, p. 193). This was largely because, when the Waffle appeared in 1969, the NDP had abandoned socialism for social democracy in order to achieve electoral success. Indeed, the NDP had begun to mirror the pragmatic brokerage parties it had once criticized. Thus, the Waffle emerged as a populist protest movement that aimed to push the NDP leftwards in a uniquely Canadian way.

To elaborate, the Waffle diverged from the movement in Britain in that it was fixated on Canadian economic nationalism, seen through its aspiration to establish an independent, socialist Canada. The first pillar, an independent nation, warned of Canadian dependence on

the United States of America, making Canadian economic nationalism an integral component of the Waffle (Whitaker, 1990, p. 168). The movement's weariness of American capitalism in Canadian society played a key role in the rediscovery of Canadian Political Economy, or, the New Canadian Political Economy (Mahon, 1990). Essentially, the New Canadian Political Economy applied dependency theory, which holds that resources flow from "periphery", or less powerful, states directly into powerful "core" states, to Canadian-American relations (with Canada constituting the marginalized periphery). By and large, the concern about economic independence was uniquely Canadian, as the Wafflers considered American dominance of the Canadian economy a major impediment to the achievement of economic and social justice (Mahon, 1990. p. 190).

Domestically, the Waffle also provided innovative and progressive contributions to the conversation surrounding Canadian federalism. Indeed, the Waffle highlighted how Canada's fragile national identity is as apparent internally as it is externally. While the Québécois nation's place within the Canadian federation has always been a hotly contested topic, the Waffle supported Quebec's right to self determination before Quebec's nationalist party, the Bloc Québécois, existed. The Waffle's concerns with nationalism were extended to the Quebecois Nation's right to full historical and cultural expression as the movement urged English Canadian socialists to ally with French Canadian socialists under the understanding of "two nations, one struggle" (Cross, 1974, p. 169, Whitaker, 1990, p. 169). This further supports how regional divides have characterized the NDP, as, in 1961, the party had yet to make inroads in Quebec. Thus, this embrace of Quebec nationalism was likely quite strategic. However, it also illustrates the Waffle's embrace of multiple identities- from Canadian nationalist to Quebecois nationalist.

The Waffle's second pillar, a socialist Canada, wanted to return the NDP to a programmatic, left-wing organization through advocacy for an expanded social safety net and the establishment of a strong national program. As a manifesto, the Waffle campaigned for affordable, high-quality housing programs, a progressive tax system, guaranteed basic income, and the democratization of social, political and economic organizations (Cross, 1974, p. 44). However, as was shown above, the movement was denounced for being too left-wing by the NDP, given the party's calculated shift away from socialism.

Organizationally, the Waffle's strategic plan to create a new party within the existing NDP allowed the movement to use NDP infrastructure and popular support to reach significant numbers of party members (Whitaker, 1990). To Wafflers, the NDP was the "core around which" the political and social movement for a truly socialist society should be based (Cross, 1974, p. 45). Their "party within a party" strategy was relatively successful as one of the Waffle's founders, Jim Laxer, narrowly lost the 1971 leadership race. Laxer's leadership bid was the apex of Waffle popularity, as the debate between the Waffle and the NDP at the 1969 federal convention was a historic event that was broadcast live on television (Whitaker, 1990, p. 169, Mitchell, 2002). Further, outside of the NDP, the Waffle also tried to reach civil society organizations through its left-wing populist appeal. The Wafflers had grassroots aspirations, believing that socialism could not come from a political party alone but must instead be derived from broad popular support outside of parliament (Whitaker, 1990, p.171).

As opposed to the anti-capitalist movement that was dominated by class identities, the Waffle encompassed a vibrant women's movement. The "Waffle women" challenged the NDP's 1950's-style take on equality with programmatic demands for universal childcare,

abortion rights, equal pay, gender quotas within the party, and the right to caucus (Burstyn, 1990, p. 177). As the Waffle women forced the party to confront its own treatment of women, they exerted a profound impact on the NDP. Further, because policies were advocated for at the riding level, greater numbers of NDP women were exposed to feminism. Indeed, many non-Waffle women in the party began to acquire feminist lenses, and often, it was these feminists that remained in the party when the Waffle disbanded and many of the Waffle-women left the party (Burstyn, 1990, p. 180). Thus, the Waffle significantly pushed the NDP in a progressive, feminist direction. Again, a key difference lies in the fact that the Waffle was able to encompass a broader array of identities than the anti-capitalist movement in Britain, which expressed itself explicitly in left-wing, socialist terms.

Despite the Waffle's support in academia and certain NDP circles, it ultimately failed to establish a permanent base of on-the-ground civil society support (Mahon, 1990, p. 191). Indeed, the expulsion of the Waffle from the NDP caused the party to "[lose] energy, youth, new ideas & above all vision, not restrained by electoralism, of the kind of society that ought to be" (Whitaker, 1990, p. 170). This remained consistent with the experience of the anti-capitalist movement in Britain. Both movements were influential in intellectual circles and to some extent, within their respective parties. However, when it came to bridging the gap between movement supporters and civil society, both ultimately faltered.

Overall, however, the anti-capitalist movement and the Waffle manifesto were representative of new left concerns in Britain and Canada (Panitch and Leys, 2001, p. 6). The economic downturn of the 1970's problematized the post-war welfare state norm, and western social democratic and socialist parties all seemed unsure how to proceed, producing a crisis in Keynesian social democratic regimes (Panitch and Leys, 2001, p. 5). As neither

movement succeeded in influencing its respective party to adopt a far-left strategy, both Labour and the NDP stayed a more moderate course during era of new left activism.

While both movements failed to achieve their overarching goals, they remain useful in the present context as they draw attention to the role of ideas, identities, and their corresponding political organizations in both countries. The anti-capitalist movement, while not wholly distanced from other new-left movements, was primarily concerned on traditional left-wing socio-economic concerns and thus, was underpinned by working-class interests. The Waffle, on the other hand, was as invested in Canada's national identity as it was socialism as it grappled with national self determination for both the Canadian and Québécois nations. Further, the Waffle contained a dynamic women's movement whereas the new left feminist movement in Britain was constrained by the prevalence of class concerns.

Finally, each movement played out differently given the distinct nature of the parties in question. While the anti-capitalist movement was a far-left critique of the Labour Party's (and government's) actions, Labour remained a left-wing, socialist organization during the new left period. On the other hand, the NDP had abandoned socialism in favour of social democracy in order to appeal to a broader range of Canadians, and thus, the Waffle was a populist protest against the NDP's shift away from its original ideological principles. Ultimately, the Waffle's left-wing nature resulted in its expulsion from the party as it was perceived to be too radical for the re-invented social democratic NDP. Not long after Laxer lost the leadership bid, the Waffle was expelled from the party where it ultimately fizzled outside of the NDP (Whitaker, 1990, p. 169).



#### **IV: A Case of Contrast**

Initially, the Labour Party and the NDP diverged as the twentieth century drew to a close and the twenty-first began. During the Thatcher-Major Conservative years, the former had an identity crisis as it first veered far left before gradually moving toward the centre and, eventually, morphing into New Labour (Panitch & Leys, 2001, p. 1, Heath et. al, 2001, p. 102). On the contrary, the New Politics Initiative (NPI) in Canada was a populist protest movement that attempted to push the NDP leftwards (Panitch and Leys, 2001, p. 227, Carroll & Little, 2001). As I will go on to show, while New Labour was an outlier in Britain, it was consistent with international political developments at the time. On the other hand, the NPI reinforces the populist-protest model that has existed in Canada.

#### **New Labour and The Third Way**

In the early 1990's, Labour began its transformation into New Labour and adopted the reformist "Third Way" platform in an attempt to forge a path between the Old Left and the Thatcher-inspired New Right. Similar to the NDP's attempts to disassociate itself from the socialism associated with the CCF, New Labour aimed to revitalize the party by shifting away from "Old Labour" traditions (Morrison, 2004, p. 168). Despite this break with Labour traditions, New Labour was a successful electoral strategy as it led to Labour governments under leaders Tony Blair and Gordon Brown (Krieger, 2013, p. 77). The Blair-Brown years produced Labour's first ever "three-peat", or the election of three consecutive Labour governments.

Labour's move toward the centre, largely in search of electoral success, began in the 1980's before it gained strength with leaders John Smith and Tony Blair (Heath et. al, 2001,

p. 147). Blair embraced neoliberalism and globalization more than his predecessors had, which can be seen through New Labour's invocation of the "good, hardworking citizen". This model placed the burden of economic and social prosperity on the citizen instead of the state, meaning that the state was no longer solely responsible for social improvement in Britain (Morrison, 2004, p. 173). Instead, and in accordance to neoliberal discourses, all citizens needed to contribute to Britain's (and their own) success (Finlayson, 2003, p. 96).

In addition, New Labour also promoted social investment and policies for children in an attempt to move away from class-based identity politics that have traditionally been associated with Old Labour (Dobrowolsky & Lister, 2008, p. 126). Social investment prioritized children, Britain's future workers and citizens, and considered them a social group that was deserving of government funds and programs (Dobrowolsky & Lister, 2008, p. 129). Instead of "bad" or wasteful forms of social spending, such as welfare programs for unemployed adults, social investment had a long-term focus on building independent, hard-working future citizens. Dobrowolsky and Lister argue that this narrative was strategically employed to appease prevalent neoliberal, Thatcherite ideals with a "barely there" left-wing strategy. The image of the child and the focus on the eradication of child poverty became representative of New Labour identity, which constituted a calculated shift away from traditional class-based or other gender and race-based political identification (Dobrowolsky & Lister, 2008, p. 129).

While New Labour represented a significant change to Labour's traditional values and ideas, some of the most staggering changes occurred within the party itself (Kenny and Smith in Finlayson, 2003, p. 66). By 2001, New Labour appeared to share little to no likeness with the Labour Party that had last governed in 1974 (Seyd & Whitely, 2001, p. 73). New Labour

reforms effectively strengthened the national party while union vote shares and financial contributions towards individual campaigns and MPs decreased (Seyd and Whitely, 2001, p. 74). One of the biggest shifts was the party's abandonment of delegatory democracy, a key element of Old Labour's mass party structure, in favour of representative democracy in the 1990's (Seyd and Whitely, 2001, p. 74). This process of centralization brought the national party to the fore while the voices of party activists, trade union representatives, and individual MPs were weakened (Seyd and Whitely, 2001, p. 76).

Overall, New Labour constituted a shift away from class and identity-based politics. Instead, the party attempted to appeal to broader segments of the electorate, which was seen in New Labour's invocation of the child and social investment. Indeed, New Labour has been called a "classic example of a formerly socialist party moving towards the centre in search of votes". Beginning in 1997, the party courted middle class votes, and consequently, the election that year saw a drastic increase in middle-class Labour supporters (Heath et. al, 2001, p. 147).

Thus, Labour's ideas, organizational structures, and support base changed significantly during the New Labour era. The Third Way shifted the Labour party away from its historical status as a left-wing mass party of working class labour and trade union activists to instead draw heavily from neoliberalism and free-market globalization to make inroads with middle class voters. Overall, New Labour represented a significant break with Labour's past traditions, and, while not fitting with historical tendencies in British party politics, the Third Way was consistent with an international trend of neoliberalization (Comment on the NPI, 2001, p. 150). Further, New Labour was an electorally successful platform that kept Labour in power for over a decade.

## **A Second Protest Movement: The New Politics Initiative**

Perhaps the only commonality between New Labour and the NPI is that, like the Labour Party during the Thatcher-Major era of the 1980's and early 1990's, the NDP found itself at a crossroads in the 1990's and early 2000's. As New Labour showed, the new political context of neoliberalism forced social democratic parties to decide whether or not to stay true to their left-wing principles or to follow the global trend toward the centre and/or the centre-right. New Labour opted for the latter, whereas the New Politics Initiative (NPI) represented a left-wing challenge to the NDP. By and large, the NPI was a reactionary force to hardships produced by decades of market liberalization and privatization (Carroll & Little, 2001, p. 54, Comment, 2001, p. 143).

When the NPI emerged in 2001, decades of pro-business policies had succeeded in growing the Canadian economy while failing to improve the lives of average Canadians (Comment, 2001, p. 145). Indeed, the NPI highlighted a growing trend of income inequality as many Canadians lived pay-check to pay-check without the support of the social safety net that had previously existed (Comment, 2001, p. 144). To combat these trends, the NPI championed egalitarianism, solidarity, redistribution of wealth, communal responsibility and the expansion of socialized welfare programs (Comment, 2001, p. 144).

The NPI shared a number of similarities with its predecessor, the Waffle, as it too warned of Canadian economic dependence on the United States. Further, NPI activists questioned the NDP's ability to genuinely advance the left's interests as they felt the party often sacrificed ideological left-wing goals in pursuit of electoral success (Comment, 2001, p. 148). Through an overhaul of the NDP, the NPI aspired to create a new party that would prioritize input from rank-and-file members in local riding associations and remain true to

its leftist principles. To the NPI activists, these reforms would bridge the gap between civil society and the parliamentary party and allow for the restoration of a genuinely “mass” populist political party on the Canadian left (Swartz, 2001, Carroll & Little, 2001, p. 54).

Indeed, the NPI enjoyed broad non-partisan support from social movements and civil society campaigns, such as environmental, anti-globalization, feminist, LGBTQ+, and disability rights movements (Comment, 2001, p. 143). Much of NPI’s leftist populist appeal came from its determination to democratize the political process in Canadian institutions and, consequently, produce a more accountable, transparent left-wing force in Canadian politics (Comment, 2001, p. 148). This revitalized left-wing movement would include perpetual political activism from everyday Canadians, which would, in turn, provide the left with a strong, populist voice that would expose capitalism’s failure to meet the basic needs of Canadians (Comment, 2001, p. 148). This genuine “bottom-up” style of politics would constitute a shift from “representative” politics to “participatory” politics in Canada, which would allow for the “new” style of politics advocated for by the movement’s name (Comment, 2001, p. 149). This aspiration to include everyday Canadians in all aspects of the political process further gave the NPI populist appeal.

Because the NPI was a product of consultations between the NDP and a number of extra-parliamentary grassroots organizations, it boasted significant support within the party as well as within civil society (Mitchell, 2002, Laycock & Erickson, 2011, p. 31). As outlined above, the NPI’s extensive grassroots support doubled the expected turnout for the 2001 NDP convention in Winnipeg as NPI supporters from all walks of life attended (Comment, 2001, p. 143, Mitchell, 2002). By and large, the 2001 NDP convention was defined by populist

support as the overalls and backpacks of everyday Canadian workers and farmers outnumbered suits in the hotel lobbies and conference rooms (Mitchell, 2002, p. 27).

While the NPI successfully amassed support from broad segments and identities within the Canadian population, its policies were ultimately further left than the party's federal leader Alexa McDonough wanted to shift (Laycock & Erickson, 2011, p. 31). Indeed, the NPI was too decidedly left-wing to be supported by the NDP, a party that had increasingly watered down its historic left-wing policies to better reflect (and compete electorally with) Canada's major brokerage parties. Like the Waffle, the NPI was very much a populist protest movement that emerged from the far-left of the New Democratic Party in response to the NDP's attempts to mirror Canada's major brokerage parties.

To summarize, New Labour and the NPI pushed Labour and the NDP in different directions in the late 1990's and early 2000's. The NPI fought hard to resist globalization and reform Canada's left-wing movement whereas New Labour engaged with neoliberal ideals and campaigned on a centrist platform. New Labour situated the party firmly at the centre, which attracted large numbers of middle-class voters. On the other hand, while the NPI attracted a broad array of extra-parliamentary working-class, left-wing, and civil society support, it ultimately failed to win over the entire New Democratic Party, now intent on making more substantial electoral inroads (Comment, 2001, p. 143). Thus, the prevalence of neoliberal, market-friendly ideologies played a significant role in the NPI's failure, as incrementally, the NDP also began to adopt pro-globalization discourses and policies.

Consequently, following the NPI's disintegration, the NDP followed Labour's lead by undergoing its own process of modernization and centralization (McGrane, 2016, p 168).

Like New Labour, the revitalized (and centralized) NDP experienced positive electoral results, as the period from 2004-2015 saw some of the NDP's best-ever performances in Canadian federal politics (McGrane, 2016, p. 168). To elaborate, when Jack Layton became party leader in 2004, he inherited a party that boasted 10% of the federal vote share (McGrane, 2016, p. 168). By the end of his leadership, the NDP had formed the Official Opposition, yet, the party dropped many of its ambitious left-wing goals (McGrane, 2016, p. 175). Jack Layton's successor, Tom Mulcair, continued these trends as NDP leader in the lead-up to the 2015 federal election (McGrane, 2016).

Although this shift toward the centre represented a significant break with CCF and NDP traditions, much like New Labour, it was a successful electoral strategy. At the outset of the 2015 federal election, it appeared that the NDP might join Canada's club of "governing parties" as it topped opinion polls (McGrane, 2016, p. 168). However, once the dust had settled, there was neither a NDP government nor opposition. Despite forcing the NDP to reclaim its traditional third party status, the 2015 federal election still returned some of the party's best-ever election results in terms of seats won and percentage of the vote earned (McGrane, 2016, p. 168).

Indeed, the NDP's electoral success as an organizationally centralized, moderate party underscores the challenges faced by staunchly ideological parties in Canada. The NDP's electoral success in recent decades was largely attained through centrist platforms that mirrored those of the Liberal Party, Canada's leading brokerage party. For example, as I will elaborate on in the next section, the Liberal Party campaigned on an election platform that was further left than the NDP's. While the NDP saw its highest ever levels of electoral success from 2004-2015, it did not do so as a left-wing populist, or protest, party. Instead, it modelled

a centrist, brokerage party that would appeal to the broad ranges of political identities in Canada. As we will see in the next section, it is this trend of electorally successful brokerage party-inspired campaigns that make Leap unlikely to succeed as a national movement in Canada.

### **V: Momentum, Leap, and “Old Left” traditions**

In 2015, neither Labour nor the NDP fared well in their respective elections. In Britain, David Cameron’s Conservative party was re-elected, while the NDP once again became a third party in Canada. Notably, the Liberal party, which reclaimed its traditional role as Canada’s governing party in 2015, campaigned on the left while the NDP remained in the centre. Indeed, both the Labour Party and the NDP promoted platforms that combined social democratic concerns with prevailing neoliberal discourses of reduced government spending.

However, a key difference was that Labour’s 2015 election manifesto under Ed Milliband, *Britain can be Better: The Labour Party Election Manifesto*, focused on working people in addition to balancing the budget and fighting the deficit. Although the platform was financially informed by neoliberal ideals, key Labour discourses around working-class identities were once again prevalent in the party’s platform. And so, Labour exhibited old Labour and New Labour narratives during Britain’s 2015 election.

In contrast, the 2015 NDP platform, *Building the Country of our Dreams*, seemed to betray its base by adopting neoliberal themes of fiscal responsibility and the promise of a balanced budget. In so doing, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair promoted a platform that was more fiscally conservative than the one proposed by the Liberal party (Leblanc, 2015). Further, while the 2015 NDP platform promised expanded social programs through childcare and



pharmacare initiatives, its platform, like the Liberal and the Conservative Parties', explicitly targeted the middle class (New Democratic Party, 2015, iv). Thus, the emphasis on working-class concerns that was seen in Britain in 2015 was absent during the NDP's 2015 election campaign. Instead, the NDP targeted broader sections of the Canadian electorate, notably a more ambiguous middle class (also the key focus for the Liberal and Conservative parties).

Given the election platforms promoted by the two parties in 2015, part of what makes Momentum and Leap so fascinating is that they forgo neoliberal discourses of balanced budgets to focus on traditional left values, such as democratization, expanded social programs, increased government intervention in the economy, and the promotion of equality (Momentum, 2017, Leap Manifesto, 2017). Both Momentum and Leap are movements that emerged, broadly, with the goal of influencing the direction of their respective parties. Momentum, though not yet an affiliated organization to Labour, aspires to become one (Momentum, 2017). In Canada, Leap will be debated and voted on by the NDP in 2018 (Momentum, 2017, Gerson, 2016).

Both movements also embody elements of populism given the high levels of popular support they enjoy. Steve D'Arcy, in 2016, argued that one of the most substantial challenges faced by post-new left activists was their apparent expulsion to the political margins (p. 155). A little over a year later, Momentum and Leap signify that the left has been able to reassert itself in mainstream party politics, as they represent a potential shift back to traditional leftist policies for Labour and the NDP.

## **The Momentum Movement and Jeremy Corbyn**

Momentum, and Corbyn's leadership campaign, grew the Labour party significantly in 2015 as over 116,000 new memberships were sold to Corbyn proponents over the course of one summer (O'Donnell, 2015, MacAskill, 2015). Although Corbyn won more than half of the vote in the leadership race, he was significantly less popular among his fellow politicians. Less than 15% supported him as number of sitting Labour MP's refused to participate in his shadow cabinet (O'Donnell, 2015, Mason, 2016). While Momentum exhibits populist, left-wing promise, it also poses a significant challenge to the Labour Party as the movement has aggravated tensions between Labour's far-left and moderate factions.

Since Corbyn has been leader, Labour's left-wing credentials have been strengthened. For example, the Labour Party under Corbyn is incredibly critical of the Conservative government's reliance on tax cuts and, further, their funding reductions to social programs such as the National Health Service (Labour Party, 2017). The Corbyn-led Labour Party represents a significant shift away from the party during the New Labour years, a change that has been met with backlash from Labour's moderate members, including Tony Blair (Tapsfield, 2017).

Perhaps adding to Momentum's controversial nature is that, in addition to exemplifying Old Left ideals of government intervention in the economy, it is also a traditional mass movement organization. Given the structural changes the party underwent during the New Labour years, Momentum poses a challenge to Labour by aiming to "revitalize the Labour Party ... [so that it] will become an effective, open, inclusive, participatory, democratic and member-led party of and in Government" (Momentum Constitution, 2017). Therefore, Momentum aims to reshape Labour party ideas and

organizational structures by restructuring the Labour Party along Old Left ideals of equality and mass participation (Momentum Constitution, 2017).

Indeed, Momentum's commitment to mass movement principles is further exemplified by its administrative body, the "National Coordinating Group" (NCG), which is composed of 12 or more elected Labour party members on the basis of geographic location, gender, and ethnicity. These quotas allow for an inclusive organization that incorporates all voices into the decision-making process. In keeping with Labour Party traditions, Momentum reserves positions for trade union representatives, as, unlike New Labour's shift away from identity and class-based politics, Momentum has prioritized union and working-class input (Momentum Constitution, 2017). Completely funded by membership-fees and small donations, Momentum's constitution was adopted only after the organization consulted its members through a survey (Momentum, 2017). This dedication to rank-and-file outreach efforts, paired with Momentum's inclusive nature, makes it a grassroots mass organization that is accountable to its membership, and further, allows it to remain true to the populist appeal exhibited by Corbyn's campaign.

On a micro level, individual Momentum supporters were predominantly youth activists who were disillusioned with centre-left and centre-right political parties (Hill, 2016). Similar to what occurred with the anti-capitalism movement, the Waffle, and the NPI, these activists held the party accountable for failing to reverse trends of income inequality, privatization, and high costs of living (Hill, 2016). Many of these young activists saw Corbyn as a leader who would challenge the status-quo and, further, return the Labour party to a truly working-class party. Thus, Momentum fits with the global trend of disillusionment with

the centre-left and centre-right, while subsequently remaining true to historical left-wing Labour Party traditions in Britain.

Interestingly, while the role of class remains first and foremost for Momentum, it also prioritizes the inclusion of individuals from many different walks of life through its emphasis on the nomination of female, BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic), LGBTQ+, and disabled candidates (Momentum Constitution, 2017). This broader range of identities bears likeness to the variety of identities that have often been encapsulated in Canadian populist movements, such as the Waffle, NPI, and Leap.

### **The Leap Manifesto**

Like Momentum, Leap is a decentralized political organization that emphasizes rank-and-file input in the decision making process. Both movements embrace Old Left values of equality, public ownership, increased social services, and government intervention in the economy (Leap Manifesto, 2017). Finally, like Momentum, Leap also represents a potential shift away from the centralized model the NDP adopted in recent years. Instead, it aims to return the party to the mass structure that historically characterized the CCF-NDP. Indeed, Leap's expression of traditional left-wing concerns is evident in the document's title, "The Leap Manifesto", as Leap was preceded by the *Waffle Manifesto*, the CCF's *Regina Manifesto*, and, of course, Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*.

However, unlike Momentum, Leap also brings contemporary concerns, such as environmental protection, and the rights of Indigenous peoples of Canada, to the fore (Leap Manifesto, 2017). Indeed, environmental protection and Indigenous rights are some of Leap's main concerns, whereas Momentum primarily deals with socio-economic inequality

and class-based concerns. A broader array of identities and social groups are once again at play in Canada while Momentum, though including more secondary identities than its precursors have, represents a return to working-class identity politics in Britain.

As well, Leap is currently further removed from the NDP than Momentum is from the Labour Party, as the former has yet to formally debate (or adopt) its policies. While Momentum is directly affiliated with Labour's leader, delegates at the 2016 NDP convention endorsed Leap "in principle", giving NDP members until 2018 to evaluate and develop opinions on Leap's policies. Then, it will be debated the 2018 NDP convention, where it will either be adopted or rejected by the NDP. Like the Waffle and the NPI did at previous NDP conventions, Leap will incite a passionate debate at the 2018 NDP convention, as pro-Leap and anti-Leap factions discuss the manifesto's merits.

Leap, a continuation of left-wing populist protest sentiment in Canada, shares a number of commonalities with its precursors, the Waffle and the NPI. To elaborate, Leap's initiating signatories include farmer, worker, and socialist organizations that are consistent with the party's historical support base. Another similarity shared between Leap, the Waffle, and the NPI is that it too encapsulates concerns about Canada's national identity. One of Leap's main pillars is the protection of the rights of the Indigenous Peoples of Canada (Leap Manifesto, 2017). While Indigenous peoples are recognized as a sovereign nation within Canada, their relations with the Crown have been tenuous at best. Leap aims to improve those relationships by declaring that: "T[he] leap must begin by respecting the inherent rights and title of the original caretakers of this land" (2017). Leap, like the Waffle and the Quebecois nation, both highlights internal challenges to Canadian federalism as well as multiple nationalist identities.

Further, Leap has received support from a broad array of identities and civil society organizations in Canada, highlighting Leap's appeal to vast ranges of identities and ideologies (Leap Manifesto, 2017). Like its precursors, Leap also shows a commitment to progressive feminist concerns as 35% of Leap's initiating signatories are women<sup>3</sup> (Leap, 2017). However, despite the variety of identities and social groups that have come forward to support Leap, as shown above, the manifesto remains first and foremost concerned with Canada's national identity through its focus on the Indigenous peoples of Canada (Leap Manifesto, 2017).

Finally, while Leap is supported by a broad range of individuals and organizations, it has also inflamed regional tensions within the NDP due to oil and gas industry backlash. Leap, given its focus on environmental action, proposes moratoria on new fossil fuel projects and encourages a shift to clean energy (Leap Manifesto, 2017). Currently, the only province governed by the NDP is Alberta, Canada's oil and gas powerhouse. As Alberta remains highly dependant on fossil fuels, Albertans are highly unlikely to support Leap. By extension, neither can their NDP government if it wants to be competitive in the next provincial election.

In sum, Momentum and Leap are contemporary left-wing protest movements in Britain and Canada that represent similar old-left concerns, and show ties to both parties' historical ideas, organizational structures, and identities. Further, both Momentum and Leap represent a potential return to the left after almost two decades of campaigning in the centre.

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<sup>3</sup> While 35% may seem modest, following the 2015 federal election in Canada, the new parliament was composed of 26% women, producing a record number of 88 female MPs in the Canadian House of Commons (Anderssen, 2015).

Momentum's left-wing success is attributable to its appeal to traditional left-wing concerns in Britain. Indeed, while Corbyn and Momentum represent a break from New Labour, they correspond with Britain's increased interest in principled, rather than technocratic, politics (Kenny, 2016, p. 83). Further, Both Momentum and Leap embody populist promise, as the left-wing populism exhibited in Corbyn's campaign fits with the international rise in populist sentiment in the west (Yakabuski, 2016). On the other hand, Leap is a continuation of the left-wing protest and populist movements that have emerged periodically from third parties in Canada.

## **VI: Conclusion**

This analysis applied most similar systems design, a comparative method best used for case studies with a number of shared characteristics, to left-wing protest movements in Britain and Canada. Despite significant commonalities between Labour and the CCF-NDP, an important difference rests on the distinctive ideas and identities that have shaped the organization of dominant political parties in Britain and Canada. These key differences help to explain why Momentum is more likely to become a national movement. Britain's closed-class system of political identities is conducive to political organizations that campaign on the left and the right and are supported by the working-class and the upper/ middle class, respectively, which has produced a number of nationally successful left-wing political parties and movements.

On the other hand, political organizations in Canada are ideologically constrained by regional, cultural, and linguistic cleavages. In order to broker votes across these divides, Canada's major parties have avoided ideological campaigns. In response to Canada's brokerage parties, a number of left-wing and right-wing populist protest parties and

movements have emerged in this country. Typically, these sentiments have been concentrated in select Canadian regions as they channel their disillusionment with the federal government into populist political action (Bickerton, 2016). Despite the relative frequency of populist movements in Canada, none have managed to have a lasting impact on a truly national level. As the CCF-NDP and the protest movements studied here show, they instead tend to taper off, remain a third party, or are subsumed by one of the major parties (Belanger, 2007). This suggests a trend in Canadian politics whereby protest movements and parties are unlikely to expand beyond their “third party” status.

However, national populist protest movements cannot be entirely ruled out in Canada. Both the NDP and the Reform Party have held Official Opposition status. Moreover, Preston Manning, the former leader of the populist right-wing Reform party, has encouraged current Canadian political elites to look back on the history of populism in their country. In doing so, they, unlike those in London and Washington, will not be taken aback if a populist movement gained traction in Canada in the near future (2017). Neither Britain nor Canada is immune to left-wing (and right-wing) populist and protest sentiments, although traditional left and right ideologies have historically been predominant in Britain. Indeed, despite the differences between key political identities, ideas, and organizations in Britain and Canada, both countries must grapple with the political consequences of the global trend of discontent with the centre-left and centre-right (Yakabuski, 2016).

While Momentum and Corbyn have benefitted from the international resurgence of ideological populist politics, Momentum must continue to capitalize and expand on its recent surge of popular support in the future. In order to do so, Corbyn will first have to take steps to unite the divided Labour Party as Momentum and moderate Labour Party members are



currently are at odds with one another (O'Donnell, 2016, Williams, 2017). Pro-Momentum members wish to see Corbyn's support better reflected by the party's organizational structures whereas his opponents fear that the party will be taken over by Momentum activists even after Corbyn has resigned from his post as Labour leader (Walker, 2017).

The divides within the Labour party are especially significant in the wake of Brexit, as high levels of political uncertainty have put both Labour and the Conservative party in precarious positions<sup>4</sup> (Williams, 2017). If the Conservative Party remains divided over Brexit negotiations, and if Labour manages to restore a semblance of intra-party unity, disillusioned anti-Brexiteers may look toward the Labour Party. In Canada, if the Waffle and NPI provide any hints about Leap, it will likely meet the same fate within the New Democratic Party as its predecessors did. Leap is a divisive moment within the party, and, without a clear consensus from the NDP, Leap faces significant structural and organizational barriers to gain support from the NDP and the Canadian electorate at large. By and large, that is because Leap is a staunchly left-wing movement, and ideological politics have typically been avoided by Canada's major parties in order to appeal to a variety of diverse political identities. Indeed, many left-wing and right-wing populist movements have been subsumed by the Liberal and Conservative Parties, where they inevitably lost their populist, protest-movement edge.

However, that is not to say that Leap will have no impact on Canadian politics at the federal level. Leap, like the Waffle and NPI, will likely further the conversation in Canadian politics as its ideas are adopted by major political parties (McGrane, 2016). Indeed, Leap's

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<sup>4</sup> Shortly after formally beginning Brexit discussions with the EU, Britain's current Prime Minister, Theresa May, called a snap election, citing stability at Westminster as a prerequisite for successful Brexit negotiations. This decision largely came as a surprise, as, in the past, May was steadfastly against an early election (Boyle & Maidment, 2017).

authors have stressed that while the left-wing NDP is the most compatible with the manifesto's principles, they are also open to (and eager for) endorsement from the governing Liberal Party (Tasker, 2016). In turn, this is reminiscent of what befell the Progressives many years ago as their left-wing populist movement was subsumed by both major and minor parties alike. This also underscores an interesting phenomenon as the lack of representation by Canada's major parties for many identities has, and will continue to, generate populist parties, sentiments, and movements that challenge the brokerage parties. It is these movements who then contribute new ideas to Canadian federal politics as their ideas are adopted by Canada's main political parties.

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