

THE CORRELATES AND CONSEQUENCES OF ANTI-PARTYISM IN THE 1997 CANADIAN ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This article examines why anti-party rhetoric resonates with some citizens, but not with others, and how this affects their electoral behaviour. The data are taken from the 1997 Canadian Election Study. Social background characteristics turn out to have only a very modest effect on anti-party sentiment. Political sophistication is associated with a less critical view of political parties, while economic frustration and perceived system deficiencies make for more negative attitudes, but the key factor is issue alienation from the incumbent party. This is also the most important factor in influencing how citizens express their anti-party sentiment. Anti-partyism is more likely to result in an 'anti-party' vote than in abstention. Those who are more involved and more informed are especially likely to work for change within the system.

KEY WORDS ■ abstention ■ anti-partyism ■ Canada ■ Reform Party ■ voting behaviour

Introduction

For all the debate about the 'crisis of party', there has been surprisingly little study of the correlates and consequences of anti-partyism at the mass level (Webb, 1996). A portrait is emerging of the trends in anti-party sentiment (Clarke and Kornberg, 1993; Poguntke, 1996), but despite the growing recognition that disaffection with political parties can be a powerful force for political change (Bardi, 1996; Scarrow, 1996), we still do not know very much about what motivates this sentiment or what its behavioural implications are. In this paper, we use data from the 1997 Canadian Election Study to address these two questions: What sort of people are most

disenchanted with political parties and why? And how does this affect their electoral behaviour?

The Meaning and Implications of Anti-Party Sentiment

Anti-party sentiment is typically taken to denote 'disaffection with, or even rejection of, political parties' (Poguntke and Scarrow, 1996: 257). Webb (1996) has undertaken the most extensive analysis of the correlates of anti-party sentiment, using survey data from the United Kingdom. As he explains, his indicator of anti/a-partisanship is more a measure of indifference than hostility toward political parties. It 'picks up the small proportion of voters (2.6 percent) in the sample who are actively hostile to both Labour and the Conservatives, plus a larger number (31.4 percent) who claim to be indifferent towards (that is "neither for nor against") them' (p. 374). Webb focuses on four possible explanations of anti/a-partisanship: negative evaluations of economic performance, the weakening of the class-vote link, major party convergence and social background. He concludes that the weakening of the class-vote link has diminished the importance of partisanship, but that something more is needed for voters to become actively hostile toward the two major parties. That something more is being unemployed and/or believing that the national economy is in decline. Lack of perceived differences between the two major parties was also strongly associated with hostility or indifference toward them. Apart from being unemployed, the impact of social background was generally weak, though people working in the public sector were less likely to be indifferent or hostile to the two major parties. Clarke and Kornberg (1993) reported a similarly small role for social background characteristics in their study of attitudes toward Canada's federal political parties.

To the extent that social background does matter, the least advantaged could be expected to be the most critical of political parties. It is these sectors of society – the less educated, the less affluent, the unemployed – who are presumably the least likely to feel that the party system is responsive to their needs. The perceived lack of responsiveness may also have a regional dimension, with some regions feeling that they are not receiving their fair share of wealth or power. In fact, Canada's western provinces have long harboured a strong strain of anti-partyism, ranging from crypto-populists who demanded party reform to radical populists who called for political parties to be replaced by new forms of democratic representation (Laycock, 1990). The lack of women in elected office may also make women more critical of political institutions in general and of political parties in particular (Blais and Gidengil, 1991; Clarke and Kornberg, 1993). On the other hand, older people should be less likely to harbour anti-party sentiments because they were socialized at a time when parties were more legitimate as institutions (Dalton, 1984). Married people may also have more positive attitudes

toward political parties, reflecting a tendency to be more supportive of established institutions in general. Finally, as Webb (1996) found, it seems likely that public sector workers will identify more closely with the state and its institutions, including political parties.

Given the modest role of social background reported in previous studies, attitudinal variables may be more helpful in understanding differences in opinion about political parties. First, frustration with the performance of political parties may have its roots in a failure of representation. A voter may feel that her policy interests are poorly represented. This perceived failure to provide adequate 'issue representation' (Miller and Listhaug, 1990) could take two forms. On the one hand, a voter may see political parties as basically indistinguishable (Webb, 1996). If the parties were arrayed amongst an ordered set of alternatives on a policy continuum, this voter would perceive them to be bunched together, all taking more or less the same position. On the other hand, a voter might perceive the parties to be occupying distinct positions, and yet all of those positions be distant from her own. Logically, the resulting 'issue alienation' (Gold, 1995) from the party system would be greatest when even the closest party is perceived to be failing to provide effective issue representation (Zelle, 1995). In some countries, though, what really seems to matter is perceived distance from the incumbent party (Miller and Listhaug, 1990). Unhappiness with the performance of the incumbent party presumably spills over into a more critical view of political parties at large.

Dissatisfaction with political parties may also have economic roots. A particularly likely source of frustration is disappointment with the economic performance of the governing party (Webb, 1996). The standard remedy in electoral democracies is to punish the incumbent party by voting against it at the next election. If the perceived economic performance fails to improve with a different party in power, however, a broader dissatisfaction with political parties as institutions could result.

Finally, the source of frustration with political parties may lie in disaffection with the political process in general. Political parties could be serving as a lightning rod for perceived lack of system responsiveness (Bardi, 1996). Miller and Listhaug (1990) reverse the causal arrow to argue that dissatisfaction with the party system erodes support for the broader political regime. It is certainly plausible, though, that other perceived system deficiencies erode affect for the institutions that are at the heart of electoral democratic systems, namely the political parties. If so, the problem lies not so much with political parties as with the workings of the larger system.

Political sophistication, on the other hand, should make for a less critical view of political parties. Based on their study of public attitudes toward the US Congress, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (1995) conclude that negative perceptions of representative institutions are fuelled by frustration with the democratic process. In action, democracy is necessarily messy and entails finding complex compromises. The politically sophisticated are presumably

better able to grasp what democracy entails and so their perceptions of the central actors in this process should be less negative. The same should be true of strong partisans. Even a strong sense of party identification may not render people immune to anti-party feelings (Owen and Dennis, 1996), but it is reasonable to assume that they will be less receptive to anti-party rhetoric. Strength of partisanship, though, raises another possible chicken-and-egg dilemma. Being a non-partisan is often cited as heightening receptiveness to anti-party rhetoric (Miller and Listhaug, 1990; Poguntke and Scarrow, 1996), but non-partisans may lack partisan attachments because they dislike political parties.

Identifying the possible behavioural consequences of anti-party sentiment is less fraught with causal ordering dilemmas. At election time, people who are frustrated with political parties basically have three choices: they can abstain from voting, they can vote for a party that vows to do politics differently, or they can vote for one of the traditional alternatives in the hope that its behaviour will change. Mudde (1996) has borrowed Hirschman's (1970) categories of 'exit, voice, and loyalty' to label these options.¹ Decreasing turnout ('exit') has been used as an indicator of growing anti-partyism. The puzzle has been why there has not been a more consistent cross-national trend of declining electoral participation (Poguntke, 1996; Webb, 1996). One possible explanation is that 'voice', rather than 'exit', has been the preferred outlet for anti-party sentiment. So-called 'anti-party parties' have mobilized on the basis of anti-party arguments and votes for these parties have also been taken to indicate increasing anti-partyism (Poguntke, 1996).

The notion of 'anti-party voting' has some empirical support. Owen and Dennis (1996) explored the role of anti-partyism in support for Ross Perot in 1992 and concluded that a Perot vote provided a channel for dissatisfaction with the existing partisan structure. Perot voters were more likely to believe that there were no important differences between the Republican and Democratic parties and they were more likely to favour the formation of a new party that would challenge the two old-line parties. But voting for Perot was not the same thing as voting for an 'anti-party' party. In 1992, Perot had not yet formed the Reform Party and his *United We Stand America* organization was clearly not a political party. A vote for Perot was a vote for a non-partisan alternative. There is evidence from the 1993 Canadian election, though, of an association between evaluations of political parties and 'anti-party voting'. Negative evaluations increased the likelihood of a vote for Canada's neo-populist Reform Party (Clarke and Kornberg, 1996).

What needs to be explained, then, is why some citizens choose to voice their frustration by casting an 'anti-party' vote while others opt out altogether, and why still others set their frustration aside and vote for one of the established parties. We anticipate that issue alienation from the incumbent party will be a key factor in motivating an 'anti-party' vote.

'Anti-parties' cannot mobilize on the basis of anti-partyism alone. Europe's neo-populist 'anti-parties' have combined their anti-party rhetoric with a clear new right agenda (Betz, 1993; Betz and Immerfall, 1998; Kitschelt, 1995; Taggart, 1995). In doing so, they have given expression to political preferences that were not represented by the established parties. Indeed, politicizing 'a hidden issue' has been the key to their success (Ignazi, 1992: 24; cf. Bardi, 1996). Similarly, a study of members' motivation for joining Canada's neo-populist Reform Party highlights the importance of both disaffection with the established political parties (and the political process at large) and strong neo-conservative beliefs (Clarke and Kornberg, 2000).

Conversely, a perceived lack of issue differentiation should increase the likelihood of not voting at all. If people are hostile toward political parties because they see little difference among them on the issues of the day, they are unlikely to make the effort to vote. This is especially likely if even the 'anti-party' party is not perceived to be sufficiently distinct. It is possible, though, that people do not see much to distinguish the political parties because they pay scant attention to politics. Before inferring failed issue representation, we have to rule out the possibility that this perceived lack of partisan difference is simply a know-nothing effect.

The politically sophisticated, on the other hand, are likely to prefer working for change within the party system to not voting at all. They are the best equipped to understand the potential power of voice, and as Hirschman (1970: 77-8) notes, what 'holds exit at bay and activates voice' is a readiness 'to trade off the certainty of exit against the uncertainties of an improvement in the deteriorated product'.

Finally, strong partisans should be the most likely to stay loyal to the established parties. This does not mean that a strong sense of party identification renders people immune to anti-party feelings. Indeed, there is evidence that even strong party identifiers can be critical of political parties (Owen and Dennis, 1996), but these disaffected partisans should be more likely to try to change their preferred party than to opt for a non-traditional alternative or not to vote at all.

Data and Methods

We test these various propositions about the correlates and consequences of anti-partyism using data from the 1997 Canadian Election Study.² Canada has been no exception to the rising tide of anti-party sentiment. The 'decline of party' (Meisel, 1991) has become the stuff of scholarly debate, while popular disenchantment with Canada's political parties has grown (Blais and Gidengil, 1991; Clarke and Kornberg, 1993).

Anti-party sentiment is measured by combining responses to five questions about political parties into a simple additive scale (with an alpha coefficient of reliability of 0.6).³ The full wording of the questions is given

in the Appendix. Ideally, there would be separate measures of specific and generalized anti-party sentiment. 'Specific anti-party sentiment' implies a rejection of the traditional party alternatives, whereas 'generalized anti-party sentiment' denotes a more thoroughgoing rejection of political parties *per se* (Poguntke and Scarrow, 1996). As Poguntke (1996; cf. Webb, 1996) notes, though, it is simply not possible to differentiate between the two dimensions empirically. When respondents say that parties hardly ever keep their promises, or do not care what ordinary people think, they could just be saying something about the traditional party alternatives rather than the inherent nature of political parties. What we can do is include a control for the number of established parties that received negative ratings (<50). By controlling for specific anti-party sentiment in this way, we are able to see which explanatory factors have the greatest impact on antipathy toward parties *per se*.

The analysis begins with an examination of the correlates of anti-party sentiment. The purpose is to determine why anti-party rhetoric resonates with some citizens but not with others. In addition to social background characteristics, we focus on failed issue representation, negative economic evaluations and other perceived system deficiencies.⁴ Social background characteristics are represented by a series of dummy variables, with the named category coded '1'. Issue alienation is measured by combining self-placements and party placements on two issue domains that have been central to Canadian politics in the 1990s, namely accommodating Quebec and cutting taxes versus maintaining social programmes. Issue alienation is measured for both the respondent's closest party and the incumbent Liberal Party. In both cases, it is simply the average absolute difference between the respondent's position on a seven-point self-placement scale and her placement of the political party in question. Perceived lack of issue differentiation is measured by taking the average absolute difference between the placement of the two parties that were placed farthest apart on each issue. Economic frustration is tapped by a composite measure that combines retrospective and prospective judgements of the state of Canada's economy and the respondent's own financial situation. Other perceived system deficiencies are represented by a measure of the perceived fairness of the federal government's treatment of the respondent's province. In order to assess the effects of all of these variables net of the normal partisan biases, a control is included for identification with the incumbent Liberal Party.

We also include measures of subjective political interest, personal political efficacy and objective political knowledge. In using a simple count of information held as a measure of political sophistication, we are following Luskin's (1987: 890) advice that 'information holding measures represent the best single existing approach'. Because of the potential chicken-and-egg problems discussed above, measures of general disaffection with politics and strength of partisanship are added afterwards, along with the control for specific anti-party sentiment. General disaffection with politics is tapped by

measures of political distrust and lack of external political efficacy (Miller and Listhaug, 1990), plus a measure of anti-politician sentiment. Estimation is by ordinary least squares regression.

Next, we examine the impact of anti-partyism on voting behaviour in the 1997 election. The object is to identify which factors encourage people to voice their anti-party feelings by voting for an 'anti-party' and which make non-voting more likely, and finally which factors help keep people loyal to the established parties. The notion of Canada's Reform Party (and its successor, the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance) as an 'anti-party' is plausible.⁵ Among the proposals endorsed at the Reform Party's founding assembly in 1987 were calls for looser party discipline and more free votes in Parliament, and the party's organizational plan embodied its rejection of traditional top-down models of party governance. While the extent to which theory and practice have corresponded is open to debate (Nevitte et al., 1998), the rhetoric has certainly been anti-party. Moreover, like its European cousins, the party fused its anti-party rhetoric with a new right policy agenda (Nevitte et al., 1999).⁶ Finally, Clarke and Kornberg (1996) have demonstrated that negative evaluations of political parties played a role in Reform voting in the 1993 election. In achieving its electoral breakthrough in that election, the Reform Party, along with the separatist Bloc québécois, succeeded in smashing through Canada's traditional 'two plus party system'. Indeed, with 27 percent of the vote in Canada outside Quebec in 1997, Reform has been one of the most successful 'anti-parties' in advanced industrial democracies. The 1997 Canadian election provides a particularly interesting test of the notion of 'anti-party' voting because the 'anti-party' was no longer a new party trying to break into the system. When people were asked for their opinions about the role and performance of political parties in 1997, the 'anti-party' party was presumably included in their frame of reference.

The analyses are confined to Canada outside Quebec. The Reform Party was not remotely competitive in any riding within Quebec and so voicing anti-partyism by voting Reform was not a realistic option. Moreover, support for sovereignty is such a powerful correlate of political preference in Quebec (Nevitte et al., 1999) that its effects would necessarily confound any attempt to draw inferences about anti-party sentiment on a Canada-wide basis. In addition to anti-partyism and its attitudinal correlates, the models include controls for background characteristics that are related to non-voting and/or Reform voting (see Nevitte et al., 1999).⁷ Because the dependent variable has three unordered categories (non-voting, voting Reform and voting for one of the traditional party alternatives), multinomial logit is employed (see Whitten and Palmer, 1996).⁸

Findings

The Distribution of Anti-Party Sentiment

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses to each of the five questions that comprise the anti-party sentiment scale. The results confirm Poguntke and Scarrow's (1996) point that citizens vary in the radicalism of their anti-party sentiment. At the extreme, only a small minority seems ready to dispense with political parties altogether, with fewer than 1 respondent in 10 endorsing the statement that 'political parties are not needed in Canada'. Sizeable minorities, though, saw the political parties as uncaring and untrustworthy and there was a fairly widespread sense that there is not much to choose between the federal parties. The most negative responses were elicited when people were asked whether 'political parties spend too much time catering to minorities', a charge that has been central to anti-party critiques in Europe (Mudde, 1996). A majority of respondents gave the anti-party response.

The Correlates of Anti-Party Sentiment

As Table 1 confirms, social background characteristics play only a very modest role in explaining variations in anti-party sentiment (cf. Clarke and Kornberg, 1993; Webb, 1996). Still, the notion that anti-party sentiment taps into regional frustration is borne out. Residents of non-core regions are significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with political parties than central Canadians. This is especially true of the least affluent regions. Women also

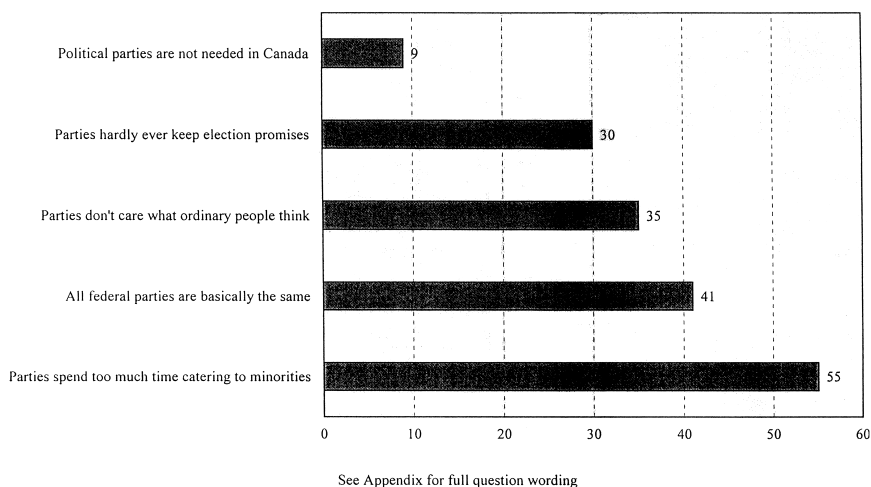


Figure 1. Canadians' evaluations of political parties (outside Quebec)
(% agreeing with statement)

prove to be more critical than men of political parties and so do people without a high school education. The contrasting effects for high school dropouts and university graduates reflect differences in the cognitive resources required to grasp the complexities of politics, rather than a gap between the haves and the have-nots: neither household income nor being out of work is significantly related to anti-party sentiment.⁹ Finally, age and public sector employment both work as predicted to reduce negative feelings about political parties. People who were born before the baby boom were less likely to be dissatisfied with political parties and so were people who work in the public sector. The effect for marital status, though, was the very opposite of what was predicted. People in traditional marriages (i.e. not living common law) were actually more critical of political parties, not less.¹⁰

None of these socio-demographic effects is very strong. Anti-party sentiment is not just regional frustration in another guise, nor is it a simple matter of material disadvantage. This conclusion is reinforced when we look at the attitudinal correlates of anti-partyism (Table 2). Issue alienation from the governing political party is clearly an important source of anti-partyism. The further respondents are from the incumbent Liberals' perceived positions on Quebec and on taxes versus social programmes, the more critical they become of political parties in general. Being distant from the closest party is also related to anti-party sentiment but much more weakly. Owing

Table 1. Social background characteristics and anti-party sentiment

<i>Intercept</i>	<i>0.49 (0.01)***</i>
Atlantic resident	0.05 (0.02)***
Western resident	0.02 (0.01)*
Female	0.02 (0.01)*
Did not complete high school	0.03 (0.01)**
University graduate	-0.06 (0.01)***
Lowest family income quintile	-0.00 (0.01)
Highest family income quintile	-0.00 (0.01)
Unemployed or laid-off	0.03 (0.02)
Pre-babyboom	-0.03 (0.01)*
Post-babyboom	-0.01 (0.01)
Traditional marriage	0.03 (0.01)**
Public sector worker	-0.02 (0.01)*
Adjusted R ²	0.06
Number of cases	1,365

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Estimation is by ordinary least squares regression, with pair-wise deletion of missing data. Column entries are unstandardized regression coefficients, with standard errors shown in parentheses.

to multi-collinearity problems, both sets of measures cannot be included in the same equation.¹¹ When distance from the closest party is substituted for distance from the incumbent party, the coefficient shrinks to 0.06. The greater salience of distance from the incumbent party parallels Miller and Listhaug's (1990) findings for the United States and Norway in their study of negativity towards the party system and political trust and confirms their assumption that 'what the incumbents are doing may be cognitively more salient and politically more relevant than what one's own party is proposing' (p. 368).¹² A further indication of the importance of feelings about the incumbent party for opinions about political parties in general is the significant independent effect of party identification. Those who identify with the incumbents are significantly less likely to harbour anti-party sentiment (cf. Clarke and Kornberg, 1993).

The other facet of inadequate issue representation is perceived lack of issue differentiation. This appears to be less of a factor in anti-party sentiment.¹³ As predicted, the closer respondents perceive the political parties to be on accommodating Quebec and the trade-off between taxes and social programmes, the more likely they are to have negative attitudes toward political parties. The effect, though, is of borderline statistical significance.

Table 2. Attitudinal correlates of anti-party sentiment

	<i>Indirect effects</i>	<i>Direct effects</i>
Intercept	0.48 (0.02)***	0.55 (0.02)***
Distance from incumbent party	0.26 (0.03)***	0.11 (0.02)***
Perceived lack of difference between parties	0.04 (0.02)	0.04 (0.02)
Identification with incumbent party	0.06 (0.01)***	-0.03 (0.01)**
Negative economic evaluations	0.10 (0.02)***	0.03 (0.02)
Province treated unfairly	-0.04 (0.01)***	0.02 (0.01)
Objective political knowledge	-0.03 (0.02)*	-0.03 (0.01)*
Personal political efficacy	-0.05 (0.01)***	0.00 (0.01)
Subjective political interest	-0.08 (0.02)***	-0.03 (0.01)
Political distrust		0.09 (0.01)***
Lack of external political efficacy		0.16 (0.02)***
Anti-politician sentiment		0.16 (0.02)***
Specific anti-party sentiment		0.06 (0.01)***
Strength of partisanship		-0.03 (0.01)**
Adjusted R ²	0.24	0.44
Number of cases	1,370	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Estimation is by ordinary least squares regression, with pair-wise deletion of missing data. The column entries are regression coefficients, with standard errors shown in parentheses. Controls are included for significant social background characteristics from Table 1.

The frustration effect is not entirely issue-driven. Economic disappointment and dissatisfaction with the workings of the federal system also make for disaffection with political parties. The more negative respondents' economic evaluations, the more likely they are to express negative views about political parties. Similarly, respondents who believe that the federal government treats their province less well than other provinces are more likely to be disenchanting with political parties.

As predicted, political involvement and political sophistication work to mitigate anti-party sentiment. People who are more knowledgeable about politics are less negative in their opinions of political parties. This is also true of those who are the most interested in politics and those with the highest sense of personal political competence. Clearly, those who are better equipped to evaluate political parties judge them less harshly.¹⁴ The other factor that is associated with a more charitable opinion of political parties is a strong sense of party identification. The more strongly respondents identify with one of the established parties, the less likely they are to hold negative views about political parties in general.

The link between generalized systemic discontent and anti-party sentiment is apparent when measures of external political efficacy, political distrust and anti-politician sentiment are added. The lower respondents' feelings of external political efficacy and the more they dislike politicians in general, the more likely they are to be dissatisfied with political parties. The same is true, albeit not as strongly, of those who lack political trust. With all three effects, though, the direction of causality is open to question. It could be, for example, that some of those who lack political trust lack trust *because* they are dissatisfied with political parties, as Miller and Listhaug (1990) have argued, rather than the reverse.

What we can say with confidence is that issue alienation remains a highly significant predictor of anti-party sentiment, net of any more general political dissatisfaction. Issue alienation from the incumbent party translates into an anti-party orientation that goes beyond negative feelings toward politics and politicians in general. It also goes beyond unhappiness with the traditional political parties to plumb a deeper dissatisfaction with political parties *per se*. Clearly, perceived lack of issue representation on the part of the incumbent party is an important source of antipathy toward political parties as such. Parties as a whole are perceived more negatively when people feel that their views are not being represented by the party in power.¹⁵

The Consequences of Anti-Party Sentiment

The first clue that anti-partyism may affect voting behaviour is that almost one Reform voter in two (48 percent) scored in the top tercile on the anti-party scale, compared with slightly more than one non-voter in three (35 percent) and only one in five (22 percent) of those who voted for one of the established parties. Respondents in the top tercile had strongly negative

opinions about political parties, with scores of 0.6 or higher on the anti-partyism scale.

Multivariate analysis confirms that anti-partyism is more likely to lead to an 'anti-party' vote than to not voting at all (Table 3). Since there are three possible choices, this analysis uses multinomial logit. With three choices, multinomial logit estimates two sets of parameters. Each parameter gives the predicted marginal effect of an explanatory factor on the log-odds of a given choice relative to a baseline choice. A positive (negative) coefficient indicates that an increase in the value of the explanatory factor is associated with an increase (decrease) in the relative probability of the given choice over the baseline choice. The third set of parameter estimates (for the relative probability of one non-baseline choice over the other) can be obtained by simply subtracting one set of parameters from the other. We provide all three sets of parameters (even though the third is, strictly speaking, redundant) because they bring out the role of the various explanatory factors in the choice among the three options (cf. Whitten and Palmer, 1996). In each column, the second of the two stated options serves as the baseline.

Anti-party sentiment significantly enhances the odds of a Reform vote. The effect on non-voting is modest in comparison. In fact, given the choice between voting Reform and not voting at all, anti-partyism favours a Reform vote. This is not just a way of voicing dissatisfaction with politics

Table 3. Anti-partyism and voting behaviour

	<i>Reform vs. established parties</i>	<i>Non-voting vs. established parties</i>	<i>Reform vs. non-voting</i>
Intercept	-4.14 (0.90)***	-1.69 (0.94)	-2.45 (1.09)*
Political distrust	0.02 (0.25)	-0.33 (0.26)	0.35 (0.30)
Lack of external political efficacy	0.47 (0.40)	0.52 (0.44)	-0.05 (0.50)
Strength of partisanship	-2.51 (0.28)***	-1.43 (0.28)***	-1.08 (0.35)**
Anti-politician sentiment	-0.55 (0.45)	0.24 (0.51)	-0.79 (0.56)
Specific anti-party sentiment	2.01 (0.27)***	0.68 (0.29)*	1.33 (0.32)***
Anti-partyism	3.07 (0.63)***	2.06 (0.70)**	1.01 (0.77)
-2 Log-likelihood	1820.99		
Nagelkerke pseudo R-square	0.43		
Number of cases	1245		
Correctly predicted	69%		

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Column entries are multinomial logit coefficients with standard errors shown in parentheses. Controls are included for relevant social background characteristics.

or politicians in general, or even dislike of the established parties. The effect of anti-party sentiment holds in the face of controls for all three forms of frustration. Predictably, people who identify strongly with one of the established parties are more likely to stay loyal, but if they do not, they are more likely to abstain than they are to cast an 'anti-party' vote.

The evidence is clear: antipathy toward political parties *per se* is more likely to find expression in voting Reform than it is in abstention. The question is why. Table 4 looks at the relationship between the choice among voting Reform, voting for one of the established parties and not voting at all, on the one hand, and the motive forces of anti-partyism, on the other (see Table 2). It turns out that issue alienation from the incumbent is indeed a key factor. The greater the distance between the respondent and the incumbent party on the issues of the day, the greater the odds of an 'anti-party' vote. Distance from the incumbent party is a significant factor in non-voting, too, but when it comes to a choice between voting Reform and not voting, the odds clearly favour voting Reform (though the effect falls just short of conventional levels of statistical significance). When the two issue

Table 4. Party performance, political sophistication, and voting behaviour

	<i>Reform vs. established parties</i>	<i>Non-voting vs. established parties</i>	<i>Reform vs. non-voting</i>
Intercept	-3.29 (0.83)***	1.44 (0.88)	-4.74 (1.03)***
Distance from incumbent party	2.98 (0.53)***	1.76 (0.67)**	1.22 (0.70)
Lack of difference between parties	0.92 (0.47)*	1.67 (0.55)**	-0.75 (0.61)
Identification with incumbent party	-1.88 (0.25)***	-0.75 (0.22)***	-1.14 (0.31)***
Negative economic evaluations	0.69 (0.39)	0.15 (0.47)	0.53 (0.51)
Province treated unfairly	0.76 (0.27)**	-0.22 (0.32)	0.98 (0.35)**
Objective political knowledge	-0.04 (0.32)	-0.90 (0.36)**	0.85 (0.41)*
Personal political efficacy	0.48 (0.24)*	0.23 (0.29)	0.24 (0.32)
Subjective political interest	-0.51 (0.34)	-1.94 (0.37)***	1.43 (0.42)***
-2 Log-likelihood	1874.66		
Nagelkerke pseudo R-square	0.41		
Number of cases	1251		
Correctly predicted	67%		

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

Column entries are multinomial logit coefficients with standard errors shown in parentheses. Controls are included for relevant social background characteristics.

dimensions are entered separately (results not shown), it becomes apparent that accommodating Quebec is the key issue underlying this issue alienation.

Perceived lack of issue differentiation is also a factor in 'anti-party' voting. The less differences respondents see among the parties, the more likely they are to opt for Reform over one of the traditional parties. This effect pales, though, in comparison with the effect of issue alienation from the incumbent. It also pales in comparison with the effect on non-voting. Failing to see a difference among the parties makes abstention much more likely than voting for one of the traditional alternatives.¹⁶ And now the key issue is not accommodating Quebec but the trade-off between taxes and social programmes (results not shown). This perceived lack of issue differentiation is not just a 'know-nothing' phenomenon. The effect holds regardless of people's objective knowledge about politics. This is an important point because it supports the contention that lack of perceived difference among the parties is a form of failed issue representation.

While issue alienation is the critical factor motivating an 'anti-party' vote, frustration with economic performance also plays a role. Negative economic evaluations increase the likelihood of choosing Reform over one of the traditional parties. The effect, though, is of borderline statistical significance. And beyond that, economic evaluations count for little. Dissatisfaction with the treatment of the respondent's province is more important than economic discontent. Respondents who are unhappy with the way their province is treated are significantly more likely to vote for Reform than for one of the established parties and they are much more likely to opt for Reform than they are to abstain.

Party identification also plays into the choice between voting Reform and not voting at all. People who identify with the incumbent party are much more likely to abstain than they are to vote Reform (though, naturally, they are even more likely to stay loyal). This mirrors the pattern already observed for those who identify strongly with any of the traditional parties. The behaviour of these strong partisans could be likened to boycotting, or what Hirschman (1970: 86) describes as 'temporary exit without corresponding entry elsewhere'. There is the implied intention to return to the partisan fold if the preferred party improves its performance in the desired way.

Political involvement is clearly an important factor in deciding whether to opt out or not. People who are interested in politics are significantly more likely to stay loyal to one of the traditional parties, but if they do not, the odds are that they will opt for Reform rather than not vote at all. The same pattern holds, albeit less strongly, for those who are more informed about politics. Finally, the more efficacious people feel, the more likely they are to cast an 'anti-party' vote. This pattern of effects suggests that voting for an 'anti-party' is an active way of expressing anti-partyism, whereas non-voting is the more passive response. In fact, some of those who fail to vote may not be so much hostile to political parties as simply indifferent. It would be wrong, though, to equate non-voting with indifference, because abstention

is also motivated by failed issue representation. In this regard, it is important to note that Canada does not have a left-libertarian, or New Politics, party on the left that could provide an alternative channel of expression within the system. When the possibility of voice is thwarted, exit becomes the more likely response.

Conclusion

As some analysts have suspected, political parties do serve as a lightning rod for disaffection with politics at large. There is much more to anti-partyism, though, than general political malaise. Frustration with political parties has specific sources in perceived deficiencies of the federal system and in negative evaluations of economic conditions. More important than either of these sources, however, is issue alienation. The key here is not a perception that *no* party is close on the central issues. What matters more is whether the incumbent party is perceived to be close or not. The further away citizens are from the governing party on the issues of the day (or in more general ideological terms), the more likely they are to be dissatisfied with political parties in general. This finding strongly suggests that political parties as a whole are viewed more critically when citizens feel that their political preferences are not being represented by the governing party. The resulting frustration breeds a deeper dissatisfaction with the institutions that are at the heart of electoral democracy.

This issue alienation clearly finds expression in voting for an 'anti-party' party. It is telling that accommodating Quebec was the critical issue underlying Reform voters' issue alienation from the incumbent. In the 1988 election, resisting Quebec had proved to be an area of the issue space that was well supplied with voters but devoid of parties (Johnston et al., 1992). This was a classic case of an issue that had been 'organized out' of electoral politics (Schattschneider, 1960: 71). That changed in 1993, when the Reform Party made its electoral breakthrough by politicizing this very issue. This supports those who have emphasized the link between neglected preferences and the success of neo-populist right-wing parties (Ignazi, 1992). Our results also point more generally to the importance of politics in explaining orientations toward political parties (Biorcio and Mannheimer, 1995; Schmitt and Holmberg, 1995). To the extent that parties themselves are the source of voters' harsh evaluations, failed interest intermediation appears to be a critical factor.

The findings reported here also lend empirical weight to the assumption that voting for an 'anti-party' party 'contains . . . an element of anti-party sentiment' (Poguntke, 1996: 334). To the extent that it does (and the result proves to hold more generally), trends in the level of 'anti-party' voting can proxy for trends in anti-party sentiment at the mass level. Abstaining from voting altogether, though, is a more ambiguous indicator. Our results

confirm that non-voting can be a way of expressing disaffection with political parties, but they also show that non-voting can reflect sheer indifference or apathy. In the Canadian case, at least, citizens who were disenchanted with political parties were more likely to voice those sentiments in an 'anti-party' vote than not to vote at all.

As Canada's 'anti-party' party, Reform tapped successfully into both the specific source of this anti-partyism *and* generalized antipathy toward political parties. According to our estimates, if Reform voters had felt no more negatively toward political parties than those who voted for one of the traditional parties, Reform support would have dropped by fully four percentage points from 27 percent of the vote outside Quebec to 23 percent.¹⁷ The importance of antipathy toward political parties *per se* in the party's support raises two questions. First, it begs the question of whether 'anti-party' voters perceive their party to be a 'real' party (Mudde, 1996; Webb, 1996).¹⁸ When these voters are responding to questions about political parties, it seems, only the established parties are part of their frame of reference. Clearly, further research is needed, but this does support the contention that the 'challenge to party' may not be a challenge to parties as such but to a particular type of party (Katz and Mair, 1995). Second, the importance of anti-partyism in support for 'anti-party' parties underlines their 'quintessential dilemma . . . how to be an effective party at the same time as being an "anti-party"' (Taggart, 1995: 39). If they end up acting more and more like established brokerage parties, will these parties still serve as a way of channelling anti-party sentiment and giving it legitimate voice inside the system? If they come to be perceived as 'real' parties, no different from the rest, some of their erstwhile supporters may choose to opt out of the system altogether. Voice may yet prove to be exit postponed (Hirschman, 1970: 37), and the challenge to party could become a challenge to parties as such.

Appendix

Question Wording

All variables were re-scaled to run from 0 to 1.

Anti-party sentiment – 'Using the [five-point] scale below, where would you place your own view?: 'Some people say that political parties are necessary to make our political system work in Canada. Others think that political parties are not needed in Canada' / 'Some people say that political parties in Canada care what ordinary people think. Others say that political parties in Canada don't care what ordinary people think' / 'For each statement below, please indicate if you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree: All federal parties are basically the same; there isn't really a choice' / 'Political parties spend too much time catering to minorities' / 'Do political

parties keep their election promises most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever?' The first two items are taken from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project, of which the 1997 Canadian Election Study is a part.

Objective political knowledge was measured by the total number of correct answers to the following questions: 'We would like to see how widely known some political figures are. Do you recall the name of the President of the United States? / The Minister of Finance of Canada? / The Premier of [the respondent's province]? / The first woman to be Prime Minister of Canada?'

Personal political efficacy – 'Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what's going on. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree?'

Subjective political interest – 'On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no interest at all and 10 means a great deal of interest, how would you rate your interest in politics generally?'

Self and party placements – 'We face tough choices. Cutting taxes means cutting social programmes and improving social programmes means increasing taxes. If you had to choose, would you cut taxes, increase taxes, or keep taxes as they are?' / 'Do you think the . . . Party wants to cut taxes, increase taxes, or keep taxes as they are?'

These questions had a follow-up, depending on the response: 'cut [increase] a lot, somewhat or a little?'

'How much do you think should be done for Quebec: more, less or about the same as now?' / 'How much does the . . . Party want to do for Quebec: more, less, or about the same as now?'

These questions had a follow-up, depending on the response: 'Is that a lot more [less], somewhat more [less], or a little more [less]?'

Economic evaluations – 'Financially, are you better off, worse off, or about the same as a year ago?' / 'Do you think that a year from now you will be better off financially, worse off, or about the same as now?' / 'Over the past year, has Canada's economy gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed about the same?' / 'What about the next twelve months? Will Canada's economy get better, get worse or stay about the same?' Responses were combined into a simple additive scale.

Province treated unfairly – 'In general, does the federal government treat your province better, worse, or about the same as other provinces?'

Political distrust – 'Do you think that people in the government waste a lot of the money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, don't waste very much of it?' / 'Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are crooked, hardly any of them are crooked?' Responses were combined into a simple additive scale.

External political efficacy – 'For each of the following statements, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or

strongly disagree. First, those elected to Parliament soon lose touch with the people/People like me have no say about what the government does / I don't think the government cares much what people like me think.' Responses were combined into a simple additive scale.

Anti-politician sentiment – 'How do you feel about politicians in general? The scale runs from 0 to 100, 0 means you really dislike them and 100 means you really like them.' The scaling was reversed.

Identification with the incumbent party – 'In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Reform, or none of these?' / 'How strongly . . . do you feel, very strongly, fairly strongly, or not very strongly?' Only those who identified very or fairly strongly with the Liberal Party were counted as identifiers (see Blais et al., 1999).

Strength of party identification – Those who identified very strongly with the Liberals, Conservatives or NDP received a score of 1, those who identified fairly strongly received a score of 0.66, those who identified not very strongly received a score of 0.33 and those who did not identify at all with any of the three parties received a 0.

Specific anti-party sentiment was measured by the number of ratings below 50 given to the three established parties – 'Now we're going to ask you how you feel about each political party on the same scale. The scale runs from 0 to 100, where 0 means an extremely bad rating and 100 means an extremely good rating. How do you feel about the . . . Party?'

Notes

- 1 Mudde includes a second option under 'voice', namely supporting new social movements. Voting for an independent candidate or spoiling the ballot are also possible options.
- 2 The 1997 Canadian Election Study was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University (see Northrup, 1998). It was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and by Elections Canada. 3949 eligible voters were interviewed during the campaign, of whom 3170 were re-interviewed after the election and 1727 returned a mail-back questionnaire. The campaign survey response rate was 59 percent. The data are available at: www.isr.yorku.ca/ISR.
- 3 Except for keeping promises, the questions come from the mail-back survey. Despite the drop in sample size, the mail-back respondents resemble the campaign respondents in terms of social background. Given the literacy requirements, though, a higher proportion of mail-back respondents had completed high school. Comparing the two samples on the keeping promises question confirms the resemblance. 28.1 percent of mail-back respondents responded 'hardly ever' ($n = 1400$), reassuringly close to the campaign sample figure of 29.6 percent ($n = 2928$).
- 4 The attitudinal variables have all been re-scaled to run from 0 to 1. The wording of all questions is given in the Appendix.
- 5 The Reform Party membership voted on 25 March 2000 to reconstitute as the

- Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance. Tellingly, the new name does not include the word 'party'.
- 6 The parallels with the European new right should not be pushed too far. Reform supporters are less radical than their European cousins (Nevitte et al., 1999).
 - 7 The following dummy variables were included as controls: Atlantic resident, Western resident, female, did not complete high school, university graduate, lowest family income quintile, Catholic, Northern European ancestry, non-European ancestry, pre-babyboom, post-babyboom, traditional marriage, children under 18 years of age, and public sector worker.
 - 8 Strictly speaking, multinomial probit should be used since the choice among the three alternatives violates the 'independence of irrelevant alternatives' (IIA) assumption that underlies multinomial logit (Burden and Lacy, 1998; Sanders, 1999; Whitten and Palmer, 1996). The IIA assumption requires that the relative probability of selecting one alternative over another be unaffected by adding or removing another alternative. It is hard to imagine that Reform's disappearance would leave the relative probability of non-voting versus voting for one of the established parties unchanged. It is not at all clear, though, that the computational difficulties and drawbacks (the trade-off between fragile identification and loss of parameters) of multinomial probit outweigh the consequences of violating IIA (Burden and Lacy, 1998). This is especially true (as in our case) when the candidate variables for explaining the choice among competing parties are the same as those for explaining the choice between voting and not voting at all (which could make for fragile identification with multinomial probit). Based on their multinomial probit model of vote choice and turnout in the 1992 US presidential election, Burden and Lacy (1998) conclude that multinomial logit would produce similar results, despite possible violation of IIA.
 - 9 The result for being unemployed contrasts with Webb's (1996) finding for a/anti-partisanship. In an uncontrolled set-up, those with family incomes (adjusted for family size) in the highest quintile are less critical of political parties, while the reverse holds for those who are unemployed or laid-off, but both effects turn out to be largely due to education.
 - 10 This may reflect lack of perceived representation on moral traditionalism, but we have no way of testing for this. The same is true of anti-minoritarianism, another source of support for right-wing neo-populist parties. It should be noted, though, that both orientations are more weakly associated with anti-partyism (and with Reform voting) than are views about accommodating Quebec.
 - 11 The correlation between the two measures is 0.56. With both measures included in the equation, the sign for the closest party is negative.
 - 12 The result is replicated if left-right self-placements and party placements are substituted. It is not clear whether Canadians really understand these terms (Lambert et al., 1986) and their unfamiliarity is reflected in a greatly reduced sample size (810 respondents). Among those who could place both themselves and the political parties on the traditional ideological continuum, it is clearly distance from the governing party that matters and not distance from the closest party. The coefficients are 0.10 (0.04)** for the governing party and 0.00 (0.01) for the closest party.
 - 13 When left-right self-placements and party placements are used instead, a stronger effect emerges at -0.14 (0.03)***. A knowledge effect is being picked up as well, though. The objective knowledge effect shrinks to insignificance in this setup.

- 14 Despite evidence that media coverage has become more negative (Capella and Jamieson, 1997; Fletcher and Everett, 1991), attention to the mass media was associated with more positive attitudes toward political parties.
- 15 Anti-partyism is not simply proxying for dislike of the incumbent party. Anti-partyism is correlated with negative feelings about each of the three established parties (the Liberals, the Conservatives and the New Democrats) and with positive feelings about the Reform Party.
- 16 It also seems to favour abstention over voting Reform, though the standard error is too high to be confident of the effect.
- 17 This estimate is derived from an equation that includes social background characteristics, fundamental values and communal orientations, economic evaluations and policy preferences.
- 18 One possible explanation to why these people vote for what is, after all, a political party is that they are voting not so much for the party as for its leader. Not only are Reform voters much less likely to identify with their party than those who vote for the established parties, but leader effects are strongest for the Reform Party (Nevitte et al., 1999).

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