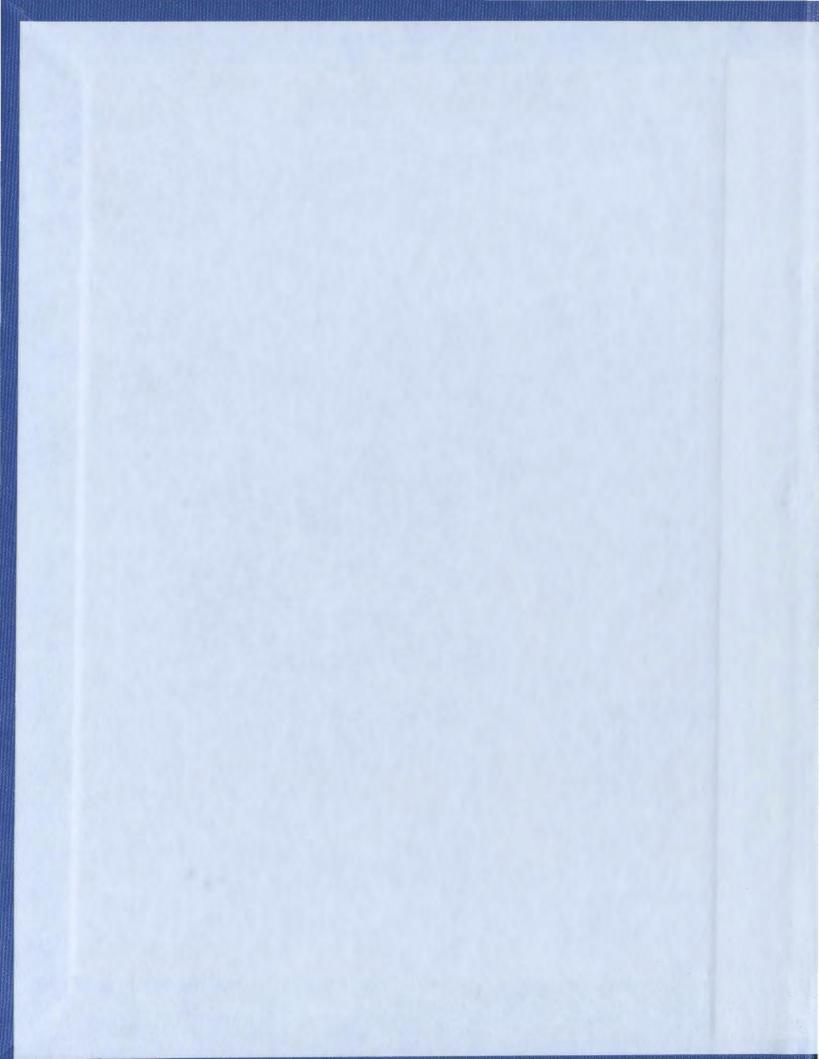REJECTING ELECTORAL REFORM:
THE FAILED SOCIAL MOVEMENT TO INTRODUCE
PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION TO THE
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND LEGISLATURE

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Rejecting Electoral Reform:

The Failed Social Movement to Introduce Proportional Representation

to the Prince Edward Island Legislature

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Chapter Six: Conclusion

Chapter 1: Introduction

Ths thesis is about a failed attempt to introduce proportional representation to the Prince Edward Island legislature. The cornerstone of popular democracy is the idea that every citizen has an equal vote. By casting votes in an election, citizens gain representation in their legislative assembly or parliament. Election outcomes depend not only upon popular votes, but also upon how these votes are compiled and how legislative or parliamentary seats are allocated. The same distribution of votes can lead to different electoral results depending upon the rules used. Traditionally, the 'first past the post' (FPP) system has determined the allocation of seats in Canadian elections. However, under this system, provincial election outcomes have seen some parties gain a much higher proportion of seats than the percentage of the votes cast for those parties. This has led to so called 'lop-sided' legislatures and prompted Canadian citizens and governments to reassess the FPP system's ability to represent democratic opinion fairly.

This re-assessment of the FPP system takes place within a larger context of what the Law Commission of Canada (2002) refers to as a "democratic malaise" where Canadian citizens feel increasingly unempowered and disenfranchised. In their 2000 study, Howe and Northrup (2000:27) concluded that Canadian citizens are inclined to feel that they have little say in what government actually does, and are likely to express disapproval of the results of FPP electoral systems.

In response to this and other perceived inadequacies of the FPP system, several provincial governments have recently explored the possibility of adopting a new voting system that includes some form of proportional representation. The last several years have seen five provinces (Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Quebec, and Ontario) consider some form of electoral reform. In a country where changes in electoral rules have

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rarely gained the endorsement of politicians, this represents a unique historical junction for Canada.

Political change with respect to the structure of democracy and popular representation is not easy. Even when there appears to be broad agreement that change is necessary, the structure of political rules and traditions have an inertia which, for reasons this research will explore, is difficult to overcome. This difficulty was demonstrated on November 28, 2005 when voters on Prince Edward Island (PEI) rejected a proposal for the introduction of a mixed member proportional (MMP) system by a margin of 64% to 36% in a non-binding plebiscite. This plebiscite followed a protracted debate during which the advocates and opponents of the proposed MMP system (the so called 'Yes Coalition' and 'No Coalition') attempted to mobilize different forms of social and political power in order to achieve their desired goals. This thesis will examine the attempt to introduce a MMP system to the Prince Edward Island legislature as an example of a social movement, and will illustrate the problems inherent in altering the established institutional system of representation in a democracy. Specifically, my research will explore why this social movement failed in its attempt to change Prince Edward Island's system of representation.

To understand why the Yes Coalition failed to achieve its goal of electoral reform, this research will utilize resource mobilization and social constructionist theory, assessing both the strengths and weaknesses of the movement. Attention will also be paid to the rise of a counter movement, and to how the actions of the government of Prince Edward Island, led by then Premier Pat Binns, affected the plebiscite outcome. First however, a brief introduction to PEI and an overview of the plebiscite process will set the stage.

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Prince Edward Island

Located on Canada's eastern seaboard in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Prince Edward Island is the country's smallest province. Its total land area is less than 6000 square km, and its population of approximately 136,000 (referred to by locals as *Islanders*) is less than one percent of Canada's total population. PEI's capital city, Charlottetown, is centrally located and has a population of just over 32,000.

The province was originally inhabited by the Mi'kmaq nation who named it Abegweit, or *Land Cradled on the Waves*. The first European claims to the Island were by France in 1523, and the first French settlements were established in the early 1700s. The territory was taken over by Britain in 1763 and, after initial resistance, joined Canada in 1873. A pastoral province, Prince Edward Island is known for its fertile red soil, sandy beaches and idyllic rural towns. This landscape has shaped the Island's culture and economy. Traditional seasonal industries such as fishing and farming continue to play a central - though gradually diminishing - role in PEI's economy, while the Island's outstanding natural beauty has helped make it a popular tourist destination.

The 15 km of water between the Island and the Canadian mainland has helped develop a strong sense of distinctiveness in the province. Its high population density (24 residents per kilometer, the highest in Canada) along with its relative isolation, have helped forge a strong sense of community. It has also contributed to the formation of a unique political culture, one which helped to frame the issues in the debate leading up to the 2005 plebiscite.

In addition to being Canada's least populous province, PEI is also the least urbanized. In 2001, rural and small town residents comprised almost 45% of the total Island population (de Peuter & Sorensen 2005:6). Two noteworthy demographic trends are the increased migration of Islanders from rural to more urbanized areas, and the aging of rural areas as their

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populations become increasingly concentrated in the 45-64 year old age group. Both of these trends can be explained by the relative lack of economic opportunities in the more rural areas of PEI (Peuter & Sorensen 2006:19). It is also worth noting that Prince Edward Island is a racially homogenous province with a population overwhelmingly British in origin[1]. Less than one percent of its citizens are visible minorities (Statistics Canada 2008a).

Like the other Atlantic Provinces, Prince Edward Island has generally lagged behind most of the rest of Canada in terms of economic prosperity. In 2004, one year before the plebiscite took place, average income in PEI was $25,109 compared to a national average of over $30,000 (Statistics Canada 2004). PEI workers in 2004 also made the lowest average hourly wage in Canada at $15.24/hr (Statistics Canada 2008b). According to Government of Canada Data,

> P.E.I.'s GDP per capita, a measure of standard of living, was $24 220 in 2000 — the lowest provincial GDP in the country, but comparable to other Atlantic provinces. Labour productivity, the average level of output produced per hour worked, is a major determinant of standard of living. Labour productivity in P.E.I. was about 32 percent lower than the national average in 2000. It was below average in all industries except the utilities sector, which represented 1.3 percent of the provincial GDP (PEI Provincial Treasury 2006:8).

As already indicated, agriculture, fishing, and tourism are vital components of the Island's economy. The province has little heavy industry or manufacturing, no commercially exploitable minerals or hydrocarbon deposits have been identified. One of the most important contributors to the Island economy is the public sector. The PEI Provincial Treasury reports that in 2006, "the public sector, comprising education, health and social services, and public administration, accounted for 26.6 % of the Island economy and 33.1 % of total employment" (PEI Provincial Treasury 2006:50). These employment statistics do not include people working for public firms contracted by the government.

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[1]http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com

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Prince Edward Island enjoys (or suffers under, depending upon whom you ask) a very high level of government representation. A total of four Members of Parliament, four Senators, 27 Members of the Legislative Assembly, and over five hundred municipal councilors and mayors yields a ratio of one elected official for every 240 residents.

The provincial government is structured on a Westminster model. The legislative Assembly of Prince Edward Island consists of 27 members representing the same number of districts. Members are elected using a first past the post (or plurality) system and may sit for a maximum of five years. Because of the province's small population, each MLA represents at most 5000 constituents. This has contributed to a high degree of informality in Island politics where politicians are much closer to their constituents than are their counterparts elsewhere. It is not difficult for members of the PEI legislature to maintain substantial numbers of acquaintances, even personal relationships, among the voters (MacKinnon 1977:228). Small constituencies allow for traditional door-to-door campaigning, and also mean that social networks remain as important, if not more important, than media sources such as television or the internet as a means for disseminating political messages to potential voters. In most districts, "people know everyone else and usually how they vote. Moreover, political motives are attributed to most public activity. Elections have become fierce battles for votes in the knowledge that they are often won - or lost - by very small margins" (MacKinnon 1977:69). The results of the last several elections, where many ridings were decided by fewer than 100 votes, illustrate this point. In the 2000 provincial election, seats in the ridings of Charlottetown-Kings Square and Cascumpec-Grand River, were each awarded by margins of fewer than 25 votes (Elections PEI 2001:38). Candidates and parties are aware of the importance of each vote. Both Conservatives and Liberals have well organized systems in

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place to get the vote out and have traditionally rewarded loyal voters through political patronage.

Island politics have always been dominated by the two major parties: The Liberal Party of Prince Edward Island and The Progressive Conservative Party of Prince Edward Island. This dual party system has been described as "non-ideological with a strong local bias to issues, [where] Liberals and Conservatives alike seek to maximize a broad base of support" (Chandler and Chandler 1979:65). Conservatives and Liberals "have been either "in" or "out", both conditions regarded as being subject merely to shifts in the political barometer" (Robb 1982:73). The two other parties, The Island New Democrats and The Green Party of Prince Edward Island, have traditionally exerted little if any influence on Island politics. Commenting on this lack of third party representation, Robb noted that over the last century, PEI politics has displayed a

> known, measured, and regular quality. In the provincial assembly Conservative governments have replaced Liberal governments with a rhythm not unlike that of the seasons... Rarely, if ever, have governments fallen.... as part of a grand clash of ideas or issues, and third parties have never seriously challenged the sway of the old parties (Robb 1982:73).

Only once in the Island's history has an MLA from a third party been elected: Island New Democrat Herb Dickison represented the riding of West Point-Bloomfield from 1996-2000. Even today it remains quite rare for third parties to garner as much as 5% of the popular vote. MacKinnon, writing in 1973, argued that "Being a Liberal or a Conservative is of almost of religious significance; anyone who is not with them is a political heathen" (MacKinnon 1973:227). The same holds true for PEI in 2008, where the prospects for third parties remain quite bleak.

It is not easy to account for why third parties remain marginal in Island politics. Robb (1982:74) argues that "The failure of third parties to intrude significantly into Island politics in

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the twentieth century may well result from successful attempts on the part of the two dominant

parties to protect a comfortable settlement of differences." Not only do the two parties appear

to have a stranglehold on power, but Islanders appear relatively content with this situation,

continuing to perceive the two major parties as the only acceptable alternatives (1982:96).

Perhaps the most striking element of PEI political culture is Islander's enthusiasm for

all things political. Voter turnout in PEI elections is amongst the highest of any jurisdiction in

North America. This enthusiasm was illustrated in the 2003 election, where voter turnout

remained above 80% despite the presence of hurricane Juan, which felled trees and caused

power disruptions to much of the Island.

Political Patronage

> Prince Edward Island was conceived in patronage, and since that moment
> change has come grudgingly. In such a small place, where the standard of living
> lags behind that of other provinces, unemployment, economic deprivation,
> ubiquitous familiarity, and familial propinquity bring pressures for patronage
> on politicians who struggle not to disappoint their supplicants (Simpson
> 1988:161).

Simpson (1988:16) notes that "there is probably less frank discussion of patronage today than

50 or 100 years ago when party leaders freely acknowledged why and how they were using it".

This does not mean that patronage does not still exist or continue to play an important role in

Island politics.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines patronage as "the power to control

appointments to office or the right to privileges" (Askoxford 2008). In PEI, patronage is

generally understood as the awarding of full-time or part-time employment or government

contracts to supporters of the party in power. It can also take the form of rewards given to

towns or ridings that support a government member. These rewards could be new

infrastructure projects or increased levels of government services. The varied forms of political

patronage mean that the line between what is commonly defined on the Island as 'patronage'

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versus what is referred to as 'representation' is often blurry and confused. It may be the case that as the practice of overt patronage becomes less acceptable, and as politicians become reluctant to refer to the practice directly, the term 'representation' has come to replace it in public political discourse.

Political patronage may be a more covert practice now than it was in previous times, yet few would seriously argue that the practice has disappeared. In fact, the Binns government (the government that presided over the 2005 plebiscite) was well known for its use of political patronage to reward supporters and punish detractors. Upon first coming to power in 1996, the Binns government fired hundreds of government employees with Liberal connections in what has been described as "the time-honoured provincial tradition of punishing enemies and rewarding friends when political power changes hands" (National Union of Public Sector Employess 2008:3). As a result of these mass firings, approximately 800 former government employees filed complaints of political discrimination with the PEI Human Rights Commission. The Binns government responded to this sea of complaints by passing legislation restricting the amount of settlements that might arise from these actions. This legislation was challenged, and in February 2006 the PEI Supreme Court struck down the Binns law, "blasting the province's Conservative government for violating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by its 'notorious' practice of political patronage" (National Union of Public Sector Employees 2008:2).

In his decision, Chief Justice Gerard Mitchell wrote:

Patronage has a long tradition in this province...It is a systemic problem the existence of which is so notorious and longstanding it requires no formal proof. One of the chief manifestations of the patronage system has been the wholesale purging of unprotected government employees that regularly follows a change of governing party. (National Union of Public Sector Employees 2008:10)

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. There is a well known and rather tongue-in-cheek piece of political wisdom on PEI that is reputed to have originated during a particularly hard fought political campaign some years ago: "If it moves, give it a pension, if not, pave it". Tales of constituents placing signs on their front yards asking for them not be paved have become a part of Island political lore.

True or not, tales such as these reflect a political culture where rewards and punishments for political loyalty are accepted as commonplace. The reliable two party system allows citizens the security of knowing that even if their party happens to be "out" at any given moment; it will not be too long before they are back in office and providing their supporters with the spoils of power.

Plebiscite Overview

The debate over proportional representation on PEI can be traced back to the early 1990's when the Prince Edward Island Supreme Court ruled that the Island's electoral map was unconstitutional and ordered it re-drawn[11]. In response to this decision, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council appointed an Election Act and Electoral Boundaries Commission to review the provincial electoral boundaries and the distribution of representation (Carruthers 2003:56). During the course of its public consultations, the committee received a number of submissions advocating the introduction of a MMP system for the province (even though examining alternatives to the province's First Past the Post system was not part of the Commission's mandate). In its final report, the commission addressed these submissions and concluded:

> The adoption of mixed member proportional representation (M.M.P.R.) in this Province would represent a major departure from traditional British and Canadian electoral approaches. While there are some features of M.M.R.P. that may be commendable, its implementation in this jurisdiction would not be appropriate at this time. First, there has been little experience with M.M.P.R. in

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[11]See: Donald MacKinnon v. Government of Prince Edward Island and the City of Charlottetown. [1993] 1 P.E.I.R. 216 (P.E.I.S.C.T.D.).

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Canada. Second, there has been limited discussion among political parties and the populace on the merits of such an approach. Lastly, there are a number of important issues related to proportional representation which would require much debate. These issues include the role of political parties in selecting list candidates, the accountability of list candidates to the public and the method of apportioning seats to political parties following each election. Based on the above, the Commission concluded M.M.P.R. would not be pursued at this time (Carruthers 2003:25).

After receiving little government attention through the latter half of the 1990's, the issue

of proportional representation surfaced again in 2000, when a Special Committee on the

Election Act was established to seek public input on the Island's electoral system and report

back to the Legislative Assembly with recommendations. During its hearings, the Special

Committee received seven presentations advocating the "establishment and/or further

examination of PR for Prince Edward Island" (Carruthers 2003:26).

In its conclusions, the Special Committee agreed with the Election Act and Electoral

Boundaries Commission's earlier findings regarding the potential drawbacks of introducing

some form of PR to the Island. However, despite their concerns with PR, the committee

concluded that there were too many unanswered questions regarding it to make a definitive

recommendation either for or against PR. Accordingly, they recommended that:

Elections P.E.I commence as soon as possible a review of the systems of proportional representation presently in existence in other jurisdictions. Particular attention should be paid to jurisdictions of reasonably comparable geographic size and population to Prince Edward Island. After the conduct of this review, Elections PEI would report on its findings to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly who would then table the report in the House for consideration of all Members (Elections PEI 2002:1).

In response to the recommendations of the Special Committee on the Elections Act,

Elections PEI prepared The Report on Proportional Representation (2002). The report

reviewed different PR systems in use around the world and examined their possible

applications to PEI. It offered no conclusive recommendations other than that "any binding

decision for one system over another system should be left to a provincial referendum,

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preceded by an impartial campaign of public education about the issues involved in the choice" (Elections PEI 2002:14).

In the November 2002 Speech from the Throne, the Conservative government of Pat Binns pledged to create an independent commission to consult with Islanders about PR and consider changes to the province's electoral system. In January 2003, Premier Binns made good on his commitment with the creation of The Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform. Norman Carruthers was its sole Commissioner. The Commission's task was to lead an impartial debate about the issues involved in electoral reform in the province. To that end, the commission prepared a discussion paper "on the major electoral systems found around the world and developed four models for discussion purposes" (Carruthers 2003:4). Copies of this discussion paper were distributed at public meetings and made available through Island Information Services.

Through May and June of 2003, The Commission held a series of seven public meetings throughout PEI "in an effort to engage the public in a discussion about the merits of the present electoral system and how it compares with other major electoral systems in use around the world" (Carruthers 2003:5). By the Commission's own admission, these meetings were poorly attended (Carruthers 2003:7). In addition to these public meetings, Commissioner Norman Carruthers spoke to each of the six Rotary Clubs on PEI and several other smaller groups. The Commission concluded that PEI's electoral system needed to be updated, and further, that

> the system having the most likely chance of acceptance by the Island electorate
> as an alternative to the First Past The Post System (FPTP) would be a Mixed
> Member Proportional System based on the system now used in Germany, New
> Zealand, Scotland, and Wales (Carruthers 2003:98).

The system they proposed would have the majority of Island MLA's (perhaps 21) elected through the current FPTP system while a smaller number would be elected through a list

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system. The Commission also recommended that an "independent commission comprised of representatives from all political parties and the general public" (Carruthers 2003:100) be established to educate Islanders about possible changes to the electoral system and decide on a referendum question which would determine what change, if any, would take place.

Following Norman Carruthers' recommendations, The Binns Government established the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future in December 2004 with Leonard Russell as its chair. The Commission

> was asked to refine a Mixed Member Proportional system as an alternative [to the current FPTP system] and to conduct an education program on the alternate system and the First Past The Post system leading to a plebiscite to determine whether or not there was voter support for a change in the manner in which MLAs are elected (Russell 2005:2).

The Commission on PEI's Electoral Future began its work in February 2005 and began developing the MMP model that was eventually voted on in the November 2005 plebiscite. This model was initially released to the public in a press conference held on May 27th 2005, and the educational process began shortly after.

To assist in the education process, The Commission hired a communications firm to help develop its educational strategy. This strategy included press releases, newspaper and radio advertisements, mail outs, and a website which contained extensive information on the proposed MMP system. One of the more important functions of the Commission was a series of 12 information meetings held across the Island. The purpose of these meetings was to explain the proposed MMP system to Islanders and receive feedback. These public meetings commenced on September 12th 2005 and concluded October 18th 2005. A total of 763 people attended these meetings. The Commission also received input from the public through e-mails, letters and telephone calls.

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The Proposed Reforms

The Commission on PEI's Electoral Future recommended the island adopt a two-ballot system. On the first ballot, a total of 17 representatives (one for each district) would be determined by the FPTP system currently in use. The second ballot would allocate 10 additional seats through a proportional system. Each political party would be required to provide voters with a list of 10 candidates (ranked 1 though 10). Voters would indicate their preferred party on this second ballot and the seats would be awarded to each party dependent upon the portion of the popular vote they received using the d'Hondt formula[111]. In addition, the Commission recommended to political parties that "their lists reflect the population of the province" and that "the nomination process used to create the party list be provincial in nature and open to all party members" (Russell 2005:18). Finally, the Committee recommended that "any party that gains 5 per cent or more of the popular vote on the second ballot be eligible to elect party list members to the legislature" (Russell 2005:18).

On October 18, 2005, the Lieutenant Governor in Council approved the Plebiscites Act, Provincial Plebiscite Re: Prince Edward Island's Electoral Future (EC2005-566) and the Plebiscites Act - Proportional System Regulations (EC2005-567). The date for the plebiscite was officially set for November 28, 2005. Islanders were asked "Should Prince Edward Island change to the Mixed Member Proportional System as presented by the Commission of PEI's Electoral Future?". On October 25, 2005, Executive Council approved the following threshold limits for the November 28, 2005 Plebiscite on Prince Edward Island's Electoral Future: (1) at least 60% of the valid votes cast province wide would need to approve the proposal; and (2) at

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[111]The d'Hondt formula allocates seats according to the formula $\{V\}/\{s+1\}$, where V is the total number of votes that list received; and s is the number of seats that party has been allocated so far (this is 0 initially). In this way the 'cost' (in votes) for each seat is determined. The formula continues to be applied until all the seats are allocated. For a more detailed explanation and online calculator see http://www.electionspei.ca/electoralfuture/calculator/.

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least 50% of the valid votes cast in at least 60% (16) of the province's 27 electoral districts would need to approve the proposal.

Voting began on November 28, 2005. PEI Voters overwhelmingly rejected the proposed MMP system by a margin of 63% to 36%. Only 1/3 of eligible voters cast a ballot setting a new record for low voter turnout in PEI.

Public Reaction to the Plebiscite Results

Public reaction to the plebiscite results varied considerably depending upon who was asked. Premier Pat Binns interpreted the results as a clear indication that Islanders were not interested in changing their FPTP system: "Islanders have quite clearly said they're not ready for a change at this particular time" (CBC News 2005:4). He believed that voters were obviously uncomfortable with switching to a proportional method of representation. While acknowledging that "there may be a lasting question of whether the model would be more acceptable if it was tweaked some from what it is", he expressed no desire to continue the debate (Armstrong 2005:8). As far as the Premier was concerned, the issue of electoral reform was closed, at least for the time being.

Pat Mella, a former Conservative MLA and spokesperson for the No Side, was not surprised with the results: "The proposal itself was much too dramatic a change. There [wasn't] good information provided to people. From what I gather they did not feel they were well informed on what the proposal would do" (CBC News 2005:8).

Supporters of the proposed MMP system blamed the Binns government for its defeat, accusing them of sabotaging the initiative. Decisions on the part of the Binns government such as reducing the number of polling stations, setting the threshold too high (at 60%), and not providing the Electoral Commission with enough time to properly educate the public prior to the plebiscite were all cited as factors contributing to the plebiscite's defeat.

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Little has been written specifically about the failed PEI plebiscite or the electoral reform process there. As far as I have been able to ascertain, only two useful articles exploring the Islands experiences with electoral reform have been published (Lea 2006 and McKenna 2006).

Lea (2006) briefly outlines the electoral process leading up to the plebiscite and presents four main reasons for the defeat of the proposed MMP system. The first reason is the short period of time given to the Commission on Electoral Reform to develop an electoral model, educate the public about this model, and come up with a plebiscite question. Early in 2005, the commission asked for an extension, fearing they would not have enough time to do their job properly. This request for an extension was turned down by the Binns government stating that there was no compelling need for it (Lea 2006:2). The implication here is that, if the Commission had had more time to educate the public or develop its model, the result of the plebiscite might have been different. However, Lea offers no evidence to support this claim. Second, Lea points out that a CBC strike in late summer and early fall meant that they were not able to cover the last few public meetings held by the commission. As a result, Lea believes that Islanders did not receive sufficient exposure to the debate. Third, Lea argues that the four weeks in between the release of the plebiscite question and the vote was simply not enough time to educate the public. Finally, she argues that the rules for the plebiscite set too high a bar; this refers to the 60% threshold required for the plebiscite to pass.

McKenna's analysis of the PEI electoral reform process is that of a self admitted "disappointed reform advocate" (McKenna 2006:58). He argues that the Binns government, as well as the opposition Liberal Party, did everything they could to prevent reform.

> It certainly looked like the entire electoral reform process – from
> start to finish – was more an exercise in public relations and
> political symbolism than an honest and forthright effort at

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purposeful and fundamental electoral reform on PEI
(McKenna 2006:58-59).

McKenna credits plebiscite defeat to several factors. First, like Lea (2006), McKenna is highly

critical of Premier Binns' decision (one month before the plebiscite date) to set the threshold for

voter approval at 60%:

> By way of historical context, only one election on PEI has ever
> produced a government that garnered 60 percent of the popular
> vote. And no previous plebiscite on PEI – including the deeply
> emotional vote in 1988 on whether to construct a fixed link to
> New Brunswick – has ever required anything other than a
> 50-percent-plus-one vote to pass (McKenna 2006:60).

McKenna draws the readers' attention to the fact that Premier Binns also severely cut the

number of voting stations (by 75 percent). This left some small towns without a place to vote.

He claims that this created long lineups at voting locations and that some voters got tired of

waiting and simply left (2006:60). Even Commissioner Carruthers was upset with Premier

Binns about the way the plebiscite process unfolded. In an interview, he declared that the

premier was "tinkering with the most important and fundamental right of our democracy – the

franchise" (2006:60). McKenna argues that both major parties were opposed to reform, and the

same could be said for their patronage loving supporters. Also, he wonders if rural areas of PEI,

which have seen their populations shrink in recent years, were worried about having less of a

voice in government and a smaller share of the patronage spoils (2006:60). He seems to imply

that Islanders are conservative and fearful of change, and that this fear was successfully

exploited by the No side (2006:61).

Several points are worth noting in regard to Lea's (2006) and McKenna's (2006)

articles on the PEI electoral reform process. First, both Lea and McKenna offer nothing in the

way of empirical evidence to support their claims. Second, neither offers much in the way of

analysis regarding the strengths (or weaknesses) of the movement to introduce electoral reform

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or the counter movement that rose in reaction to it (the so called 'Yes' and 'No' Coalitions).

Third, neither author sufficiently considers the structural opportunities that may have worked

to favour or discourage electoral reform. Finally, both Lea and McKenna largely attribute the

plebiscites' final outcome to the actions (or inactions) of the Binns government. In doing so,

both authors reduce what was, in fact, a complex process involving many different social actors

and organizations, to simply an affirmation of the power of the PEI government to maintain the

status quo.

Just how complex the process of electoral reform can be will be explored in the next

chapter where different types of electoral systems, their effects, and their susceptibility to

change, will be assessed through a review of the relevant literature. Also included will be a

brief examination of other attempts at electoral reform in PEI, Canada, and other jurisdictions

around the world.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Types of Electoral Systems

There is a substantial body of academic literature devoted to the issue of electoral reform.

Before examining this literature however, several preliminary questions must be addressed:

What are electoral systems, what different forms do they take, and why are they important?

In answer to the first question, electoral systems are the rules, formal and informal, that

determine how people are elected to office. These rules include how the ballot is structured,

how votes are cast and compiled, and how winners are chosen and seats awarded. Bogdanor

(1983:1) describes electoral systems as "practical instruments through which notions of

consent and representation are translated into reality". A more substantive description is found

in Norris (2004) who emphasizes not just the formal, but also the informal components of

electoral systems:

> Formal electoral rules are understood... as the legislative
> framework governing elections, as embodied in official
> documents, constitutional conventions, legal statutes, codes of
> conduct, and administrative procedures authorized by law and
> enforceable by courts. It is neither necessary nor sufficient for
> rules to be embodied in the legal system for them to be effective;
> social norms, informal patterns of behaviour, and social
> sanctions also create shared mutual expectations among political
> actors (Norris 2004:7).

Though individual electoral systems vary in detail according to the particular context within

which they are employed, most can be analyzed as variations upon three basic types: The first

past the post system (FPP), proportional representation (PR), and mixed member proportional

(MMP) systems, each of which will be briefly described.

The first past the post system is one of the more common plurality or majoritarian

electoral systems and is the one currently employed in Canada and the United States. This

system awards the legislative or parliamentary seat to the candidate who receives the largest

number of votes. For example, if a candidate receives 40% of the vote, while two other candidates on the ballot each receive 30% respectively, this would result in the first candidate being awarded the seat even though 60%, a sizable majority, did not vote for that candidate. Variations of this system include the runoff majority or double ballot system. Under this regime, three or more candidates appear on a first ballot of whom all but the top two are eliminated. The two remaining candidates then appear on a second ballot, with the winner being the candidate who achieves a simple majority. Another popular variation is majority preference voting. This system allows voters to rate each candidate in order of preference. If after all the first preferences are tallied no candidate has a majority, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. The votes for the eliminated candidate would then be assigned to the candidate who was those voters second choice, and so on.

A common alternative to majoritarian electoral systems is proportional representation. The premise of proportional representation is that the distribution of representatives in the legislature or parliament should match the distribution of votes in the population (Richie and Hill 1999: xvi). For example, a party that receives 60% of the popular vote will be awarded 60% of the seats. The most popular form of proportional representation is known as the party list system. Competing parties provide lists of candidates which are displayed on the ballots. Electors vote for the party rather than the individual candidate (Elections PEI 2001:4). Though some party lists may allow electors to give preference to certain candidates, most often each candidate on the list is given a priority. So if a party is awarded ten seats based on their share of the popular vote, then these seats will be given to the top ten candidates on the party list.

There are also electoral systems which combine elements of both FPP and proportional systems. Two of the most popular of these systems are mixed member systems, and the single transferable vote system. In mixed member proportional systems, a portion of the seats are

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awarded to representatives elected through a first past the post system. The rest of the seats are awarded in proportion to the percentage of the popular vote each party received. This is the system currently in use in Germany. The single transferable vote system, on the other hand, is unique in that it provides a means of ensuring proportional representation while still allowing people to vote for individual candidates. Voters rank each candidate on the ballot, these choices are then tallied, and candidates reaching the "quota" are elected. This quota is determined by the number of seats available and the number of ballots cast. If no candidate reaches the quota on the first count, then the candidate with the fewest first votes is eliminated and his or her ballots assigned to their second preference. The process continues until all seats are filled (Elections PEI 2001:5). The single transferable vote system is currently in use in New Zealand, France and Ireland.

The merits and drawbacks of each electoral system have been debated *ad nauseam*. Questions regarding the efficacy or fairness of each system will not be addressed here in any great detail. However, many of the arguments used in the academic debate over electoral systems were echoed in the public debate leading up to the PEI plebiscite on electoral reform. Therefore, an examination of the academic debate on the advantages and disadvantages of different electoral systems is useful as a background to the PEI case.

The most frequent charge leveled against FPP systems is their propensity to produce what Johnson (1984:60) calls "electoral distortion", which refers to the difference between a party's proportion of votes and its proportion of legislative seats. This argument assumes that seats ought to be awarded in direct proportion to the number of votes received. As I have already pointed out, it is not difficult in a FPP system for a legislative member to be elected despite receiving less than a majority of the vote. Real life examples of this happening have been well documented (Elections PEI 2001, FAIR Vote Canada 2003).

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Critics of FPP systems claim that the imbalance between the portion of votes received and the portion of seats awarded leads to several practical problems: The first is that smaller parties (those that receive less than 20% of the popular vote), find themselves at a serious disadvantage in FFP systems. With FPP, a party must receive a large concentration of the vote in a single riding in order to get a member elected. Achieving a significant (10% for example) portion of the vote across all ridings is not necessarily sufficient to win a seat. Voters are aware of this, and as a result, may be unwilling to vote for a preferred smaller party for fear of "wasting" their vote.

A second problem is that voters may feel their votes are wasted because only the votes awarded to the winner of each seat actually 'count'. Using my earlier example, if a candidate is elected with only 40% of the popular vote, then 60% of the votes were 'wasted' in the sense that they didn't count towards electing anybody. Richie and Hill (1999: x) claim that "Part of the reason for poor election turnout is the winner take all system, people feel their votes are wasted so they don't bother". It has been noted that FPP systems typically under represent racial/ethnic minorities and women. Richie and Hill (1999:5) found that when members of a racial or ethnic group make up a majority of the electorate in a majoritarian system, they tend to elect a member of their own racial or ethnic group. Few minority groups however, even those comprising a large portion of the overall electorate, are large enough to constitute a majority in any given electoral district. This means they are usually underrepresented.

Another problem with the FPP system stems from its use of geographic ridings or constituencies, Richie and Hill criticize the "antiquated" notion that geography should be the primary basis of representation "given the increased mobility of our population, ease of communication across distances, and importance of economic, social, and political associations with geographic definition" (1999:11). The use of electoral districts also leaves

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open the possibility of gerrymandering, where the physical boundaries of a voting district are modified to favour one political party. A case could also be made that political patronage is more likely under FPP systems, or similarly, that too much involvement in local issues diverts representatives away from larger issues. Hain (1986) argues that national issues may get ignored in favour of smaller local issues which increase prospects for election or re-election (1986:26). Milner (1994) is also concerned that FPP systems "provide incentives for catering to narrow local interests", while Bakvis (1983 cited in Milner 1986) refers to a German study which found that legislators elected from single members districts tend to be more concerned with securing government projects and benefits for their riding than members elected using the party list system.

Some of the shortcomings of FPP systems were demonstrated during the 1993 Canadian federal election. As a case study, the Canadian experience shows how countries with regional cleavages can produce regionally concentrated parties that are able to win victories seemingly out of proportion with their national popularity. In the 1993 election, the Reform Party, the Progressive Conservative party, and the NDP all won a far lower portion of the popular vote than the victorious Liberal Party. The fact that the Reform Party had its support concentrated in a relatively small geographic area however meant that it won a sizable number of seats. The PC Party and NDP parties, whose support was just as high but spread out across numerous ridings, had far fewer candidates elected (Weaver 2001:551). It could also be argued that FPP systems may exacerbate regional differences in countries such as Canada. Again using the 1993 election as an example, we see how FPP systems can lead to a scenario where the ruling party is severely underrepresented in a particular region. This might "feed a vicious circle where a region's perceived under representation in government further exacerbates

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regional alienation" (Weaver 2001:552). In the case of Prince Edward Island, similar lop-sided

election results formed part of the impetus for electoral reform.

Despite the criticisms, FPP systems are not without their advantages. Single member

constituencies facilitate a direct relationship between the elected member and his or her

constituents. Not only does this system put politicians in touch with local issues and

communities, but it also helps guard against over centralization of government. Similarly, FPP

systems encourage direct local accountability. The MP is selected by the local party riding and

remains accountable to it. FPP systems allow voters to express a clear voice for a governmental

team (Duverger 1984:31). As the system most likely to produce majority governments, FPP

allows voters to choose a government and legislative agenda with the reasonable certainty that

it won't have to be modified or compromised in order to build a majority coalition. Finally, FPP

systems are extremely straightforward and easy to understand. The ballot is simple; there is a

clear choice between alternative governments, and a straight forward, direct and immediate

connection between votes cast and the result (Hain 1986:47).

Proportional representation is often held up as a cure for the perceived ills of FPP

systems. One of the most important advantages of proportional representation systems, claim

its advocates, is that it allows for the full range of minority opinions to be expressed and taken

into account in policy decisions. Duverger (1984) however, takes issue with the argument. He

does not agree that a fair and democratic government must necessarily reflect the diversity of

opinion of a population:

> Democracy does not consist of assembling a parliament which is
> a small-sized model of the distribution of a nation's different
> spiritual families in all their diversity and nuances. Voters
> should not choose their doubles who resemble them as closely as
> possible. They should choose governments with the capacity to
> make decisions. (1984:32)

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Taylor similarly argues that "election(s) are a means for producing governments, for endorsing or changing the government in power", this means that the mathematical "fairness" of proportional representation needs to be set aside for "practical reasons of good firm government" (1984:54).

The argument that PR is somehow more fair or democratic than other systems is also a frequent target of criticism. Hain (1986) observes that in practice, proportional representation systems can in fact be quite unfair and unrepresentative. Governments created through PR systems he contends, are typically formed after intense "behind the scenes maneuvering and bargaining" amongst the parties (1986:45). This often results in government programs that bear little resemblance to the policies that were placed before the electorate prior to the vote. In this sense, PR's strength is also its weakness; by making the formation of coalition governments necessary, it may force political parties to compromise or even abandon their policy platforms in order grab a share of power. In a similar vein, it is argued that because PR has a tendency towards the formation of coalitions, it may:

> Give undue power to small, unrepresentative groups which would be able not only to make or break governments, but to extract policies to advance their sectional interests which had little public support across the country. Meanwhile, much larger parties could be excluded from power (Hain 1986:45).

Indeed Duverger (1984) asks:

> What is the point of guaranteeing that each party's number of deputies will be exactly proportional to that of its voters, if it remains free to ally itself with whomever, whenever, and for whatever purpose it wishes, and to change partners at any moment (1984:33).

Ultimately, it is the voters influence upon the actual policies enacted by the government that counts, that make a democracy a democracy (Ferejohn 1999:42). In this sense it is not at all clear that PR is in any practical manner more democratic that FPP systems. Under proportional

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representation, its critics argue, electoral shifts in popular support for a party need not necessarily alter or impact the process of coalition formation. It may even happen that governments are dissolved and re-formed without any input from the voters at all.

Criticisms are also leveled against PR on the grounds that it prevents voters from expressing a clear choice in terms of which individuals they want on the government team. PR transfers this choice to party leaders. Hain (1986:45) further contends that coalition governments almost inevitably tend to re-enforce the status quo. This is because the inter-party bargaining process behind the formation of coalition governments encourages an outcome based upon the lowest common denominator around which agreement can be secured.

Despite these potential drawbacks, PR systems are quite common around the world. One of the most serious charges leveled against PR – that it leads to political instability - is most often supported by case studies of Italy and Israel. These two countries, however, are not necessarily representative of all states currently using a PR electoral system, many of whom do in fact enjoy quite stable effective governments (Richie and Hill 1999:30). It should also be pointed out that FPP systems can lead to political gridlock, minority governments, and political instability as well. As for the loss of geographic representation under PR; this criticism assumes that geographic concerns are in fact paramount to voters, but is this in fact the case? Citizens of western democracies are far more mobile today than they were in the past. This may make them more sensitive to issues affecting the entire electorate rather than purely local concerns.

Mixed member electoral systems have been proposed as a compromise between FPP and PR systems. Shugart and Wattenburg (2001) point out that in actual practice, most mixed member systems tend to emerge as a product of negotiation among parties with diverse preferences (2001:578). Their research finds:

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> Parties tend to favour different specific electoral rules according
> to what systemic outcomes are more favourable to them. As
> systems that balance the tendencies of PR and majoritarian
> electoral systems, MM systems in their myriad variations offer
> especially fertile terrain for political bargaining   (2001:578).

One of the great practical advantages of mixed member systems is the relative ease with which they can be introduced into already democratic electoral systems. Mixed member systems almost inevitably retain some of the features of the pre-existing structure while adding a greater or lesser range of new elements. This feature may help make mixed member systems more palatable to voters and representatives alike than a switch to pure FPP or PR systems. It was a mixed member system that was proposed for Prince Edward Island.

The Effects of Electoral Systems

Electoral laws are important and have measurable effects on how governments are formed and how they function. One of the best known propositions regarding these effects is known as Duverger's Law. Quite simply, it states that "the simple-majority single-ballot system favours the two-party system" (Duverger 1963:217). Similarly, Duverger argues that the "simple majority system with second ballot and proportional representation favor mulitpartyism" (Duverger 1963:239). As Riker, points out, Duverger's law is "implicitly embedded in a rational choice theory about the behaviour of politicians and voters" (1986:41). Rational choice theory has become important in political science and the social sciences in general, especially in fields like election studies (Dunleavy 1991). This theory's models assume that actors choose the best action available, that all action is fundamentally 'rational' in character and that people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do (Scott 2000).

One of fullest developments of rational choice theory as it relates to electoral laws is found in Norris (2004).   Norris's core theoretical claim rests on what he calls "rational-choice

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institutionalism"; that "formal electoral rules generate important incentives that are capable of shaping and constraining political behavior" (Norris 2004:7). He uses this theory in order to explain how and why electoral rules affect political behavior. An understanding of rational motivations, he claims, should allow us to predict some of the consequences of what he calls "electoral engineering".

Norris's account of rational choice institutionalism is composed of a series of claims. First, he argues that rational-choice institutionalism rests upon the premise that the rules adopted in any electoral system, such as the choice of either proportional or majoritarian system, influence the structure of opportunities and incentives for political parties and individual political actors (2004:9): "Formal electoral rules are not neutral in their impact; instead they systematically benefit some while penalizing others" (2004:9).

Second, Norris argues that "political actors are rational vote-maximizers in pursuit of electoral office who respond strategically to electoral incentives" (2004:7). He does not make any assumptions regarding the type of strategies they will employ, but only that a Darwinian selection process ensures that politicians will seek votes. Those that do not actively seek votes will become less common because, in general, they will not be successful in gaining election or re-election.

Finally, Norris makes three claims regarding how electoral systems directly shape the opportunities for politicians to secure votes. First, majoritarian systems construct higher electoral hurdles because parties need a simple majority or plurality in each district to win (2004:10). This means that parties have to look for broad support across diverse sections of the electorate. Under majoritarian rules, parties tend to be centrist socially and ideologically, they typically govern 'from the centre'. Proportional representation systems on the other hand, construct lower hurdles to office and require a far smaller share of the electorate to win seats.

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This allows parties to focus on a narrower voter base among particular sectors of the electorate (2004:10). Single issues parties or parties nearer to the fringes of the political spectrum are typically more likely to win seats with a PR electoral system.

Second, the ballot structure is closely related to the type of electoral system. Under majoritarian systems, voters choose from a limited number of candidates in each riding. This encourages candidates to campaign on the benefits they provide to this particular constituency, emphasizing their ability to deal with local problems and concerns. Candidates can also emphasize unique characteristics they possess which make them superior candidates (such as individual character). In contrast, PR systems only allow votes for the party, not the individual candidate. This encourages parties to focus their efforts upon collective party appeals and issues that span multiple constituencies. Third, electoral rules also shape "the inducements for parties to select a group of socially homogeneous or social diverse candidates" (Norris 2004:13). Candidates selected under majoritarian systems will necessarily be the ones who have the broadest appeal. This often means selecting candidates from the predominant ethnic group or choosing candidates who are similar to those who have been elected in the past. In the Canadian context this has often meant white professional males. PR systems present voters with a list of candidates, and parties risk an electoral penalty if they exclude any major social group (2004:14). Also, under PR systems statutory quotas can be more easily introduced to assure diversity in candidates.

Cales (1999) sees majoritarian electoral rules as "constraining devices that, by encouraging strategic behaviour among voters and elites, force the coordination of resources and ballots on a reduced set of candidates" (Cales 1999:610). People generally devote their resources (and votes) to candidates they feel have a strong chance of winning. However, this changes under PR:

> Strategic voting declines… as proportionality of the electoral
> system increases. Because seats can be gained with only a
> fraction of the total vote, voters have fewer incentives to
> abandon their most preferred candidates. Accordingly, the
> number of viable candidates increases with PR (1999:610).

While acknowledging the importance of rational choice theory, it is important to understand

that people cannot always be expected to act in their own rational self interest. This point, and

the limitations of rational choice theory, are recognized by Norris:

> It is widely recognized that the rational calculus of rewards may
> have limited impact, for multiple reasons. Deep-seated and
> habitual patterns of behaviour may persist unaltered, frustrating
> the dreams of electoral reformers. Political actors may be ill
> informed about, blind to, or unaware of the potential
> consequences of institutional rules. Legislators may also
> prioritize career goals… over immediate electoral rewards
> (2004:16).

Changing Electoral Systems

Changing electoral laws is not easy. This case is made by Deiter (1984) who refutes the

assumptions that:

> Electoral systems may be constructed deliberately and changed
> freely; that a great number of options exist under which national
> legislatures may choose. In my view, this impression is wrong
> and the public debate on electoral systems is used by politicians
> and academics alike in order to feign a freedom of choice that
> really does not exist (Dieter 1984:217).

Deiter does not deny that changes in electoral system are possible, but suggests that the "few

deviant cases can be explained primarily in terms of deep-rooted ruptures in the historical and

political development in those countries in question" (1984:217). This echoes the conventional

wisdom amongst political scientists, such as Taagepera and Shugart, who hold that electoral

systems are deep-rooted aspects of national character and political life:

> Electoral systems do not arise from a vacuum but from political
> debate and struggle. They mirror the politics of the time of their

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> creation and are altered when politics change to the point where
> the existing electoral system becomes too restrictive (1989:234).

Hence voting systems change only rarely, if ever.

One of the primary reasons that voting systems are so difficult to change lies in the fact

that those in power have little incentive to change the electoral system that put them there.

Again, drawing on rational choice theory, Quintal argues:

> Political parties are rational: they seek to minimize inputs and
> maximize outputs. Party members are motivated by the income,
> prestige, and power which derives from holding office... [and] a
> party seeks to maximize not just votes, but also legislative seats.
> Given the assumption that party leaders seek to maximize
> parliamentary seats, it follows that, all other things being equal,
> it is always rational for the larger parties to opt for the electoral
> law which awards them the highest seat/vote ratio (Quintal
> 1970:753).

This argument is similar to one made by Cales (1999). He claims that ruling parties will

typically choose the electoral system which maximizes their chances of staying in power. As

long as the "electoral arena" does not change, parties have no incentive to modify the electoral

system (Cales 1999:610). Dieter notes that the disadvantages of any particular electoral system

are typically criticized most harshly by political parties negatively affected by them

(1984:223). Political parties who once claimed to be discriminated against by an electoral

system often lose interest in reform once they came to power. A good example of this is found

in the Quebec provincial election of 1970. In this election, the Parti Quebecois (PQ), a newly

created party advocating secession of the province from Canada, come in second in the popular

vote with 23% per cent but received only 7 out of 108 seats. These results led PQ members to

call for electoral reform. The subsequent rise of the party and its accession to office in later

elections, however, damped the enthusiasm for reform. Once in power the PQ made no moves

towards electoral reform.

There is also the multi dimensional character of voting systems to consider, and the fact

that they are criticized or supported according to many different criteria simultaneously

(Dunleavy and Margetts 1989:17). As Dunleavy and Margetts point out, there can be high

transition costs involved in changing political systems. For example:

> Moving away from an established electoral system creates
> uncertainty for parties about their prospects and strategies under
> the new system, while creating huge uncertainties for incumbent
> MP's who might or might not be able to secure re-election under
> new arrangements (1989:20).

Finally, external interest groups may display a "considerable bias towards protecting the

current system" (Dunleavy and Margetts 1989:22).

Political scientists typically frame the reluctance to tinker with voting systems as

"rational", since "electoral systems reflect fundamental features of a political system, they

should not be changed except when those political fundamentals themselves change"

(Dunleavy and Margetts 1989:10). This could include times of war, economic collapse, system

breakdowns, or anything revolutionary. Dunleavy and Margetts further claim that orthodox

political scientists usually argue that political systems will always diverge owing to the unique

political climates in which they are situated. They see it as unlikely that any one system will

become dominant across different states and jurisdictions (1989:11). Against this, Dunleavy

and Margetts also argue that there is a "disguised conservatism" in orthodox political science

commentary which views electoral systems as natural and effective (or else they wouldn't be

there) (1989:12). This typically puts the electoral system in the background of electoral

analysis; it is taken as a given and not analyzed as rigorously as it should be. In place of this,

they argue for:

> An approach which stresses that electoral systems are a key
> focus of preference-shaping behaviour by established political
> parties and elites, which actively maintain institutional

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arrangements that maximize their access to state power
(1989:12).

Electoral Reform in Other Jurisdictions

Political systems can, and often are, changed. Since the early 1990's several established liberal democracies have made major changes to their electoral systems. This list includes New Zealand, Japan, and Italy. Each of the countries was able to enact major structural changes to their system of representation despite the reluctance of political leaders. This flurry of recent electoral change refutes the conventional wisdom that systems of representation tend to remain static. It will be instructive, therefore, to examine the conditions under which these nations embraced electoral reform and see what, if any, general conclusions can be drawn from these case studies.

On November 6, 1993, New Zealand's electorate voted to change their 138 year old plurality electoral system to a MMP system in a binding referendum that coincided with a national election. As Milner (2004) notes, this occurred despite a very well financed anti-reform campaign led by both major parties and supported by the business community.

The seeds of electoral reform in New Zealand were first sown in the late 70's and early 80's when the Labour Party, despite having won more votes than the National Party in back to back general elections, was in both cases unable to form a government. These two elections were also noteworthy because the third party, Social Credit, having garnered 16 and 20 percent of the national vote, won only one, then two seats in the national legislature. These election results inspired the Labour Party to include electoral reform in its platform. When they came to power in 1984, Labour struck a Royal Commission to examine the issue and make recommendations, one of which included the adoption of an MMP system similar to Germany's. Despite promising to hold a referendum on the issue in the 1987 election campaign, after being re-elected, Labour failed to follow through. The National Party was

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quick to capitalize on this broken promise by making its own pledge to hold a referendum, even though their leader, James Bolger, personally opposed PR (Mendelsohn and Parkin 2005:138 in Howe, Johnston and Blais 2005).

After returning to power in 1990, the National Party made good on their promise and held two referendums; the first asked voters whether they wanted to retain the FPP system (an overwhelming majority, 85%, rejected the FFP system), and a follow-up referendum asked which of four alternate electoral systems they would prefer. Of the options with which they were presented, 70% of voters chose the Royal Commission's recommendation of a MMP system. This process cumulated in 1993 with a final binding referendum in which voters chose to adopt the MMP system by a margin of 54 to 46%.

The New Zealand electoral reform process and the structural conditions that led to it are instructive because they demonstrate how electoral reform is possible despite resistance from the political and business elite. The two major parties in New Zealand – Labour and National – had seen consistent declines in their popularity since the early 1950's. Support for small parties on the other hand, had grown steadily, reaching 30 percent in 1993 (Sakamoto 1999:423). Even with falling levels of popularity, Labour and National governments were able to force through unpopular legislation in the 80's and 90's despite huge public opposition.

> New Zealand's strong governments with smaller popular support
> had carried out economic policies they had not promised in their
> election platforms since 1984, including radical market
> liberalization, deregulation and privatization. As a result, the
> public felt the absence of accountability, blaming it on the
> plurality electoral system (Sakamoto1999:423).

Denemark argues that the plurality electoral system "insulated" zealous politicians from the will of the electorate (2001:73). Similarly, Vowles writes that New Zealand's FPP system made it more difficult to defeat unpopular governments, because the large nation-wide swings necessary to topple incumbents could not be achieved (Vowles 1995:101 in Denemark). It was

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also noted that the plurality system encouraged New Zealand's political parties to compete, in part, through "escalating promises" to the electorate. These promises proved difficult to deliver on, however, which produced "a stark contrast between promises and performance" (Jackson and McRobie 1998:11).

Together, these factors contributed to a general decrease in voter trust and a perception that the existing plurality system was unable to accommodate their concerns (Denemark 2001:74). This would appear to confirm Dunleavy and Margetts's observation that "the push for change has come mainly from public disillusionment with low levels of political accountability" (1995:25). Added to these factors was a rise in unaccommodated minority groups and the emergence of new issues such as feminism and environmentalism.

Finally, Norris (1995a in Sakamoto 1999) also cites fragmentation of the party system as a critical factor contributing to electoral reform in New Zealand and elsewhere:

> In New Zealand, an increasing level of fragmentation of party support among the electorate became a cause of the reform movement because it worsened disproportionality between the actual popular votes and the number of seats the parties won; this fueled public demands for reform (Norris 1995a in Sakamoto 1999:427).

Sakamoto frames electoral reform in New Zealand as something that was "imposed" upon the dominant parties through the series of referendums. He also credits strong campaigns by reform supporters for forcing the issue (1999:425). While he mentions the work of citizen activists in the reform process, like many, he fails to adequately acknowledge and explain the role of political activism in electoral reform. Nagel (1994) bucks the trend by acknowledging the important role that grass roots agencies played in the reform process, but he fails to flesh this issue out in any great detail.

Structural conditions may provide a context where electoral reform is possible, but are they alone sufficient to bring about change? This is an especially salient question in New

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Zealand's case where change occurred despite a strong, well organized, anti-reform campaign. It may be that structural conditions and general dissatisfaction with the status quo were so high that little convincing was needed for the electorate to seize upon electoral reform as the best solution. This is not clear, however, and represents a significant gap in our understanding of the reform process that occurred there.

In Italy, reform took a different path facilitated by the *referendum abrogativo*. This is a mechanism which allows Italian voters to overturn legislation through a referendum. If 500,000 signatures can be collected within 90 days, a binding referendum is held providing the electorate the opportunity to repudiate the existing law. In this case, widespread political corruption and scandal largely attributed to the electoral system inspired a successful campaign for change (Bull and Newell 1993; Donovan 1995). The initial drive for a referendum challenging Italy's electoral laws was led in part by sitting deputies who disagreed with the status quo, this "highlights how the referendum abrogativo allows dissident parliamentarians to circumvent government leaders" (Mendelsohn and Parkin 2005:139 in Howe, Johnston and Blais 2005). Contributing to the popular desire for change was the perception that Italy's PR system led to unstable short-lived governments which were unable to effectively manage the nation's economy, which had been subject to a significant downturn since the late 1980's (Sakamoto 1999:423).

In the 1991 referendum, 96 percent of those who cast a vote opted for electoral change. This result was "a severe reprimand to the existing system" (Mendelsohn and Parkin 2005:139 in Howe, Johnston and Blais 2005), yet the response of politicians was to make only small modifications to the electoral system. As a result, reform became a major issue in the 1992 election and parties committed to reform did quite well. Another referendum was held in 1993 where 83 percent of voters expressed a desire for radical electoral change. Faced with such a

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groundswell of support for change, and no doubt chastised by the poor showing of anti-reformers in the previous election, politicians recognized that it was in their best interests to enact the popular reforms demanded by the electorate.

In Japan, a series of corruption scandals beginning in the 1980's provided the initial impetus for electoral reform. These scandals created powerful feelings of distrust and anger amongst the electorate who perceived political corruption as symptomatic of a wider failure of the country's governing system. Politicians (especially younger reform-minded members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)) attributed these scandals to Japan's electoral system, claiming that it led to candidate focused politics and immense campaign spending (Sakamoto 1999:422). Under Japan's electoral system of the time, from two to six representatives were elected for each riding. One result of this was that candidates had to compete not only against political adversaries from other parties, but also against colleagues from their own. This led to election campaigns focused almost exclusively on constituency service at the expense of broader policy issues. Hideo summarizes this dynamic:

> Individual LDP candidates concentrated on establishing and
> nurturing personal voter networks in order to win re-election.
> Interparty competition... spurred the rise of factions within the
> LPD. Over time, a perception grew that the system of multiseat
> electoral districts – by creating factions that provided the money
> with which candidates serviced their electoral districts – was
> responsible for money politics and political corruption generally
> (Hideo 1998:x).

Hideo also points out that many political scientists and academics agreed with the criticisms of Japan's multiseat system and their vocal support for reform helped swing public opinion in that direction.

Japanese reformers wanted a single member district system believing that it would encourage parties to adopt policy-focused electoral platforms and mitigate the effects of money and corruption. The majority of these reformers were also members of the LDP party, which is

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not surprising as it was generally believed that the proposed electoral reforms would most benefit the LDP party (Sakamoto 1999:422). Opposition parties were at first opposed to electoral reform, but eventually came onside and accepted a proposed mixed member proportional system believing this to be more equitable and less likely to favour any particular party (unlike the initially proposed SMD system). Choosing to back a MMP system was critical as it made reforms coincide with the interests of a majority of Japanese politicians, giving them a strong incentive to support reform (Sakamoto 1999).

The political reform process that took place in Japan is noteworthy because it occurred without the use of a referendum to 'force' politicians to enact changes. Instead, reform was made possible by a "change in the nature of party competition that altered parties' incentives favourably for reform" (Sakamoto 1999:433).

Electoral Reform in Canada

Until quite recently, the topic of electoral reform had not aroused much interest amongst Canadian citizens or politicians. Even within academia, the calls for changing Canada's electoral system have been few, and as Weaver observes, have almost never "made it out of the rarefied atmosphere of academic debate to gain the endorsement of real politicians" (2001:542-43).

Recent years, however, have seen a flurry of interest and debate amongst diverse segments of the Canadian political landscape regarding electoral reform: "There can be little doubt by early 2004 that the "electoral reform issue" had once again heated up in Canada" claims Courtney (2005:152). But why this sudden interest? Courtney credits the federal election of 1993 for "re-igniting" Canadians interest in electoral reform. Shares of parliamentary seats in that election, he charges, bore "little relationship to their respective shares of popular votes" (Courtney 2005:152). This inspired a debate regarding the

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effectiveness of Canada's current electoral laws in translating popular opinion into electoral seats. Since the mid 1990's, Canada has seen the creation of several non-governmental organizations devoted to raising public awareness of electoral issues and advocating for reform such as Fair Vote Canada. Recent discussion papers by the Law Commission of Canada and The Canadian Policy Research Networks have highlighted electoral reform and the potential benefits of PR. Near the end of 2004, an opposition motion to hold a national referendum on introducing PR was debated in parliament. Although it was defeated (144 to 76), it remains noteworthy as the first such motion to make it to the floor since 1920. This public interest in electoral reform has been mirrored in academia and spawned a small but growing number of articles on the topic (Courtney 2005, Weaver 2001, Milner 1994). Perhaps the most telling indicator of this renewed interest in Canadian electoral systems is found in the fact that since 2000, five provinces have explored or are considering exploring alternative forms of election.

Despite the widespread interest in electoral reform however, Courtney does not believe that the level of dissatisfaction with the voting system in Canada has reached the same levels of dissatisfaction that inspired electoral change in New Zealand (2005:155). This makes the chances of successful modification of voting systems in Canada unlikely: "Without extensive and profound disapproval on the part of the electorate with the current system, coupled with a general agreement on an acceptable alternative to plurality voting, the push for electoral reform is likely to fall on deaf government ears" (2005:155). He goes on to argue:

> The irregular nature of the debate in the past over our electoral
> system is important to note, for it suggests that Canadians have
> not shared a profound or deep-seated distrust of plurality voting
> per se. Rather, theirs can be characterized as having been a
> tempered, spasmodic, and election-driven response to
> particularly egregious instances of inequitable conversion of
> votes into seats (2005:154).

Carty (2004) also notes this recent concern with electoral reform in Canada. Like

Courtney (2005), he attributes this interest in the tendency of FPP systems to produce

unbalanced legislatures, or even allow a party to win despite receiving less total votes than

another. He also points to several other factors which play a part in this renewed interest. One

factor is low voter turnout. Voter turnout has fallen precipitously in the past decade, producing

a "growing concern for the health of the system" (Carty 2004:177). Carty speculates that the

"recognition that representational electoral systems typically have higher turnout rates may

have fostered a new willingness to consider electoral reform" (2004:177). A second

consideration is the failure of political parties to address the gender gap effectively. The

proportion of women being nominated and elected appears to have plateaued (2004:177).

Again, proportional representation is seen as a remedy for this.

Looking specifically at recent electoral reform initiatives in the provinces, Cross,

observes that:

> The evidence is clear that the current interest in electoral reform
> does not have a partisan base nor is it found solely among
> government or opposition parties. Two of the provinces engaged
> in these projects are lead by Progressive Conservative
> governments and the other three by Liberals; similarly, two of
> the parties first committed themselves to a reform project while
> in government while the other three made the commitment in
> opposition (2005:77-78).

Looking for a common catalyst inspiring electoral reform in the provinces, Cross (2005)

suggests that three factors have played an important role in each case: disproportionality,

democratic malaise, and a desire by government to be seen as reformers (2005:76). Cross

(2004) also credits a series of "second order issues" with having a part in driving electoral

reform in the provinces. They are; the lack of women and minorities in provincial legislatures,

electoral change in other democracies around the world, and the rise of citizen groups

dedicated to electoral reform such as Fair Vote Canada. Cross agrees with Carty who claims

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that governing parties are typically "loath to alter the rules that brought them to power" (2004:176), but points out that in the cases of Ontario, BC, and Quebec, "the current governing parties are likely to see long term partisan advantage in a more proportional electoral system" (Cross 2004:80), hence providing these provincial governments with a strong incentive to consider reform.

In summary, electoral systems are important; they determine how governments are formed in a democracy. Changing the structure of electoral systems is not easy. Those in power have few incentives to modify the system which brought them to power. When we examine jurisdictions which saw the introduction of proportional representation, we see reform preceded by a sense of political crisis or disenfranchisement. But this is only part of the story; the ability to introduce broad social or political change cannot be reduced to the presence of certain structural pre-conditions, but will also depend upon the strengths and abilities of those championing the change. For this we turn to the next chapter which will examine not only theories of social movements, but also counter movements and how both interact with government and other social actors.

Chapter 3: Theory

This research will conceptualize the Yes and No Coalitions in the PEI plebiscite debate as social movements. Explanations of social and political change require analysis of actions by political groups and agents. This chapter will summarize the social movement theories to be utilized in this analysis.

Social Movement Theories

Social movement theory is characterized by a diversity of perspectives. The three social movement theories outlined in this chapter were first formulated in the 1960's as sociologists struggled to conceptualize the progressive movements of the time. These three theories are: political and cultural opportunity theory, resource mobilization theory, and social constructionist theory. While each theory brings a different perspective to social movement research, they share similarities which make each useful to this research project. First, they acknowledge social movements as exhibiting enduring, patterned, institutional elements. This challenges traditional social movement theories which see collective behaviour as relatively unpatterned and non-institutional (Buechler 2000:34). Second, they see social movement as rational behaviour, rather than fads, crazes or manias with psychological motivations. Third, they accentuate the political dimension of social movements and acknowledge the importance of competing group interests in social movement formation and longevity.

Political and Cultural Opportunities

> When people come together to pursue collective action in the context of the modern state they enter into a complex and multi-faceted social, political and economic environment. The elements of the environment have manifold direct and indirect consequences for people's common decisions about how to define their social goals and how to organize and proceed in pursuing those goals. (Tarrow quoted in MacAdam McCarthy and Zald 1973).

Since the 1970's, the concept of political opportunity has become an important component of social movement theory. Despite the terms apparent popularity, consensus

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regarding its precise definition has proved elusive. In order to bring some conceptual clarity to the terms, McAdam (1996) has surveyed the literature and created what he refers to as a "highly consensual list of dimensions of political opportunity" (1996:27). This list summarizes four key dimensions of political opportunity.

The first dimension is "the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system" (MacAdam 1996:27). This refers to a jurisdiction's formal legal and institutional structures. Some political systems (such as democratic ones) are more readily affected by the actions of a social movement than others, creating an incentive for movement mobilization. The second and third dimensions refer to "the stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity, [and] the presence or absence of elite's allies" (MacAdam 1996:27). These speak to the more informal "structure of power relations characteristic of a given system" (1996:27). Movement mobilization is more likely to occur if members of the political elite can be recruited by the social movement. Similarly, rifts or discord within the ranks of the political elite may help create a sense that a political system is vulnerable to change by the social movement. Finally, MacAdam's last element; "the state's capacity and propensity for repression" (1996:27) suggests that social movements are less likely to mobilize when faced with the threat of state repression.

In addition to political opportunities, MacAdam (1996:25) also discusses four cultural opportunities which may increase the likelihood of movement mobilization:

> (1) the dramatization of a glaring contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social practices, (2) suddenly imposed grievances, (3) dramatizations of a system's vulnerability or illegitimacy, (4) the availability of an innovative 'master frame' within which subsequent challengers can map their grievances and demands (1996:25).

As Tarrow (1996) points out, the existence of political or cultural opportunities conducive to movement formation does not in itself guarantee that a movement will form, nor

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does the absence of these opportunities necessarily preclude it. Rather, the presence or absence of these opportunities sends a signal to social or political actors which either encourages or discourages them from mobilizing their resources. Therefore, the type and amount of resources available to social and political actors will be key in determining whether or not a social movement is actually created and sustained. This makes resource mobilization theory one of the most important tools in understanding the formation, longevity and success of social movements. It is to this theory that we will now turn.

Resource Mobilization Theory

Resource mobilization theory (RMT) views social movements as structured extensions of politics using other means than the formal political system. This means that social movements may be analyzed in terms of organizational dynamics just like other institutionalized behavior (Buechler 2000:35). There are two divergent models of RMT: the entrepreneurial and the political model. Both are useful to the study of social movements in general and this research in particular. The entrepreneurial model originated in the work of McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977). They note that past analysis of social movements typically assumed a strong causal link between the frustrations and grievances of social actors and the growth and decline of social movement activity (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1212). Discontent was understood as originating primarily in structural conditions. Shared assumptions about the causes of grievances and the possible means of rectifying them were seen as important preconditions for the emergence of collective action.

The political model of RMT, on the other hand, departs from the entrepreneurial approach by arguing that grievances are ubiquitous in every society, and as a result, cannot on their own provide sufficient explanation for the formation or longevity of social movements. The political model instead focuses on the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the

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linkages between social movements and other groups, the dependence of social movements on external support, and the tactics used by authorities to control or co-opt these movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1213). Quoting Tilly and Killian, they posit as a general assumption that "... there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement if the movement is effectively organized and has at its disposal the power and resources of some established elite group" (1972:251). Furthermore, they argue that this discontent can be created, defined, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and social movement organizations.

This version of RMT emphasizes four key points. First, aggregation of resources (primarily money and labour) is central to social movement activity. Second, resource mobilization requires some central form of organization; hence an emphasis upon movement organizational structure is necessary. Third, crucial to a movement's success or failure is the involvement of individuals and organizations from outside the collectivity which the social movement represents. Fourth, a general supply and demand model can be applied to the flow of resources toward and away from a social movement. And finally, an analysis of costs and rewards is necessary in explaining individual and organizational involvement in social movement activity (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1216).

The entrepreneurial version of resource mobilization theory thus blends economic and organizational theory in order to explain the formation and longevity of social movements (Buechler 2000:35). This is reflected in the theory's key terms. McCarthy and Zald define *social movement* as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution in society" (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1218-19). In to order predict the likelihood of these beliefs being translated into collective action, RMT analyzes the preexisting organizational structures and

the integration of the population which shares those beliefs. A *social movement organization* (SMO) is a formal organization which identifies with the social movement and seeks to implement its goals. Social movements are often represented by more than one SMO. A collectivity of these social movement organizations working towards similar goals constitutes a *social movement industry* (SMI). A parallel can be drawn between the definition of SMI and industry in economics (1977:1219). In McCarthy and Zald's (1977) model, SMO's operate much like businesses competing in an open market for resources such as money, facilities, labor, and legitimacy. The amount of activity any SMO directs towards a goal is a function of their ability to marshal these resources. Furthermore, in much the same manner as they regulate business, authorities also have the ability to frustrate or enable resource mobilization through legal and political mechanisms. Finally, the *social movement sector* consists of all SMI's in a given society irrespective of which social movement they represent.

The business metaphor can be extended to explain the dynamics of SMO's in other ways as well. Like businesses competing for customers, SMO's must market themselves to potential members (or *constituents* to use McCarthy and Zald's (1977) terminology) and potentially compete with other SMO's promoting other causes. Based on a rational choice paradigm, SMO's will seek to convince potential members that the relative benefits of movement participation outweigh the anticipated costs. Furthermore, in much the same way that companies call upon famous actors or athletes to endorse their consumer products, SMOs often attempt to link their causes to well known names in an attempt to maximize credibility (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1231).

This entrepreneurial model of resource mobilization theory is not without its critics. McAdam (1984) points to several deficiencies in the social movement literature (1984:24). First, there is no widely accepted typology within the field to separate the diverse range of

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phenomena all grouped under the heading of social movement. This criticism is echoed by

Traugott (1978:42) who argues that entrepreneurial RMT's desire for inclusiveness comes at

the cost of theoretical specificity. For McAdam (1984), this shortcoming is most apparent in

the model's failure to differentiate between organized efforts for change generated by those

located within the established polity, and the efforts for change generated by those who are

excluded or marginalized. He argues that established polity members or elites are likely to

pursue limited reforms through institutionalized channels. These "top down" reform efforts are

typically used by entrepreneurial RMT supporters to illustrate their model. McAdam does not

doubt the effectiveness of the McCarthy-Zald model as a framework for the analysis of these

phenomena, but rather, questions whether such group actions should be called social

movements in the first place (1984:25).

A second criticism of entrepreneurial RMT concerns its implication that elites and elite

institutions are required to provide social movements with the resources critical to facilitate

organized collective action. This leaves one to conclude that elites must be willing sponsors of

social movements. As McAdam points out however, social movements typically pose a threat

to existing institutional arrangements and the elites who benefit from them. This makes

established elite sponsorship of social movements unlikely:

> What marks social movements as inherently threatening is their
> implicit challenge to the established structure of polity
> membership and their willingness to bypass institutionalized
> political channels. Emerging, as they do, among excluded
> groups, social movements embody an implicit demand for more
> influence in political decision making. This raises the specter of
> a restructuring of polity membership, a prospect that is anathema
> to all components of the elite. (1984:26)

It may be true, as McAdam (1984) argues, that elite participation in social movements is not as

frequent as Entrepreneurial RMT suggests (1984:26). Yet it is also a mistake to assume that all

elites necessarily have similar interests, or share a common desire to maintain established

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political and social structures. It may well be that competition and conflict among elites can be exploited by social movements who wish to challenge the status quo. Even if this were true, however, and social movements were able to find allies in the elite, McAdam still questions whether such alliances are useful, suggesting that "what is overlooked [by Entrepreneurial RMT] is the distinct possibility that elite involvement in social protest may more often contribute to the demise of a movement than its success" (1984:27).

A third, related criticism of Entrepreneurial RMT is its failure to acknowledge the political capabilities of a movement's mass base (1984:29). By placing too much emphasis upon the support of elites, this model fails to adequately take into account the potentialities and power of this base. In contrast, McAdam suggests that, with the exception of the most "deprived segments of society, aggrieved groups possess the ability to exert significant political leverage on their own behalf and contain indigenous resources facilitative of organized social protest" (1984:30). It is hard not to agree with this criticism. Recent years have seen communicational and organization resources (the Internet is the most obvious example) become widely available, even to those of relatively meager means. This makes it easier for relatively deprived groups to access the resources necessary to generate a social movement.

McAdam also questions the way in which Entrepreneurial RMT proponents have defined the concept of resources, charging that the vague, all inclusive definitions typical of the theory rob the concept of much of its analytic utility (1984:32). According to the broad definition of resources set out by McCarthy and Zald (1977:1220): resources "can include legitimacy, money, facilities, and labour". This leads McAdam to argue that it "would be difficult to find a social movement that was not preceded by *some* increase in *some* type of

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resource [emphasis his]" (1984:32). In other words, such a vague definition virtually assures confirmation of their model.

A final weakness of Entrepreneurial RMT concerns what McAdam sees as the theory's failure to distinguish between the objective social conditions a collectivity may face, and the collectivity's subjective perception of these conditions. McCarthy and Zald (1977) take social discontent, collective grievances, and the unequal distribution of power and resources, as a given or constant, and as a result, see it as insufficient cause for the formation of social movements. The subjective meaning of these conditions however, can change and will affect the possibility of the formation of collective movements at any given time: "segments of society may very well submit to oppressive conditions unless that oppression is collectively defined as both unjust and subject to change. In the absence of these necessary attributions, oppressive conditions are likely, even in the face of increased resources, to go unchallenged" (MacAdam 1984:24).

McAdam attempts to remedy these perceived shortcomings of entrepreneurial RMT with his political process model. In it, he sets out three factors which he argues are crucial to the generation of social movements. First, is the political alignment of various groups within the larger political environment; second, is the level of organizational strength of the aggrieved population; and third, is the collective appraisal of the movement's prospects for success (1984:40).

Political alignment refers to the structure of political opportunities available to social movements. Referring to the work of Eisinger (1973:28) who states that "protest is a sign that the opportunity structure is flexible and vulnerable to the political assault of excluded groups", McAdam argues that any event or social process that serves to undermine or disrupt the

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political establishment contains a potential opportunity for the formation of a social movement (1984:41).

Organizational strength, McAdam argues, is a function of four critical resources. The first resource a social movement requires is a membership. Recruitment of members typically follows one of two patterns. First, individuals can be recruited into the ranks of a movement by virtue of their involvement in similar social movements or other organizations which form the associational web out of which the social movement originates (1984:45). Second, members can be recruited through the merger or incorporation of other movements into one centrally organized structure. In this formulation McAdam echoes Obershall's general observation that "mobilization does not occur through recruitment of large numbers of isolated solitary individuals. It occurs as a result of recruiting blocs of people who are already highly organized participants" (1973:125). The second critical resource is the movement's established structure of solidarity incentives. This refers simply to the various interpersonal rewards that provide the motivation for participation in the group, such as a feeling of solidarity with the group or even simple companionship. The third resource is a communication network or infrastructure. Social movements rely on this network to disseminate their message throughout the group itself as well as to the wider population. Fourth, strong leaders and organizers are required in the generation of social movements. These leaders are useful not only for their organizational expertise or interpersonal skills, but are also frequently called upon to lend prestige to the incipient movement. McAdam suggests that established leaders and those with central positions within a community are often the first to join social movements and can be critical to their success.

The final factor in the formation of social movements is what McAdam (1984:49) calls

"cognitive liberation" which borrows from Piven and Cloward (1979), who outline a threefold

series of "necessary cognitions" for the successful formation of social movements:

> First, "the system" - or those aspects of the system that people
> experience and perceive – loses legitimacy. Large numbers of
> men and women who ordinarily accept the authority of their
> rulers and the legitimacy of institutional arrangements come to
> believe in some measure that the rulers and these arrangements
> are unjust and wrong. Second, people who are ordinarily
> fatalistic, who believe that existing arrangements are inevitable,
> begin to assert "rights" that imply demands for change. Third,
> there is a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider
> themselves helpless come to believe that they have some
> capacity to alter their lot (Piven and Cloward 1979:3-4).

McAdam (1984:50) is careful to point out however, that these "cognitions" are not the result of

changes in objective conditions, but rather, changes in how these conditions are perceived by

the members of the movement – something more likely to occur within the context of a highly

organized and well led group.

Despite debates between the two different versions of RMT, a few general points of

agreement have emerged, such as a belief that the existence of grievances is not sufficient on its

own to account for the formation of social movements, a recognition of the individual costs and

benefits of participation is social movement organizations, the key role that expectations of

success play as an incentive to mobilize, and the importance of organization structure

(Klandermans and Tarrow 1988:4-7).

Social Constructionist Theory

The second social movement theory this research will draw upon is social

constructionist theory. Buechler (2000) characterizes this theory as a revival of the earlier

symbolic interactionist approach to collective behavior, albeit, with several key differences.

Unlike symbolic interactionism, which Buechler believes is best suited to elementary forms of

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collective behavior, social constructionist theory is concerned specifically with structured social movements which can be sustained over time. It seeks to individuals' motivations motivations for movement participation and social movement strategies of recruitment. As a result, social constructionist theory places more emphasis upon the role of networks, organizations, and communication as conduits of collective action than does traditional symbolic interactionist theory. Buechler argues that it is "insistent that every aspect of collective behavior must be understood as an interactive, symbolically defined and negotiated process among participants, opponents, and bystanders" (2000:40).

At the core of social constructionist theory is the concept of framing. In a broad sense, framing (a term borrowed from Goffman (1974)), refers to the way political players, such as news media, politicians, interest groups, and other social actors define the political space and erect the boundaries within which a public policy issue will be considered. (Callaghan and Schnell 2005: xi). In specific reference to this research, framing is understood as "the interactive, collective ways that movement actors assign meanings to their activities in the conduct of social movement's activism" (Buechler 2000:41). By giving meaning to social events and practices, frames function to organize experiences, inspiring and guiding both individual and collective action.

Snow and Benford (1988) outline the three ways that issues are framed. First is diagnostic framing, which identifies the problem to be targeted by the social movement. This diagnosis will also contain implicit assumptions about the cause of the problem being targeted. Second is prognostic framing, which as the name implies, identifies possible solutions to the problem. It also contains information about tactics and strategies that may be utilized by the social movement. Third is motivational framing. This aims to provide not only a rationale for

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recruitment of new movement members, but also to supply justification for taking collective action to remedy the perceived problem.

Snow et al. develop this concept of framing with their analysis of what they call *frame alignment*. This "refers to the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some set of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals and ideology are congruent and complementary" (1986:464). They consider frame alignment a necessary condition of movement participation and propose four types of frame alignment processes to guide social movement research.

The first process is called frame bridging and refers to "the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem" (1986:467). In this process, the movement attempts to reach out to people who share values and beliefs similar to those of the SMO but who have yet to be mobilized. Citizens are offered an organizational base for expressing their values and concerns, and a structured means for acting in pursuit of them. This bridging is effected by an organized dissemination of information through interpersonal networks, the media, telemarketing, and direct mailings (1986:468). The Internet provides extensive opportunities for frame bridging, especially among the more computer literate segments of the population (professionals, young people, etc.). Technology is also useful in terms of researching, constructing, and managing data bases of potential movement recruits.

The second process of frame alignment is called frame amplification which refers "to the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events" (1986:469). Goffman (1974) points out that an individual's interpretation of any particular event can be subject to a certain amount of uncertainty and ambiguity. This often means that participants in SMO's will require frequent clarification and

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reinforcement of the movement's interpretive frame if they are to remain motivated and active participants in the SMO. There are two varieties of frame amplification. The first, which is value amplification, is understood as the idealization or elevation of one or more values assumed to be integral to prospective social movement participants, but which have lost their resonance because of a lack of opportunity to express or translate them into action. The second frame amplification is referred to as belief amplification: "Whereas values refer to the goals or end-states that movements seek to attain or promote, beliefs can be construed as ideational elements that cognitively support or impede action in pursuit of desired values" (Snow et. al. 1986:469-70). In their review of the literature, Snow et al. (1986:470) found five beliefs which are especially relevant to mobilization and participation processes: (1) grievances or beliefs about the severity of the problem; (2) beliefs about the cause of the problem; (3) beliefs about antagonists or targets of influence; (4) beliefs about the possibility of change and potential effectiveness of collective action; and (5) individual beliefs about the necessity of their own involvement in order to bring about the desired change.

The third process of frame alignment is called frame extension. In the case where the values espoused by an SMO fail to resonate with potential movement recruits, the SMO may have to extend the boundaries of its ideational framework to encompass other values that, while not necessarily vital to the SMO's core interests and objectives, may help provide an incentive for new membership. Movement leaders frequently elaborate goals and activities so as to encompass auxiliary interests not obviously associated with the movement in hopes of enlarging its adherent base" (Snow et al. 1986:472). Often, the SMO structures initial recruitment encounters not to sell the movement or get people to join, but simply to persuade the potential recruit to attend a movement activity. The recruitment comes later (Snow et. al. 1986:472).

The final process of frame alignment is called *frame transformation*. It may be that the values and goals promoted by an SMO fail to resonate or may even contradict the traditional frames held by potential recruits. This necessitates a re-casting or re-interpretation of the old frames. New values may have to be planted and nurtured, while older meanings and "misunderstandings" jettisoned (Snow et. al. 1986:473). This points to how objective conditions are always open to new subjective re-interpretations. Social arrangements that once may have been considered acceptable can often be transformed into sources of discontent by a SMO. Furthermore, sources of injustice or discontent that were once internalized can be refocused on an external source. Problems that once seemed inevitable or insurmountable can be transformed into causes vulnerable to collective remedy. Particularly relevant to this research is what Snow et al. (1986:474) call the *transformation of domain specific interpretive frames*. By this they mean fairly self-contained but substantial changes in the way a particular domain of life is framed, such that a domain previously taken for granted is reframed as problematic and in need of repair, or a domain seen as normative or acceptable is reframed as an injustice that warrants change.

Taken together, resource mobilization theory, and social constructionist theory provide a powerful, broad theoretical framework within which social movements can be analyzed and understood. Yet I would argue that this understanding is partial, as these theories do not fully account for the role of the state in social movements, nor do they theorize the role of counter movements. In order to redress this important shortcoming, the following two sections will explore how the state reacts to social movements and the role of counter movements.

Theories of democracy and the state

The state is one of, if not the most, important social institutions in the contemporary western world. It should come as no surprise to find it a frequent target of social activism. In the

context of this research, understanding the role of the state and how it interacted with the social movement in question is paramount. This section addresses state politics and their relationship to social movements through three different though related paradigms: the state as an intermediary, political markets and monopolies, and the state as a reform filter.

The State as Intermediary

Melucci argues that pluralist theories of democracy have tended to view the political system as an "open system of interactions where all of the active and legitimate groups of the population can make their voices heard at all stages of the decision making process" (1996:230). According to this approach, the plurality of interests first formed at the individual micro-level is represented in an open, transparent manner by the political system (Melucci 1996:231). This view is contested, however, by Marxist theories of the political system which regard the state not as a neutral or independent political actor, but rather, as a tool to enforce the interests of the dominant class. In this image, "the state stands as an intermediary between the grievances, ideology, and politics of social movements on the one hand and the imperatives, requisites and constraints of advanced capitalist social formation on the other hand" (Buechler 2000:169).

In his critique of pluralist theories of democracy, Melucci (1996) first argues that interests are not formed at an individual, atomized micro level; rather, they are formed within a social structure characterized by divisions of class, gender, geography, age, etc. Individual needs, therefore, will reflect the individual's social roles, access to resources and their relations to other individuals. Second, the representation of these interests in the political system is neither transparent nor necessarily accurate. This is because the implementation of these needs is subject to the boundaries and constraints imposed by the dominant social relationships of the society (Melucci 1996:231).

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> The free play of transaction and the overt confrontation of
> competing demands become ideological imagery masking the
> reality of a system of domination and imbalances... dominant
> social relationships set the boundaries and determine the
> possibility and the limits of political action (Melucci 1996:231).

The political system, despite its claims to openness, fairness, or democratic principles,

will in fact be limited in its decision making processes by two key considerations. First, it will

be restricted by "a priori establishing the areas of decidability as well as the areas which remain

non-negotiable" (1996:231). In other words, structural limits are enforced which restrict the

scope and type of decision-making open to government to those who do not threaten basic

social relationships. Melucci argues that these limits become transparent when "new interests

and emerging demands tend to thematize them in public discussion, and when the action of

new groups within the political system begins to strain the limits of its habitual functioning"

(1996:232) . The limitations of the political system are then revealed through the repressive

actions of the state.

The second limitation of democratic political systems is the result of direct

manipulation of the internal functioning of the system by dominant social groups. Melucci

describes political systems as closed in the sense that access and the ability to utilize political

mechanisms is allocated to ensure dominant class interests prevail:

> Political competition is 'imperfect competition', structurally
> organized to effectively favor the interests of the dominant
> social groups. Whether in the opportunities for political
> organization, in the use of electoral mechanisms, in the access to
> the apparatus of the state and media system, or in the influence
> of decision-making, the political forces which represent the
> dominant classes enjoy structural advantages within the political
> game (1996:232).

Buechler tends to agree that the state, even a democracy, is structurally pre-disposed to

favor the interests and ideology of the dominant class, but raises two important qualifications.

First, he argues that Marxist theories of the state tend to privilege working class activism and

relegate other constituents to subordinate status. This can lead to a reductionist view of the state as captive of a single group or interest (Buechler 2000:173). He emphasizes however, that the state is not just "classed", but also "raced" and "gendered". Second, Buechler (2000) argues that even a "closed" political system or state will not necessarily always prevail in protecting the interests of the dominant groups. There is always the potential for subordinate groups to make inroads into the formulation of public policy and the shaping of political institutions through collective action.

Political 'Markets' and Monopolies

Miller III draws a parallel between commercial markets and what he calls "political markets" based on the existence of competition between agents:

> Firms compete for consumers' dollars; parties and candidates
> compete for citizens' votes. Consumers and voters are sensitive
> to what providers offer and will choose others if not satisfied.
> This freedom to choose is absolutely essential to making
> markets work effectively (1999:39).

The ability of consumers to freely choose between companies and their products forces business to focus on consumer wants and needs, the same way that the ability of voters to choose between different political parties or candidates should theoretically provide a powerful motivation for political elites to stay intently focused on the needs of citizens.

Agents in political markets, like those in commercial markets, have a strong incentive to monopolize the marketplace (1999:40). Miller III argues that political parties and candidates who are successfully able to 'monopolize' or exclude political rivals will generally enjoy greater levels of power and influence, can more easily reject the desires of constituents, are better able to distribute favours to their supporters, have more control over the provision of public goods and services, have almost guaranteed tenure, and are less likely to have to deflect critical scrutiny by rivals (1999:41). The ability to undermine the competition is not only a

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function of effective political campaigning, but can also be enhanced by manipulating and shaping political structures and procedures such that potential rivals have little chance of gaining a foothold.

It is not easy to exclude all potential rivals in a democratic system (though it can and has been done, at least on a short term basis); this means that established political parties have an incentive to collude to suppress potential challengers and upstarts. Miller III maintains that voters are harmed if parties are able to successfully exclude competitors by establishing a monopoly which allows them to "share the spoils" so to say (1999:42), in the same way that consumers are harmed by companies that   monopolize or collude in the marketplace.

The State as Reform Filter

It becomes useful at this point to conceptualize the state as a series of what Buechler (2000) calls "reform filters" that stand in the way of social movements and their goals. Buechler acknowledges that social movements do persist over time and often have an impact upon state policy, but agrees with Melucci (1996), that states grant reform only as a last resort and even then in as restricted a form as possible (Buechler 2000:174). Generally, the political system either filters demands and only selects for consideration those that can be dealt with using existing decision making structures and processes, or alternatively, excludes altogether demands that question the hegemony of certain groups over the political system (Melucci 1996:236). Despite this, however, certain groups   or interests often succeed in altering the balance of the political system or gain access that was once denied to them without fundamentally altering the wider political structure.

Buechler emphasizes that the state and its political apparatus are not omnipotent and its power can be undermined for several reasons. First, there are often conflicting interests among dominant groups which may provide openings to once excluded interests. Second and closely

related, the efforts of social movements may have differing and contradictory effects upon different dominant groups within the established political structure, which can yield unintended or unanticipated results. And third, social movements are well aware that states operate as reform filters and shape their goals and tactics around this knowledge. These tactics often include using what Buechler (2000:176) calls a "Trojan horse" strategy where mild reforms are proposed that contain a potential for more radical changes in the future.

Taken together, the state as intermediary, the effects of monopoly politics, and the state as reform filter, paint a picture of a powerful state and political structure hostile to change. This isn't to say however, that the state cannot also be vulnerable to certain strategies and initiatives on the part of social movements. Tarrow (1998) proposes a view which identifies the state not just as a structure of political constraints, but also of opportunities. Under certain circumstances "institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines" (Tarrow 1998:71). This approach sees the relationship between social movements and the state as dynamic and unpredictable. Social movements can exploit and even create vulnerabilities in the state's repressive abilities.

Never the less, social movements face an uphill battle when they engage established political structures supported by dominant interests and groups. The next section will look at some of the strategies employed by the state and counter movements in general to combat social movements and neutralize their gains.

Resistance to Social Movements

Resistance to social movements can come in many forms. As a movement gains visibility or begins to achieve its goals it almost inevitably spawns a counter movement. Resistance can also come from the state, which in the context of this research is particularly

relevant. This section will examine the types of resistance and counter tactics social movements typically encounter.

Counter Movements

A counter movement is the mobilization of sentiments and actions in opposition to an already existing social movement. Mayer and Zald (1987) argue that social movements with any visibility or impact typically create the conditions for the mobilization of a counter movement:

> By advocating change, by attacking the established interests, by mobilizing symbols and raising costs to others, they create grievances and provide opportunities for organizational entrepreneurs to define counter movement goals and issues (1987:248).

They point to a neglect of the "dynamic interplay between movement and counter movement" in social movement research (1987:248). This neglect is a serious shortcoming in the analysis of social movements since many of a social movement's tactics and resources are often devoted to neutralizing and discrediting a counter movement.

Several factors affect the timing and form of counter movement mobilization. The first is the success of the targeted social movement. A counter movement is more likely to emerge if the movement appears to be accomplishing its goals (Mayer and Zald 1987:254). Successful social movements have a "demonstrative effect", alerting constituents of potential counter movements to the utility of collective action. Mayer and Zald (1987) also point out however, that a counter movement is unlikely to emerge if the targeted social movement wins a huge, overwhelming victory. Rather than inspiring opposition, such a decisive victory is more likely to paralyze and discourage opponents.

A second factor is the development and articulation of an effective ideology. Counter movements are often initially bereft of a rallying ideology with which to inspire the enthusiasm

and commitment of potential members, but can develop this important element over time. A third factor affecting the formation of counter movements is the availability of resources. Mayer and Zald (1987:255) consider the counter movement's location in the social structure a key determining factor in determining its access to resources. While social movements are often launched by the marginalized or those excluded from established power structures, counter movements on the other hand, often benefit from links to and support from established interests and organizations.

It should be pointed out however, that counter movements cannot always count on direct support from the establishment. For example, it may not be appropriate for a government to provide direct public support to a counter movement. This problem can be circumvented by utilizing a loose, decentralized structure which allows established groups and elites within the counter movement to supply it with resources, yet also allows them to disassociate themselves from actions taken by the counter movement they have helped to create (1987:255).

A final consideration, and one "much overlooked in the study of movements as well as counter movements" (Mayer and Zald 1987:256), are the political constraints and opportunities that can restrict or encourage the formation of movements. Certain political and social climates may not allow counter movements to advance if they are seen as unpatriotic, frivolous, or in some way counter to widely held values and beliefs. In addition, political structures (such as the structure of the electoral system) can vary in the opportunities they provide to movements.

Once the "battle has been joined", movement and counter movement interact in loose "spirals of mobilization" (Mayer and Zald 1987:257). McAdams (1983) describes a cascade of tactics and counter tactics where the movement's early successes are countered by the responses of authorities and countermovments. This in turn leads to even more cycles of

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"tactical innovation and response" (Meyer and Zald 1987:259) by each group. Tactics used by the opposing interests will vary according to circumstance but generally will involve damaging actions, such as trying to raise the costs of mobilization for the other group or disrupting and restricting their flow of resources, or the attempt to create an unfavorable public image of the opposing group (Mayer and Zald 1987:263). Tactics can also include preemptive strategies which attempt to undercut the moral or political foundation of a movement or counter movement. Finally, movements and countermovments may also seek to persuade members of the opposition group to join their own side of the controversy or attempt to co-opt the opposition through offers of rewards or threats of deprivation.

Counter Movements and the State

While Meyer and Zald (1987) acknowledge the role that government or state institutions can play in the formation and longevity of counter movements, they do not enter into the discussion in great detail. This is contrasted with Stewart et al. (2001) who are particularly sensitive to how democratic governments and institutions react to, and often resist, social movements. Every organization, they argue, has a series of explicit or implicit purposes that include (among others) self-preservation and perpetuation (Stewart et al. 2001:319). This desire for self-preservation may be threatened by social movements seeking institutional reform or change. Leaders who wish to stay in power, especially those whose position is tied to the democratic support of an electorate, must be attuned to the various forms of power available to them and how they can best be deployed to their advantage. Steward et al. (2001:325) present six primary strategies available to democratic governments and institutions to counter social movements which threaten to disrupt the status quo.

First is the strategy of evasion. This is usually the first strategy employed and involves simply ignoring the social movement or seeing it as unworthy of official response. The large

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bureaucratic nature of western democratic governments makes the use of this strategy quite

effective in marginalizing potentially disruptive movements:

> Bureaucratic procedures allow institutions to delay official
> responses to such movements. Institutional bureaucracies are
> adept at passing-the-buck, being unavailable for comment, and
> giving the runaround. Institutions maintain the appearance of
> addressing issues by referring them to committees, special
> commissions or task forces, often populated by those who
> support the institutions. Postponement tactics slow or delay the
> decision-making process regarding a social movement's charges
> and demands (Stewart et al. 2001:326).

The second strategy is counter persuasion. This is typically employed when evasion

fails. It can involve challenging a social movement's version of reality, discrediting its

leadership or members, and framing its demands and ideas as irrational, ill-advised or lacking

merit (Stewart et al. 2001:327). A social movement may be countered in this manner through

the use of several tactics. First, government can nurture and exploit a population's sense of fear.

Thus, institutions and authorities will argue that the movement's success would bring about

social disorder, threaten a valued reward system or structure, or have some other dire

consequence that should be feared and avoided. Second, an institution or its surrogates can

attack the nature and motives of the social movement (Stewart et. al. 2001:327). They can

portray the movement as self-serving and its members as simply acting to promote their own

narrow self-interests, rather than acting in the public good. In extreme examples, social

movements, their members, and their leaders may be subject to personal slanders, smear

campaigns, or even physical harm and imprisonment. A third tactic is to challenge the

rationality, accuracy or veracity of the movement's arguments.

In cycles of persuasion and counter persuasion, it is likely that government, with its

superior resources and power, will hold a distinct advantage over the more marginal social

movement. Flyvbjerg (1998) argues that there is a strong relationship between power and the

ability to define reality. In his study of how power functions within social and political

institutions, he concludes that:

> Power, quite simply, produces that knowledge and that
> rationality which is conducive to the reality it wants.
> Conversely, power suppresses that knowledge and rationality for
> which it has no use. In modern societies the ability to facilitate or
> suppress knowledge is in part what makes one party more
> powerful than another (1998:36).

Should the tactics of evasion and counter persuasion fail however, governments and

institutions may resort to what Stewart et al. (2001:329) call "coercive persuasion", which can

involve a considerable range of tactics. Many of these tactics originate in government's ability

to affect the lives of their citizens through rewards and deprivations. Government employees

can be fired, or similarly, citizens denied access to jobs, students can be expelled, union leaders

blacklisted, and social services can be withheld. Governments also have the ability to

inconvenience, harass, and intimidate citizens and movement groups through the use of

judicial and regulatory systems. Coercive persuasion can be very effective as a means to

generate fear amongst a social movement's leaders, followers, and sympathizers (Stewart et al.

2001:334). This can help make movement leaders hesitant to act, members fearful to make

their participation in a movement known, and sympathizers hesitant to extend financial and

moral support.

The strategy of adjustment involves making concessions to a social movement without

actually accepting the movement's demands or goals (Stewart et al. 2001:334). This gives the

appearance of being responsive to a movement while in fact only addressing superficial

elements of the movement's agenda. This often involves making symbolic gestures to the

movement such as promising to investigate issues raised by the social movement through the

creation of special committees and commissions, or by seeming to cooperate with the

movement by providing access to facilities or other resources. These actions can frustrate a

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movement by providing a visible show of concern while reducing the urgency of the movement's demands. Open and publicized cooperation with the movement may make government or government institutions less of a target for criticism; it may defuse a movement's momentum and recruiting efforts, and it can buy time for counter efforts and countermovments to mobilize. Another common and effective adjustment tactic is the incorporation of the movement's leaders into the very system they oppose. This can involve token appointments to commissions or agencies charged with studying the issue being contested. This strategy can even lead to a movement being co-opted, in which case the government or government institution seemingly takes on the movement's issue as a cause of its' own.

There is a risk involved in adjustment however. In acknowledging the importance of a movement's cause, even if only superficially, authorities risk legitimizing the movement. There is also the risk that any sign of concession or weakness may encourage public support for the movement and encourage its members that ultimate victory is possible.

Research Concepts and Considerations

As stated earlier, this research will examine the movement to introduce a MMP system to the PEI provincial legislature as a case study illustrating the interaction between social movements and the state. The "yes" and "no" coalitions in this issue will be analyzed respectively as social movement and counter movement. The state will be analyzed as the "target" of the social movement, a reform filter which resists the movement for electoral reform, and also as a supporter and indirect participant in the counter movement. The final section of this chapter will set out the specific theoretical considerations (taken from the preceding sections) that will guide this research.

Resource mobilization theory argues that discontent or grievances cannot *on their own* provide sufficient explanation for the creation or longevity of social movements. This does not mean that grievances cannot contribute to the mobilization of a social movement; indeed, I would argue that analysis of grievances should be the first step in the analysis of the formation of a social movement. Another consideration in understanding the formation of social movements will be actions (or inactions) on the part of the state. The concern in the initial phase of research is not to focus simply on the state's actions as reform filter or intermediary, but rather, to search for the presence of vulnerabilities or political opportunities exploited by the emerging social movement.

As the research turns to analysis of the maturing social movement, resource mobilization theory will be the primary theoretical guide. The ability of the movement to translate their initial grievances into a sustained collective effort will reflect their success in mobilizing the various resources available to them. This means that an examination of the social movement's organizational structure, their success or failure in recruiting individuals and organizations (including elites and already established political organizations) from outside the movement, and their flow of resources (especially money) in or out of the organization, are all required. Specific considerations regarding the efficacy of the organization's structure are provided by McAdam's (1984) political process model. Because this model is concerned with many of the practical details of movement organization and recruitment, it will be used extensively in areas such as: defining and measuring the costs and benefits of movement membership, issues of leadership, and the role of expectations of success in member recruitment.

The resources marshaled by the social movement will have to be measured against those at the disposal of the movement's adversaries. These adversaries include both the

emerging counter movement and the state. As movement and counter movement engage in escalating cycles of contention, social construction theory will become important in understanding how each side frames and communicates their respective messages. With its emphasis upon the role of networks, organizations, and communication, this theory will help explain the interactive process between movement and counter movement, the state, and the general public. Each side will create it's own diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational frames which it will attempt to disseminate through the various channels (the media being the most important).

A social movement which makes modifying the structure of representative democracy its goal will interact with the state and state representatives frequently and on many levels. Understanding the actions and motivations of the state in its relationship to the social movement is key. The theories of the state outlined in the preceding sections, specifically the theory of the state as reform filter and intermediary, will be drawn upon frequently to explain the state/social movement dynamic. The state will utilize a variety of resources and tactics to influence and counter the social movement. Assessing the effectiveness of these efforts is an important component of this research. The use of the tactics discussed in the preceding section on resistance to social movements will be noted and evaluated.

The synthesis of the theories of social movements and the state discussed in this chapter will provide a theoretical framework for chapter five, which will examine the Yes and No Coalitions, their interactions with the government, and how this interaction affected the eventual outcome of the plebiscite on electoral change. First though, the next chapter will outline the projects research methodology.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed in this thesis. This includes

an introduction to the case study method of research - its strengths, weaknesses, and the

appropriateness of its application to this particular research problem. In addition, this chapter

discusses how the concepts discussed in the theory chapter are operationalized, and outlines the

process of data collection and analysis.

The Case Study

The case study method is not easily summarized as a single coherent form of research

(Stark and Torrance 2005:33). Although many researchers refer to the case study as a research

'method', Babbie and Benaquisto (2002) point out that it is not actually a technique for

gathering information. Instead, it "refers to the design of a research study. It concerns what the

researcher will focus on – not how data will be collected" (Babbie and Benaquisto 2002:308).

A case study is broadly defined as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a

contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are

used" (Yin 1984:23). Berg (2007) notes that the case study approach is particularly useful for

qualitative researchers seeking rich, detailed and in-depth information:

> By concentrating on a single phenomenon, individual,
> community, or institution, the researcher aims to uncover the
> manifest interaction of significant factors characteristic of this
> phenomenon, individual, community or institution. But, in
> addition, the researcher is able to capture various nuances,
> patterns, and more latent elements that other research
> approaches might overlook. The case study method tends to
> focus on holistic description and explanation (Berg 2007:284).

Furthermore, the case study is usually an instance of a broader phenomenon, as part of a larger

set of parallel instances. The findings of a case study may be generalizable to other cases

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which, for theoretical reasons, we think may be similar. To the extent that a case study illuminates and develops theory, we can treat it as representative, as the empirical manifestation of some aspect of social theory (Bechhofer and Paterson 2000:49). Similarly, Berg argues that "when case studies are properly undertaken, they should not only fit the specific individual, group, or event studied but also generally provide understanding about similar individuals, groups, or events" (2007:295).

In this thesis, the attempt to bring some form of proportional representation to the PEI legislature should be understood as just one instance of a larger phenomenon. The past several years have seen five Canadian provinces flirt with similar electoral reform initiatives. A detailed examination of the Prince Edward Island electoral reform experience may provide insights which may be generalized to these other jurisdictions. This makes a case study approach particularly apt for this research.

The case study approach is identified as having both specific strengths and weaknesses. The most serious criticism questions the scientific validity of making generalizations based on a single case. Case study observations are typically taken at a single place at a single point in time with no control group or baseline data for comparative analysis. Responding to this criticism, Yin argues:

> Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical
> propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense,
> the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a
> "sample," and the investigators goal is to expand and generalize
> theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate
> frequencies (Statistical generalization)" (Yin 1984:21).

Similarly, Bechhofer and Paterson argue that "case studies may be seen as representative and generalizable insofar as we are trying to generate theories. Generalization is analytical and not statistical" (2000:48). With regard to electoral reform however, it should be pointed out that in this case one could argue that control groups do exist in the sense that other jurisdictions in

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Canada and around the world have also experimented with various electoral reform initiatives. In other words, PEI is not an anomaly. As the literature review chapter demonstrated, the study of democratic electoral reform is not new. Similar case studies have helped inform the theory which guides this thesis. This particular research does not aim at a comparative study of electoral reform initiatives per se, but this does not preclude drawing on findings and conclusions from other jurisdictions to illuminate the Prince Edward Island experience.

Another criticism of the case study is that they generally take a long time to complete and result in "massive, unreadable documents" (Yin 1984:21). But case studies need not involve long lengthy narratives, nor do they need to take a long time to complete. Yin believes that this criticism of the case study incorrectly confuses the case study approach with a specific method of data collection such as ethnography or participant observation (1984:21). Indeed one of the strengths of the case study is that it need not rely upon any one method of data collection. In fact, as this thesis will demonstrate, case studies frequently employ multiple methods of data collection or 'triangulation' in order to provide the fullest picture of the phenomena in question.

Case Study Rationale

Yin (1984) sets out three criteria which serve as guideposts when selecting a case for sociological analysis. The first is that the case in question must represent a unique or extreme example of the phenomenon to be studied. In choosing Prince Edward Island, this research will examine the first attempt by a Canadian province to introduce proportional representation to a provincial legislature. Known for its high voter turnouts and grass roots political culture, Prince Edward Island represents a unique case study subject. As the least populous province in Canada, PEI is the smallest jurisdiction to engage in a political reform process of this nature. Island politics tend to inspire a great deal of passion amongst citizens and unlike other larger

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provinces, are conducted in a 'face to face' manner.

The second criterion is that "the case represents the critical case in testing a theory. The theory has specified a number of propositions as well as the circumstances within which these propositions are believed to be true" (Yin 1984:42). Unlike other jurisdictions (such as Japan for example), the Prince Edward Island case clearly demonstrates an example of a citizen led drive to reform its electoral system. As such, it provides an excellent example of the interaction between social movement, counter movement, and the state. Electoral reform can take place under a variety of circumstances, but PEI is particularly noteworthy because the process was citizen driven from its inception.

The third criterion is that the case represents a revelatory case. "This situation exists when an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation" (Yin 1984:42). In this case, the small size of PEI and easy access to political figures allows for unprecedented access to the electoral reform process. In a larger jurisdiction it might prove difficult for a researcher to access similarly prominent political figures (such as the provincial premier).

Research Methodology

As outlined in chapter three, this research will analyze the social movement to reform Prince Edward Island's electoral system drawing upon several broad theoretical traditions: (1) the analysis of the structure of political and cultural opportunities and constraints facing social movements, (2) the forms of mobilizing structures and resources available to social movements, and (3) the collective process of interpretation and framing that mediates the interaction between opportunity and collective action.

This section will operationalize these concepts and discuss how they will be utilized in this research project. Though conceptually distinct, in practice there are numerous opportunities for

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overlap when applying these seemingly divergent theories to a particular social movement. While the purpose of this research is not to create a synthesis of these theories per se, I will still attempt to draw out their common threads whenever possible.

This research will be primarily qualitative rather than quantitative in its methodologys. Babbie and Benaquisto (2002) define qualitative analysis as "The nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships" (2002:496). They list several advantages of qualitative research which are particularly applicable to this thesis. The first advantage of qualitative research is its validity; "field research seems to provide more valid measurements than survey and experimental measurements, which are often criticized as superficial and not really valid" (Babbie and Benaqisto 2002:325). Second, qualitative research is effective for "studying the subtle nuances and attitudes and behaviours and for examining social process over time" (2002:325). In this case, the social processes being studied occurred over a span of years (and are still occurring). Third is flexibility: qualitative research can be conducted at almost any time and modifications to the research method can be made on the spot if warranted (if for example, a new or unexpected piece of information is discovered). And fourth, qualitative research can be relatively inexpensive: in this case the research requires little equipment or staff and is well within the parameters of a master's thesis.

A disadvantage of qualitative research concerns reliability. It is well and good for a researcher to draw specific conclusions and interpretations from the study of a particular social phenomenon. Whether another researcher would draw the same conclusions and interpretations given the same set of facts however can be questionable.

Political and Cultural Opportunities for Movement Mobilization

The measurement of political and cultural opportunities is not only important in

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assessing the conditions under which social movements are likely to emerge, but also in assessing the conditions under which a social movement is likely to be successful. There is no broad agreement amongst sociologists concerning exactly what constitutes a political or cultural 'opportunity' in the study of social movement formation. Despite this lack of consensus, there is a general agreement that social movements are shaped by broader cultural and political constraints and opportunities unique to the context in which they are embedded. This is especially true (as we shall see) in the case of the movement to introduce proportional representation to the PEI legislature.

For the purpose of this research, I will draw from the work of political process theorists such as Charles Tilly (1978), Douglas MacAdam (1982, 1996) and Sydney Tarrow (1983) and broadly define political and cultural opportunities as *characteristics of the social and/or political order which make them receptive to challenge by social movements*. Before this concept can be operationalized however, we must distinguish between *political* and *cultural* opportunities.

As Tarrow notes: "political opportunity may be discerned along so many directions and in so many ways that it is less a variable than a cluster of variables – some more readily observed than others" (1998:430). This makes it difficult to define the term with any sort of analytic clarity. Gamson and Meyer argue that

> The concept of political opportunity structure is in trouble, in
> danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up virtually every
> aspect of the social movement environment – political
> institutions and culture, crises of various sorts, political
> alliances, and policy shifts… Used to explain so much, it may
> ultimately explain nothing at all ((1996) 1996:24).

Mindful of this danger, MacAdam (1996) has assessed various attempts by sociologists to specify the relevant components of political opportunity, and has distilled their respective schemas into a coherent "consensual list of dimensions of political opportunities" to provide

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the term some analytic clarity. These four dimensions will form the criteria used to assess the political opportunities which gave rise to the social movement this research is concerned with. These four dimensions are:

1. The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system.
2. The stability or instability of that broad set of elite alignments.
3. The presence or absence of elite allies.
4. The state's capacity and propensity for repression (MacAdam 1996:27).

It should be noted that this list incorporates both formal and informal components of political structures and institutions. This is important in studying a relatively small jurisdiction like Prince Edward Island where formal and informal political structures and activities both need to be accounted for.

The first dimension of MacAdam's schema emphasizes the importance of the formal legal and institutional structures of a given polity; what (if any) opportunities and mechanisms exist within the formal political structure which may facilitate reform or change? The second and third dimensions speak to "the informal structure of power relations characteristic of a given system" (1996:27). Rather than assuming that elites necessarily share similar interests, these dimensions emphasize the fluid nature of politics and how changing alliances and interests may provide opportunities for social movement formation. The last dimension, state repression, looks at the various tools and mechanisms available to the state to resist and repress the social movements. It is difficult to formulate a precise method of measurement for these four dimensions of political opportunity. This research utilized interviews with several of the Island's major political figures to get a sense of elite alignments and interests, and interviews with members of the Yes and No Coalitions to gather data regarding the presence or absence of elite allies. The openness or closedness of the Island's political system and the Island's government's propensity to repress social movement will also be gauged drawing upon interviews with both political figures and social entrepreneurs.

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In addition to political opportunities, the rise of a social movement may also be facilitated by the existence of cultural opportunities. Like his analysis of political opportunities, MacAdam attempts to bring analytical clarity to this concept by delineating its four key components, they are:

1. The dramatization of a glaring contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social practices.
2. Suddenly imposed grievances.
3. Dramatizations of a system's vulnerability or illegitimacy.
5. The availability of an innovative 'master frame' within which subsequent challengers can map their own grievances and demands (MacAdam 1996:25).

Scrutinizing the media coverage of the plebiscite debate will provide a sense of how the issues in question were framed. Further, both the Yes and No Coalitions made frequent public statements and published several informational fliers which will this thesis will examine.

Resource Mobilization

Recognizing that political and social opportunities conducive to the formation of social movements can come and go, resource mobilization theory examines how groups organize to exploit these opportunities through mobilizing and managing resources. As outlined in the theory Chapter 3, this research will draw upon both the entrepreneurial and political versions of resource mobilization theory. Two broad concepts are of concern here, they are: aggregation of movement resources and organizational strength. While social movement research typically draws a conceptual distinction between these two concepts, in practice the two tend to overlap a great deal and will be combined for this research

Aggregation of movement resources refers to the flow of resources toward and away from the movement. For the purpose of this research these resources will include:

1. Money
2. Physical infrastructure
3. Human resources (labour, expertise, contacts, organizational and leadership skills, prestige)

Like any organization, social movement organizations require financial resources (for

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activities such as advertising) and a physical headquarters from which to operate. Human

resources are also important. Of particular salience will be assessing the various assets and

skills individual members bring to the social movement (and counter movement): experience,

links to other social movement organizations, community and business contacts, leadership or

organizational experience, and prestige and public reputation are all potentially important and

will be examined.

Organizational strength will be measured according to two of the variables set out by

MacAdam (1984) in his political resource model, they are:

1. Solidarity incentives
2. Communication network and infrastructure

Movements need incentives to attract recruits. These incentives can be complex and difficult to

measure but typically involve providing some sort of interpersonal rewards that serve to

motivate movement members and give a sense of group solidarity. Before a message can be

disseminated to the wider public, it must be disseminated to group members. A well organized

and functional communication network is crucial for this important task. Interviews with

coalition members, and coalition records and documents will provide the information needed

in this regard.

Collective Interpretation and Framing

At the core of social constructionist theory is the concept of framing, which is "the

interactive, collective ways that movement actors assign meanings to their activities in the

conduct of a social movement's activism" (Beuchler 2004:31). Chapter 3 pointed out that

social movement's typically utilize three different frames: diagnostic, prognostic, and

motivational. Creating frames that resonate with the intended audience is critical to the success

of a social movement.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to study framing. This research

however, focused primarily on qualitative methods and will examine the language, symbols and images employed by social movement, counter-movement and the state. The goal of this approach will be to understand how the frames employed by various social actors and organizations were shaped by changing political and social contexts, and how these frames reflected the interests of each group. This thesis will also probe the relationship between discourse and action – i.e. how action was influenced (or not influenced) by discourse and how discourse is in turn influenced (or not influenced) by action.

Counter Movement and the State

Counter movements and the state can be analyzed in much the same way as social movements. The concepts of political and cultural opportunities, resource mobilization, and framing are equally useful in understanding the formation of the so called 'No' side in the Prince Edward Island debate on electoral reform as they are for the 'Yes' side.

In addition, there are several means a state typically uses to repress social movements, these are spelled out by Boykoff (2006) and include depriving the social movement of resources, stigmatizing the movement or its members, disrupting the movement's activities, and intimidating or threatening the movement's members. This research looked for evidence of these types of activities through interviews with the relevant actors.

Collection of Data

This research utilized multiple methods of data collection (triangulation), this included: documentation such as letters, memorandums, and other communiqués; agendas and minutes of meetings; administrative documents; media coverage of the case being studied; organizational records; and physical artifacts such as fliers and handouts. Much of the information required for this research is in the public domain and available through the Internet and media archives.

This research also utilized semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview

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method allows for greater flexibility than rigidly structured interviews and is "particularly useful for understanding social movement mobilization from the perspective of movement actors or audiences" (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002:92). Klandermans and Staggenborg argue that semi-structured interviews

> have been particularly useful in research on loosely organized, short lived or thinly documented social movements and in studies that explore issues for which it is difficult to gather information through structured interviews, field observation, or documentary analysis (Klandermans and Staggenborg 2002:93).

Interview subjects were chosen based upon their role in the social movement, counter movement, and state. Most of the key organizers and players in the electoral reform debate were interviewed. This list of key players included the leaders and organizers of the Yes and No Coalitions, provincial MLAs, officials at Elections PEI, and members of the The Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform. A total of fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted. The interview subjects were:

Allan McIssac - Member of the No Coalition and current Liberal MLA.

Kirsten Lund - Member of the Yes Coalition and The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Jane Ledwell - Member of the Yes Coalition and The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

Leonard Russel - Chair of the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future.

Mitch Murphy - Former Conservative MLA in the Binns government.

Pat Mella - Spokesperson for the No Coalition and former MLA and leader of the PEI Conservative Party.

Leo Broderick - Member of the Yes Coalition.

Lowell Croken - Chief Electoral Officer of PEI.

Norman Carruthers - Chair of The Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform.

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Robert Ghiz - Current (2008) premier of PEI.

Harry Baglole - Founding Member of Every Vote Counts.

Leo Cheverie - Member of the Yes Coalition.

Mark Greenan - Leader of the Yes Coalition.

Pat Binns - Former premier of PEI.

Robert Henderson - Member of the No Coalition and current Liberal MLA.

All of the potential research subjects I approached agreed to be interviewed and were quite

willing to share their experiences and opinions regarding the plebiscite process and outcome.

Furthermore, all subjects agreed to be interviewed 'on the record'. Interview questions sought

to explore:

  1. The participant's role in the debate:
       What was the interviewee's role in the debate?
       Why did the interviewee decide to get involved in this issue? What were their
       motivations?
       Did they have professional relationships to other players in this debate?
  2. Organizational structure:
       How did they recruit members?
       Where did their financial resources come from? How were these resources
       deployed?
       How were the leaders chosen?
       Perceived strengths and weakness of the organizations.
  3. Organizational strategies:
        What were the strategies of each side?
        How did these strategies evolve over the course of the debate?
        Which strategies were most/least successful?

Though several different methods of data collections were utilized during the course of

this research, it is the data gathered through interviews proved the most enlightening, yielding

important information that could not gathered using other mean. This is demonstrated in the

next chapter, to which we will now turn, which documents this information and analyzes it

using the theories outlined in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5: Why PEI Rejected Electoral Reform.

Political and Cultural Opportunities

The cases of New Zealand, Japan and Italy outlined in Chapter 2, suggest that the reform process that eventually led to the adoption of proportional representation in these countries was preceded by a sense of political crisis. In New Zealand, there was chronic low voter turnout and a popular sense of disenfranchisement and dissatisfaction with the political system. Japan and Italy, on the other hand, were plagued by political scandals and corruption - problems which again were attributed to the structure of their political systems. These crises and scandals, and the public outrage they generated, provided a strong incentive to mobilize for change and helped create the perception that change was possible. The question, then, is whether such a perceived state of political crisis existed on PEI providing an opportunity for supporters of electoral reform to mobilize a social movement.

If a perceived state of political crisis existed in PEI, it certainly was not reflected in voter turnout. From 1966 to 2003, the average voter turnout has consistently been over 80% for provincial elections, one of the highest rates in the world. Nor does there appear to have been any great concern amongst the electorate regarding government corruption or scandals. While there has been no shortage of criticism regarding government policies and practices over the years, these criticisms were typically directed at the party in power, not toward the political system itself. A survey of major Island media sources (The Guardian newspaper, the Journal Pioneer newspaper, and the CBC) yielded little evidence of calls for major changes in how Islanders elected their MLA's.

There is one issue, however, which frequently inspired calls for major political reform - this is the so called 'lop-sided' distribution of seats that has plagued the PEI legislature over the past several elections. Table 1 summarizes the results of the last 11 provincial elections with the percentage of popular vote received by each party, and the subsequent number of legislative

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seats awarded. Several elections (1989, 1990 and 2000) saw one of the major parties being all but shut out of the legislature despite in each case garnering a significant portion of the popular vote.

Table 1[1]						
Historical Percentage of Popular Vote Received and Legislative Seats Awarded For Each Political Party						
	Vote	Seats (%)	Vote	Seats (%)	Vote	Seats (%)
2003	54.0%	23 (85%)	42.4%	4 (14%)	3.0%	0 (0%)
2000	57.6%	26 (92%)	33.6%	1 (3%)	8.4%	0 (0%)
1996	47.2%	18 (67%)	44.6%		7.8%	1 (4%)
1993	38.8%	1 (3%)	54.1%	31 (97%)	5.3%	0 (0%)
1989	35.2%	2 (6%)	59.6%	30 (94%)	1.9%	0 (0%)
1986	44.7%	11 (34%)	49.4%	21 (66%)	1.8%	0 (0%)
1982	52.2%	21 (66%)	44.6%	11 (34%)	.4%	0 (0%)
1979	52.1%	21 (66%)	44.3%	11 (34%)	1.3%	0 (0%)
1978	47.2%	15 (47%)	49.7%	17 (53%)	.9%	0 (0%)
1974	40.1%	6 (18%)	54.1%	26 (81%)	5.9%	0 (0%)
1970	42.2%	5 (16%)	57.8%	27 (84%)	0.0%	0 (0%)

This disproportional awarding of legislative seats received substantial press coverage,

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[1]Elections PEI (http://www.electionspei.ca/provincial/historical/index.php)

especially after the 1989, 1993, and 2000 elections. Of specific concern were the consequences

of having only one or two opposition members to hold the government to account. This issue

was brought to a head in May of 2002 when the sole Liberal opposition member at the time -

Ron MacKinley - was sick, and as a result, absent from the legislature for two days. What

follows is an example of the press coverage this story received:

> By being sick last week, Opposition leader Ron MacKinley inadvertently managed to give a healthy shot in the arm to the current push for electoral reform. On the two days last week that MacKinley was absent from his familiar spot in the legislature, question period was arguably reduced to little more than a farce. On the first day, the province's only non-government MLA was out of action, MacKinley's Tory counterparts spent question period lobbing the kind of soft questions to ministers one might expect a cheerful mother to pose to her young child. Day two likely didn't stir up a great deal more respect for the current electoral system that resulted in majority government of 26 members facing off against an opposition of one: MacKinley.... "It just highlights the problem," said John Crossley, a UPEI political studies professor and member of Every Vote Counts, a non-partisan citizens' group exploring possible election reform. "Mr. MacKinley works very hard to provide effective scrutiny of government but it's very hard for one person to keep it up and all you have to do is have him be sick and it starts to look like... not a very democratic system" (The Guardian May 10/02).

The 'lop-sided' legislature issue was seized upon not only by citizens advocating PR, but also

by The Island NDP whose leader at the time - Gary Robichaud - argued that, "the lack of viable

Opposition [in the provincial legislature] is a major impediment to our parliamentary system"

(Guardian May 8/02).

Activists in favour of introducing PR to the Island's electoral system and who, at this

point, were a collection of small and loosely organized groups, recognized the potential

opportunity these lop-sided legislatures presented for promoting their cause. Drawing on

McAdam's (1996) theory of cultural opportunity, we can see: (1) how the lack of effective

opposition in the Provincial Legislature called into question the Westminster parliamentary

system's functionality, hence its very legitimacy, and (2), how the complete (though

temporary) lack of any opposition in the Legislature was a "dramatization of a glaring

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contradiction between a highly salient cultural value and conventional social practices"

(McAdam 1996:25) - the cultural values being democracy and a sense of fair play. When a

party receives a third of the popular vote yet is awarded only one legislative seat, a sizeable

portion of the electorate can be left feeling disenfranchised and unrepresented.   The criticism

that the Westminster system awarded seats unfairly came to form one of the pillars of the Yes

coalition's public relations campaign in favour of the proposed MMP system (this campaign

will be explored in detail later). Phrases such as "dubious democracy", "wasted votes" and

"democratic deficit" (FAIR Vote Canada 2006) emphasized a perceived disparity between our

society's democratic ideals and how the electoral system actually functioned in PEI. Advocates

of PR were helped by the fact that other Canadian provinces were grappling with similar

electoral issues and also considering some form of PR as a solution.

The problem, however, is that the majority of Islanders were not as concerned about

these lop-sided legislatures as proponents of PR would have liked. To my knowledge, there has

been no scientific polling or market research concerning this issue. Nevertheless, a consensus

emerged amongst my interview subjects that the lop-sided legislature issue had little, if any,

traction with the Island's electorate. Even those who actively participated in the Yes campaign

agreed in hindsight that "it certainly wasn't a bread and butter issue" (Leo Broderick).

Two interview subjects particularly well suited to speak to Islanders opinions about

their electoral system are Norman Carruthers, who chaired The Prince Edward Island

Commission on Electoral Reform, and Leonard Russell, who chaired The Commission on

PEI's Electoral Future. Both conducted numerous public meetings and received feedback from

Island citizens regarding electoral reform. During his interview, Leonard Russell stated that he

"didn't think the general population was concerned [with the lop sided-legislatures]". The issue

of electoral reform, he believes, was perceived to have little impact upon people's daily lives

when compared to other more pressing concerns:

> We [the Commission]... went into some communities where people had some other pretty pressing issues that they were dealing with. When you look at fishing and farming dilemmas across this province, some of those were ongoing and folks were attempting to deal with some of those. So we found ourselves bumping up against community activities that were perhaps a little more important to people [than electoral reform] (Russell interview).

Even though he personally believed that the lop-sided legislatures were a serious problem, Norman Carruthers also conceded that the issue did not appear to generate much concern amongst most Islanders. One possible reason for this is the simple fact that no matter how thoroughly a party is defeated in a general election, or how few seats they win in the legislature, that party will inevitably get their turn to form the government in a term or two.

> You know as well as I do that Islanders take their politics very seriously... it's more like a sport. When the Liberals win big they take great delight in thumping the Tories and they know the day they get in, that the day is going to come when it is going to be the reverse - and the Tories will thump them. And it just seems to be part of our culture here on PEI (Carruthers Interview).

Another reason for this apparent lack of interest was alluded to by Yes Coalition member Leo Broderick, who argued "I do not think people get very upset at the lopsided legislature[s]. The liberals and conservatives make it clear that they own the legislature. Their policies are basically the same. We just change people" (Broderick interview). Though it may not be entirely accurate to portray the Liberal and Conservative parties as identical, observers of P.E.I. politics have noted that they are in fact quite similar, both typically hugging the political centre (Milne 1982:64). One would be hard pressed to find any striking ideological differences between the major parties. This similarity may make the lack of effective opposition seem less disconcerting to Islanders.

Premier Ghiz brings another perspective. He argues that unlike members of the media or others who follow politics very closely, the average Islander really isn't that interested in what happens in the Provincial Legislature. This means they have little concern over lop-sided legislatures:

People who are engaged in what happens in the legislature, they were concerned [with lop sided legislatures]. But at the end of the day, and I say this to my MLA's all the time - 10% of the population actually pays attention to what we do inside the legislature: people follow it from the outskirts and stuff like that, maybe 20 or 30% in total... when we [elected members] are in there making speeches we think the whole province is listening - [but] its not happening. We are not as influential or as important as anybody thinks we are (Ghiz interview).

In his frequent dealings with the electorate, Chief Electoral Officer Lowell Croken also detected little sense that Islanders were concerned with the distribution of seats after the last several elections. When interviewed, he spoke about his belief that P.E.I. lacks the conditions which had typically inspired movements to introduce PR in other jurisdictions:

Why did they want PR in other jurisdictions? Mostly because their voter turn-out has declined to the point where it's 50 or even less percent. So the PR tends to increase the voter turn-out. Well we are at 87% so it was a really hard sell for the public that more people would go out to vote (Croken interview).

Mitch Murphy, a conservative MLA at the time of the electoral reform debate, echoes this point. He agreed that, judging from the feedback he received from his constituents, the sense of political crisis required to introduce a major change like the introduction of PR did not exist. Pat Mella, a member of the No side and former Conservative MLA, argued that "unless you have real conspicuous corruption, people are not going to say that it's such a terrible system, and then when you have all these patronage benefits, then they are going to tend to stick with it" (Mella interview).

Though the issue of the lop-sided distribution of legislative seats did not engage Islanders as dramatically as proponents of PR would have liked, the issue was not without utility. In fact, as a "master frame" (McAdam 1996:25) within which other challengers of the status quo could frame their own grievances and demands, it was quite successful. Under the guise of promoting fairness and a more democratic system of representation, the Island New Democratic Party (and, to a lesser extent, the Green Party) could support the introduction of PR - a system that would give them a better chance of electing members to the Legislature -

without their arguments appearing entirely self-serving. Referring again to Table 1, we see that, despite receiving over 5% of the popular vote in several elections, the NDP has only ever had one member elected to the Legislature. Little surprise, then, that they came out so strongly in support of PR and would later emerge as strong supporters of the proposed MMP system.

As the issue of lop-sided legislatures continued to receive large amounts of media attention, the Binns government found itself under increased pressure to address it. This meant that groups who had unsuccessfully lobbied for electoral change in the past now perceived a window of opportunity within which reform might be possible. A political system that had once appeared firmly entrenched now seemed to show some indication of the vulnerability that McAdam (1996) cites as a major cause of movement activity.

In identifying the specific characteristics of PEI's political environment which may have had an impact on the structure of the movement to introduce PR, I refer to McAdam's (1996) "dimensions of political opportunity" discussed in the chapter three. His first dimension "emphasizes the importance attributed to the formal legal and institutional structure of a given polity" (McAdam 1996:27). In the case of PEI, its democratic government is, in theory, open to almost any manner of change a majority of electors can agree upon. In practice, however, it is the "informal structure of power relations" (McAdam 1996:27) that will play the largest role in helping to shape movement formation. This is especially true in a place like PEI with its largely informal political culture. As such, McAdams' second and third characteristics of political opportunity -- the stability or instability of elite alignments, and the presence or absence of elite allies -- merit the closest attention.

In the context of PEI politics, the class of 'political elite' includes MLA's and party leadership, riding presidents, poll captains, or anybody with significant influence in terms of party organization or platform. I refer, of course, exclusively to members of the Liberal or Conservative parties. The NDP, despite having once elected a member, remains marginalized

as a political party in PEI. The same holds true for the Greens who have yet to win a seat. This means that neither party's membership, nor even leaders, belongs in the category of the Island's political elite.

Rather than highlighting divisions or disagreements among the Island's political elite, the movement to introduce PR to the PEI legislature demonstrated their solidarity. Almost without exception, the Island's political elite opposed the proposed MMP system, and as we shall see later, in some cases may have even put aside partisan differences and joined forces to help defeat it. Norman Carruthers, who met and consulted with government members frequently in his capacity as chair of the Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform, not only detected very little enthusiasm for electoral reform, but also portrayed elected officials as united in defending their turf against those trying to change the status quo: "All [Island politicians] are interested in protecting their own turf, and they, THEY the politicians own the system. It's OUR system you know. They don't think that it belongs to the public...its disgraceful" [his emphasis] (Carruthers interview).

Mitch Murphy confirms that the vast majority of Conservative MLA's were opposed to the proposed MMP system: "By far, the majority of the feeling [among MLA's] was to protect the status quo, the so called 'first past the post'" (Murphy interview). Even some who tried to remain publicly neutral on the issue while the debate was ongoing (such as then opposition leader Robert Ghiz) later admitted to being privately against the proposed changes (Ghiz interview).

When it comes to recruiting elite allies, those favouring electoral reform understandably had little success. As far as I have been able to determine, Mitch Murphy was the only sitting MLA who strongly favoured the proposed MMP system. Like many MLA's, he did not take a public stance on the issue during the debate. Former Liberal MLA Jeannie Lea was clearly in favour of change, and even worked with the Yes coalition during the debate. But

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the strongest ally among the political elite was undoubtedly then Premier Pat Binns; "I personally was of the opinion that there might be a way to avoid the sort of lopsided results we were having in PEI over the past several elections... that a PR alternative might better reflect the voting intentions of people on election day" (Binns interview). He therefore "encouraged caucus and cabinet to consider it [PR] in some detail and to support a plebiscite." Despite his personal enthusiasm for electoral reform, former Premier Binns faced considerable opposition from his caucus:

> I think it would be fair to say that there was a fair bit of opposition, in my opinion at least, to the concept. (This opposition existed among) most elected people whether on the government's side or not. I didn't detect any great desire for change. It was most people's view that the existing system was serving their needs, and it really didn't require any amount of consideration. (Binns interview)

A premier who supported bringing PR to the Island's legislature was a major boon for reformers. This support helped build the reform movement by significantly increasing its chances of success. Indeed, without such strong support from the Premier, it is unlikely that the electoral reform process would even have begun, let alone have ended in a plebiscite. Mitch Murphy credits the then Premier with "forcing some people [in government] to have a good look at this [PR] because a lot of our members had just dismissed it right off the bat" (Murphy interview). Despite championing PR in caucus, the premier remained steadfastly neutral in the public debate and encouraged the same from his caucus, believing that "the electoral system is bigger than the parties; therefore the parties should not necessarily take a strong stand one way or another" (Binns interview). Had the former Premier (who was quite popular at the time) taken a public stand in favour of PR, he undoubtedly would have been a much stronger ally for the reform movement.

Throughout my interviews, some subjects spoke to the difficulties one encounters when trying to introduce major social or political change to PEI, which they consider a traditional,

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and quite conservative place. For example, Pat Mella argued that enacting major social change on PEI is always difficult, and requires a careful assessment of just how much change Islanders are willing to accept: "large social change [like the introduction of PR] is never going to take place on PEI. It's the hardest place on earth to get social change. We are pretty 'small c' conservative. So we have to figure out what people would be willing to change" (Mella interview).

Yet it may be incorrect to characterize PEI as traditional or conservative, as change has occurred in the past. A brief survey of recent Island history reveals several examples of major political and social changes. These include a major electoral reform initiative of 1993 which saw the Island move from dual to single member ridings, and controversial social changes like the building of a fixed link to New Brunswick. Mitch Murphy has this to say about change on P.E.I.:

> You often hear (that change is hard here).... I think PEI is not a whole lot different from other places in that if change is coming, and it's explained [and Islanders understand] the reasons for it... and have an opportunity to ask their questions and to understand the reasons why its necessary to change, then I think they will support it (Murphy interview).

Norman Carruthers agrees that political and social change is possible, but cautions that it can be a long and arduous process:

> It's like everything else: it takes a lot of time before these things finally sink in. And if you go back and take a look at the major changes that have taken place to the PEI electoral system since it first started off way back in 1769, the major changes that have taken place in the legislature, they have been talked and discussed and debated and thrashed out for years before anything really happened (Carruthers interview).

In summary, it appears that the cultural and political opportunities required to facilitate the growth of a social movement to introduce PR to the Island's legislature were not entirely absent, but were certainly far less than reform-minded Islanders would have liked. There was little sense of political crisis or dissatisfaction with the status quo, and the Island's political

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elite, with only a few noteworthy exceptions, appeared united in their endorsement of the status quo. Advocates of PR clearly faced an uphill battle right from the start.

However, the lop-sided election issue did represent a useful master frame with which to unite various groups and individuals dissatisfied with the Island's FPTP system, while then Premier Binns' willingness to put electoral reform on the public agenda provided a powerful mobilizing incentive for those seeking change.

In the next section I will examine how the various proponents of PR came together to form a (mostly) united social movement, and assess how effectively the movement marshaled and employed its resources.

Movement Formation

The social movement to introduce proportional representation to the P.E.I. legislature had its roots in the efforts of several key organizations: Every Vote Counts, The P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women, The Canadian Union of Public Sector Employees, P.E.I. Division, and The P.E.I. Federation of Labour.

The first Island organization specifically devoted to putting PR on the pubic agenda began forming in the mid 1990's around the work of several members of the Institute of Island Studies. One member in particular, Harry Baglole, was instrumental in the genesis of this lobby group:

> In the mid-nineties I became aware through a common friend that premier
> Binns was interested in electoral reform. I hadn't discussed it with [The
> Premier] myself but knew he had discussed it with someone else and knew he
> was very interested. So if [The Premier] was interested I thought it might be a
> good opportunity to raise it publicly (Baglole interview).

The Institute hired graduate student Andrew Cousins to prepare a discussion paper on PR in the hope that it would help inspire debate about the Island's electoral system. Because the Institute of Island Studies was not meant to be a lobby group, it was decided to form a

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separate organization to push for electoral reform; this group became known as Every Vote Counts.

> [Jeannie Lea] and I were the main founders [of Every Vote Counts]. We didn't have a large membership - 10 or 12 people and we would meet from time to time. We had a press conference announcing [our formation]; we kept in touch with the premier's office, and continued to push the idea of a plebiscite and an alternate system. So I think we largely kept it in the public mind and on the agenda until the decision was made to call a plebiscite (Baglole interview).

The key role that Every Vote Counts played in initiating the debate which eventually cumulated in the 2005 plebiscite cannot be overstated. It is unlikely that an organized social movement to introduce PR would have formed were it not for their efforts. Reflecting upon the electoral reform process, former Premier Binns observes that "it was certainly driven by [Every vote counts] who were raising the question [of introducing PR] at every opportunity" (Binns Interview). Mitch Murphy agrees that this group was not only responsible for first bringing the issue of PR to the attention of Islanders, but also for keeping the issue on the Binns government's agenda through their lobbying efforts (Murphy interview). Harry Baglole also points out that it was a member of Every Vote Counts who first suggested Norman Carruthers chair The Prince Edward Island Commission on Electoral Reform.

Though relatively small and possessing few resources, Every Vote Counts was able to disseminate its message successfully by writing letters to the editor, making presentations to government committees (such as The Special Committee on the Election Act), and other interested groups such as Island Rotary Clubs, and by keeping in touch with the Premier. It is interesting to note that despite its role in creating the conditions which facilitated the formation of an organized movement to introduce PR, the group did not itself become a member of the so called 'Yes Coalition' (although some members of Every Vote Counts did join this Coalition). Reasons for this will be discussed later.

Every Vote Counts was not the only 'early riser' in the electoral reform movement.

Both The P.E.I. Federation of Labour and CUPE P.E.I. were also early supporters of PR. Each organization passed resolutions supporting PR, promoted it in their newsletters, and contributed to the lobbying effort which eventually led to the creation of the Carruthers Commission. The P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women also had an early interest in electoral reform and actively lobbied the Binns government to this end. Their enthusiasm for PR stemmed from the belief that it could potentially lead to more women in public office: "We (the Council) came to a conclusion that proportional representation or some form of PR seems to be connected to almost all the countries that have at least 30% women in their lower house. So we sort of focused on [PR] as a best practice" (Lund interview). Even before the run up to the plebiscite, the issue of PR and its potential benefits to Island women "was a common topic of discussion among Advisory Council members and staff" (Ledwell Interview). Though separate, each of the groups discussed here had various connections to one another, mostly through cross membership. These connections contributed to movement momentum and, as we shall see, helped in the eventual formation of the Yes Coalition.

Despite their common interests, these groups did not get together to form a united and cohesive social movement until rather late in the game - perhaps too late in the game according to some members (Lund interview). It was fall 2005 before the Yes Coalition finally got organized. Coalition member Leo Cheverie reflects that "it was the women's groups and labour that actually started the ball rolling in terms of saying we actually need a yes coalition". He credits the late Donelda MacDonald (then president of CUPE P.E.I.) as instrumental in pushing for the creation of a united yes side. There seems to have been an early expectation that Every Vote Counts would take the lead in organizing the campaign in support of the proposed MMP system. This did not happen. It was only after it became apparent that Every Vote Counts would not play a leadership role that others stepped up to the plate. Kirsten Lund reflects that the invitation to lead a yes coalition was extended first to Every Vote counts, "and then when

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they didn't pick it up, that's when the e-mail started going around saying "well somebody needs to do this, can we get together to talk about how we might collaborate" (Lund interview). Leo Cheverie talked about a general feeling of surprise among advocates of PR that, even as late as early fall 2005, nobody had yet organized them into a united front: "We were all surprised, knowing that there was a plebiscite announced and that a vote was announced. I guess people were waiting to see who was going to draw a group together and that wasn't happening. There seemed to be a vacuum that needed to be filled" (Cheverie interview).

So what happened to Every Vote Counts? Reflecting on why the group did not take a more active role in the Yes Coalition, Kirsten Lund says she "got a sense it was because they had other ideas about what the model should look like" (Lund interview). Harry Baglole, the founder of Every Vote Counts, and one of my first interview subjects, had this to say when asked if his group was involved in the formation of the Yes Coalition:

> Not very much. We were there when it was set up... we supported it and certainly wrote letters supporting it, Jeannie [Lea] and I. But we didn't take part in it actively. We felt it was great and we should support it but didn't think it was going to prevail. It was just too... looking back on it; it was just going too far for islanders who weren't ready for a fully proportional legislature (Baglole interview).

He felt that the MMP model advocated by the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future represented too great a change to win the endorsement of most Islanders. This made him reluctant to actively participate in the Yes Coalition. He wasn't the only supporter of PR who questioned the proposed MMP model however. Both Jane Ledwell and Kirsten Lund suggest that there was considerable wrangling over the pros and cons of the proposed model among members of the Yes Coalition:

> It was always challenging to keep away from re-hashing the discussion of 'is this model the right model? Is this the best model?, Should we be more open to other kinds of models so we can collaborate more with people who don't like this model but who want some form of change or electoral reform (Ledwell Interview).

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Despite misgivings with the MMP model proposed by The Commission on PEI's Electoral Future, coalition members moved ahead with organizing their campaign and marshalling their resources. It is to this process that we will now turn.

Movement Resources and Organizational Structure

As outlined in chapter 3, the three most important resources are typically money, facilities, and labour. The Yes Coalition, despite its relatively late start, was able to raise a significant amount of money during the course of its campaign. Coalition leader Mark Greenan did most of the fundraising himself, netting approximately $40,000. The Coalition received its largest donations from organized labour groups such as The CUPE National Office, PEI Federation of Labour, and the British Columbia Federation of Labour. As president of CUPE P.E.I., Donelda MacDonald was instrumental in securing these sources of funding. In addition to money raised by soliciting various organizations, funds were also raised through donations by individuals. Yes Coalition member Kirsten Lund told me that she donated $100 herself to the campaign. I suspect that many people associated with the Yes Coalition also made personal donations, but because no records were kept in this regard, a detailed accounting is not possible. There is also a lack of records in terms of precisely how this money was spent. It is clear however, that most (if not the entire) Yes Coalition budget went towards advertising.

Some fault the Binns government for not making funds available to the Yes and No Coalitions. They argue that this lack of resources made it difficult to carry on a full public debate. Norman Carruthers commented:

> The yes side - what resources did they have to mount their campaign with? There was nothing provided to them by government to ensure that there was a proper debate... If [the Binns government] were really serious about bringing in change and they wanted a really serious debate, then the government should have set up a proper system whereby finances were available to both sides of the debate (Carruthers interview).

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Would the Yes Coalition's campaign have been more effective had they possessed more funds? This is a difficult question to answer. More funds certainly would have allowed for more advertising, but would this have swayed many more voters? The Yes Coalition's message and advertising strategy will be examined in more detail later. Suffice to say here that Mark Greenan believes that more money, and the greater levels of advertising it would have allowed, would probably not have made a large difference in the plebiscite's outcome: "Oh certainly [we had enough money]. We couldn't have asked for much more, I don't know what more we could have done. It would have just gone into advertising if we had more money... [and] I don't think it would have made any difference" (Greenan interview).

A second important resource is facilities. Again, it appears the Yes Coalition was not lacking in this regard. CUPE P.E.I. donated office space to the Coalition and it appears to have been sufficient for their needs. In addition, many Coalition members had access to resources such as photocopiers, computers, and printers which they could use in support of the Coalition.

The final and perhaps most important social movement resource is labour. Labour here is defined quite broadly to include not just the number of members, but the skills, social networks, and experience each member brings to the organization. Deciding exactly who constitutes a movement member of this social movement is not a simple matter. On the one hand, there was a core group of people who attended the Yes Coalition meetings and played active roles in organizing and executing the campaign. Other groups existed who may not have played as active a role in the campaign, but who still supported the movement through donations or public comments in support of the cause. Finally, there were those who worked only sporadically or part-time with the movement. For this research, I will consider any individual or organization that worked in support of the MMP system under the co-ordination of the Yes Coalition to be a movement member.

It has proven difficult to determine the exact number of individuals involved in the Yes

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campaign. Yes Coalition member Leo Broderick estimated total coalition membership to be no more than 40-50 people with a core group of approximately a dozen organizers. Organizations involved in the Yes Coalition included: The P.E.I. Federation of Labour, CUPE P.E.I., The P.E.I. Advisory Council on the Status of Women, The P.E.I. NDP, The P.E.I. Green Party, The Council of Canadians, and F.A.I.R. Vote Canada.

Leo Broderick notes that "in terms of their backgrounds, a lot of [the movement's core members] had social activist and community activist" experience, but that "there was not a lot of experience with this type of campaign amongst the Yes Side. Some had some political campaign experience, but they were few" (Broderick interview). Many or even most of the members of the Yes Coalition were already known to each other because of their social activist backgrounds: "there were not a lot of new people involved. Most of the members of the Yes coalition were community activists who already knew each other. There was little new blood" (Broderick interview). Kirsten Lund agrees that "there weren't very many unfamiliar faces around the table" at the Yes Coalition meetings (Lund interview). This familiarity contributed to the quick establishment of a working rapport among members. One person who was relatively new to this group however, and who was to become the Yes Coalition's leader, was Mark Greenan. He was chosen for this position of leadership because of his academic background in electoral systems as a graduate student in political science, and also because as a student, he was able to take the time off to devote himself to the campaign full-time.

There was no formal recruitment strategy for the Yes Coalition; Mark Greenan comments that "it was far too hop dash" for that. Recruitment took place mainly through word of mouth. Some efforts were made to broaden the movement membership and attract the interest of the Island's community leaders and political elite. Mark Greenan comments that "There was a little bit of effort to try and work on some [community and political leaders]. My father who had been a Liberal candidate in the previous election and is currently an MLA, tried

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to help me with getting people in our side. (But) generally people were against it" (Greenan interview). Kirsten Lund had similar observations:

> There was significant solicitation [by the Yes Coalition] of individuals who would be considered community leaders. I think we may have done more and maybe sooner if we had to do it again. But a lot of those community leaders were attached to [one of the two major political] parties, that's one of the reasons that they are community leaders. The protection of party mechanisms was intense (Lund Interview).

In his interview, Premier Ghiz expressed little surprise that community and political leaders expressed so little interest in getting directly involved in the debate, citing it as too divisive an issue (Ghiz interview).

Crucial to a movement's success or failure is its ability to recruit individuals and organizations from outside the collective which the social movement represents (McCarthy and Zald 1977:1216). Despite correctly perceiving the need to recruit members from outside the activist community, the Yes Coalition had little success in this regard: "We had lots of problems getting volunteers" notes Leo Broderick. One possible reason for this could be the perception that the movement had only a small chance of achieving its goals. McAdam (1984:40) emphasizes the role that the appraisal of a movement's prospects for success plays in movement formation. In this case, it is likely that most Yes Coalition members, and perhaps the general public at large, felt that the prospects for the introduction of PR to the Island's legislature were quite slim: "personally, I expected (the Yes Coalition) to lose. I expected [it] to be slaughtered" (Ledwell interview). This pessimism is echoed not only by other coalition members, but also by Norman Carruthers, who came to the conclusion very early in the process that "there was absolutely no hope this would go anywhere" (Carruthers interview). Faced with the likely prospect of failure, potential recruits would have little incentive to participate in the movement.

Harry Baglole alludes to another possible reason why the Yes Coalition didn't attract

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more recruits. He points out that the leaders of the coalition, in their well known roles as community activists, composed what some people on PEI unflatteringly refer to as the 'protest crowd'(Baglole interview). The fact that so many Coalition members had taken public stances on controversial (and often polarizing) social and political issues in the past may have made the movement unattractive to recruits who didn't share similar views. Coalition leaders and organizers were likely (and probably accurately) perceived as left-leaning politically, which may again have discouraged those with different political views from joining. Kirsten Lund acknowledges this: "we were all very much left wing. It would have scared people away" (Lund interview). While it would have been nice to have different groups and individuals involved in the Yes Coalition, such as members of the business community, she doubts many would have been prepared to work with Yes Coalition members: "having more business elite would have made [the movement more successful]. The problem is.... this business elite... don't want to work with some of the more polarizing individuals [on the Yes Coalition]" (Lund interview). Mark Greenan also admitted that hesitation over the perceived left wing political leanings of the Yes Coalition "was certainly something that was expressed to me." It is difficult to gauge exactly how much this perception hampered recruitment efforts. More significant however, is how this perception may have impacted the Coalition's ability to communicate its message during the campaign. This will be explored in greater detail later.

Another challenge facing the Yes Coalition was its weak ties to rural PEI. Coalition members were primarily urban citizens with few established networks outside of urban areas. The grassroots nature of Island politics makes informal social and community networks among the most important mechanisms of political communication. Looking back at the campaign, Mark Greenan reflects that "ultimately, my impression of why we didn't win was we just didn't have the sort of social network that the Liberal Party of PEI or the PC Party of PEI do." Nor did they have the grassroots network that the No Coalition - which was composed of people with

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Conservative and Liberal ties - did. Lacking this crucial resource, the Yes Coalition had to rely upon more conventional mass marketing strategies to communicate their message. The urban composition of the Yes Coalition may have also affected their credibility with rural Islanders, who often feel shortchanged and misunderstood by urban residents and politicians. MLA Robert Henderson, a member of the No Side, comments: "If I look at western PEI which is the area I represent, there is a deep seated attitude that everything is for Charlottetown. There is a lack of understanding about the challenges faced in more remote areas" (Henderson interview). Looking back at the campaign, it is no surprise that the Yes Coalition had its greatest success in urban areas. Leo Broderick notes that these were the areas where the Yes Coalition were able recruit enough volunteers to conduct the sort of door-to-door, face-to-face campaigning most effective in Island politics.

In summary, the Yes Coalition was able to marshal a considerable amount of cash to conduct their campaign. They had a membership of experienced community activists with an established rapport, and they also managed to attract a strong leader. However, the coalition was unable to recruit many members from outside the activist community and lacked rural networks. The movement was also hampered by a perception that they were unlikely to succeed in their goals, and may have been perceived as too left-leaning politically for a 'small c' conservative place like Prince Edward Island. Finally, mobilizing so late in the game gave the coalition little time to expand their resource base and organize their campaign.

The No Coalition

Mayer and Zald (1987) argue that social movements with any visibility or impact typically create the conditions for the mobilization of a counter movement. They also argue that while social movements are often launched by the marginalized or those excluded from established power structures, counter movements often benefit from links to and support from established interests and organizations. As we shall see, this was certainly the case with the No

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Coalition.

The No Coalition was far more informal and haphazard than the Yes Coalition. Pat

Mella, the group's primary spokesperson, talks about its formation:

> I wrote a letter to the paper, one of those editorial pieces [criticizing the
> proposed MMP system), and as soon as it was published my phone started to
> ring... [Soon] different people, provincial Liberals, people of different
> affiliation, and people from my own party came together. And they said 'where
> should we meet', and I said well you can meet in my living room if you want. So
> we met. This occurred about half way through the public education campaign,
> they were still holding the public consultation meetings across the province.
> When we met, we decided that we would enunciate the principles that we felt
> were not good for PEI in the proposal. Then we designated people [from our
> group] to go to the public meetings and to give our side, or to at least ask
> questions of the committee so that the public would hear how this [new system]
> was going to work (Mella interview).

This group had no real leader, and only a small amount of cash (less than $7000). They had no

formal fund-raising campaign, and what they did raise came entirely from private individuals

sympathetic to their cause. Allan MacIssac explains that No Side members would attend

meetings where they would meet others who opposed the proposed changes; "so when people

made their bias known, their opinions known, we asked them "hey, do you want to chuck a few

dollars into the pot" (MacIssac interview). This counter movement also formed quite late in the

debate, leaving it little time to get organized.

Unlike the Yes Coalition, the No side had no office space. In fact, Pat Mella reports that

a good portion of their work was done in her living room using her own fax machine and

computer (Mella interview). While the group's membership was small compared to the Yes

Coalition (15 members at most reports Pat Mella), these members brought considerable

resources to their cause. For example, Pat Mella, the most public face of the No Side, was a

former leader of the P.E.I. Progressive Conservative party and sat as an MLA from 1989 to

2000. In her career as a successful politician, she would have acquired useful leadership and

organizational skills, not to mention expertise in public relations, campaign strategy and

debating. Finally, having once sat in the provincial legislature as the sole member of the opposition, Pat Mella was uniquely qualified to talk about the problem of lop sided legislatures and the P.E.I. electoral system in general.

Other members of the No Side also brought similar resources to the group. Robert Henderson, a self-described "political animal", had longstanding ties to the provincial Liberal Party. In fact, his father was a Liberal MLA under the former government of Allan Campbell. Allan MacIssac was another member of the No Side, who was and still is active in the provincial Liberal Party. Both figures were also well known and respected members of their local communities. This (along with their political connections and savvy) is reflected in the fact that both were subsequently elected as Liberal MLA's in the 2007 provincial election. The No Side also included other less prominent but perhaps equally well politically connected citizens (Ivan Macarthur for example).

Despite its ties to the mainstream political parties, it appears that the No Side received little if any direct support from either the Binns government or the Liberal or Conservative party organizations, nor did they coordinate their campaign with the sitting MLA's who opposed PR. Pat Mella explains that the No Side was quite aware that contact with either of the major political parties or government could hurt their organization's credibility. As a matter of fact, she claims that the Binns government, in its efforts to appear neutral in the debate, "didn't want us to be anywhere near them" (Mella interview). Despite this, it is likely that the No Coalition would have had informal contacts with MLA's and party officials through the course of the campaign. Indeed, given the Island's small size, it is unlikely that such contact could have been avoided.

At first glance, the Yes Coalition appears to have had many more resources than the No Coalition. The Yes Coalition came together earlier, had more members, more money, superior facilities, and strong ties with established and influential organizations such as CUPE and The

Advisory Council on the Status of Women. This is contrasted with the No Coalition which came together late, had few members and little money. Yet the No Coalition did have several important resources the Yes Coalition lacked. These resources included a very high profile spokesperson in Pat Mella, strong ties to the Liberal and Conservative parties, and established networks in much of rural PEI. The relative strengths and weaknesses of both sides were demonstrated through the course of the campaign, to which we will now turn.

Framing and Communicating the Message

Framing refers to the way in which political players such as news media, politicians, interest groups, and other social actors define the political space and erect the boundaries within which a public policy issue will be considered. To have any chance of success, the Yes Coalition's messages had to be framed and communicated in a manner that would convince Islanders that the FPTP system was in need of change - a daunting task considering the apparent absence of popular discontent with the electoral status quo in PEI. However, objective conditions are always open to new subjective reinterpretations (Snow et. al. 1986), and social arrangements that once may have been considered acceptable can often be transformed into sources of discontent by a social movement. Despite the absence of any widespread dissatisfaction with the Island's electoral system in the period leading up to the debate, it was at least theoretically possible for the Yes Coalition, with a convincing campaign, to create the perception that electoral change was a necessary and achievable goal.

The Yes Coalition was aided in their campaign by extensive local media coverage. In 2005, local CBC radio and television had a combined total of nearly 90 segments devoted to the electoral reform issue, including several interviews with Yes Coalition members. In addition to local coverage, the story was also covered by CBC's national news programs and was the subject of several articles on The CBC News website. The Guardian - the Island's most

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popular newspaper - also covered the issue of electoral reform quite extensively. In 2005, it published over 80 news stories, devoted approximately 40 editorials, and printed 60 letters to the editor on electoral reform. It is worth noting that the Yes Coalition received significantly more coverage than the No Coalition - with 26 articles devoted to Yes Coalition activities compared to only 2 devoted to the No Side.

However, the Yes Coalition was unable to translate this intense media coverage into popular support for the proposed MMP system. A possible reason for this may be the manner in which they framed their message. Drawing upon Yes Coalition literature (a mail out flyer), media statements by coalition members and interviews conducted for this thesis, several frames can be identified that summarize the Coalition's diagnosis of FPTP's perceived shortcomings:

1. Lack of fairness: The FPTP system does not treat all votes equally "only votes for leading candidates count - so election results are distorted" (Yes Flyer).

2. Lack of representation: Seats are awarded disproportionally (the so called 'lob-sided' legislature problem). This means that voters supporting the opposition are not adequately represented in the legislature.

3. Lack of diversity in the legislature. There is a lack of diversity in terms of parties - only the two major parties are typically represented in the legislature. Also, "the legislature does not reflect the diversity of the Island population" (Yes Coalition Flyer).

These frames failed to resonate with most potential voters. Kirsten Lund points out that it was very difficult to frame the FPTP system's shortcomings in a manner that would engage the average Islander. She argues that people need to easily understand how the electoral system actually affects their everyday lives if they are to become engaged in the issue of reform, giving the redrawing of the electoral boundary map as an example (Lund Interview). The Yes Coalition appears to have had difficulty framing their campaign in a way which resonated with Islanders beliefs and everyday interests. Leo Broderick notes that "electoral reform probably appeals to the more academic policy hound kind of people. It's not something that generally

people are talking about" (Broderick Interview).

By using broad, general, or abstract diagnostic frames, the Yes Coalition did little to connect what they saw as the FPTP system's failures to the average Islander's daily life. This likely made it difficult to create broad discontent and generate the perception that change was needed. Perhaps if the FPTP system had been framed as a factor contributing to specific social or economic problems, the Yes Coalition would have been more successful.

One could also question how well thought out some of the Yes Coalition's arguments were. For example, in their flyer, the Yes Coalition presents a chart designed to point out the shortcomings of FPTP. The problem, however, is that this same chart also concedes that despite its flaws, the FPTP system does deliver "effective government", "accountable government" and "diversity of ideas" (Yes Coalition flyer page 2). This would seem to undermine some of the Yes Coalition's most important arguments.

When frames fail to resonate with their intended audience, a social movement can extend and transform these frames to broaden movement appeal. Some attempts were made by the Yes Coalition to modify their frames in this regard. For example, an attempt to appeal to Islanders' collective ego was made by presenting the plebiscite as a chance to lead the country and make history: "Islanders can lead the way. The Birthplace of Confederation can become the Birthplace of Canada's new 21st Century Democracy!". It is difficult to determine if this pitch had any effect. The Yes Coalition did not have the resources to conduct scientific market research to assess the effectiveness of their frames. Nor did the short duration of the plebiscite campaign allow them the opportunity to experiment with different messages. Furthermore, because the coalition did not have extensive networks in the more rural parts of P.E.I., they lacked input and feedback from this part of the electorate in terms of how to frame their messages to extend their appeal.

Prognostic frames identify solutions to the problems outlined in the social movement's

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diagnostic frames. In this case, the Yes Coalition argued that problems with the Island electoral

system would best be addressed by making it more democratic. Introducing PR to the Island's

electoral system was framed as the most effective way to achieve this. The following excerpt

from the Yes Coalition's mail out summarizes their arguments:

> **Voters would have more choice. MMP means voters get two ballots.** When
> voting for a district MLA, votes chose the best local candidate from any party.
> When voting for the party list, voters choose which party they would like to see
> form government. More choice means better democracy.
> **Election results would be fair rather than distorted.** Party list candidates will
> win seats in the legislature to ensure that every party has the right number of seats -
> neither more nor less than voters want them to receive. A legislature that reflects
> the way we vote means better democracy.
> **The government will always face a real opposition.** Government would no
> longer face a toothless opposition of one or two people. A real opposition means
> better democracy.
> **The legislature would better reflect the Island population.** Parties will learn
> that candidate lists with good balances of candidates - in terms of gender, ethnicity
> and rural/urban candidates - attract more votes. More diversity in the legislature
> means better democracy.

The actual proposed MMP system, however, was formulated not by the Yes Coalition but by

the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future. The Yes Coalition, despite some misgivings with

the proposal, had little choice but to throw their weight behind it as their best and only shot at

introducing PR.

In promoting the proposed MMP system, the Yes Coalition faced two hurdles: The

first was countering the claim that while the current FPTP system was problematic, the

proposed MMP was not an effective means of remedying it. This was the most frequent, and

likely one of the most effective, arguments employed by those opposing the MMP system (this

is discussed in more detail below). The second and probably more serious hurdle was

addressing the confusion surrounding exactly how the proposed system would work.

The responsibility of educating Islanders about how the proposed MMP system was

to work fell to the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future. Despite the commission's efforts,

confusion and uncertainty over MMP was rampant -- not only among the voters -- but even among MLA's and party officials. This left the Yes Coalition in the difficult position of advocating for a system that many people simply did not understand.

During the course of its mandate, the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future hired Baker Consulting to conduct polling to assess Islanders interest in electoral reform and their understanding of the proposed MMP system. Eligible Island voters were surveyed to assess their:

1. Awareness that an alternative way of electing provincial politicians has been proposed;
2. Awareness that a referendum will be held on whether or not the new system should be adopted;
3. Understanding of what the alternative system is;
4. Interest in the electoral reform process;
5. Intent to vote in November. (Baker 2007:5)

These measures were taken in September 2005 as the Commission began its education campaign, and again in October as the campaign concluded. The findings illustrate the level of confusion surrounding the proposed system.

In brief, the research found that in September, almost 90% of Islanders knew "nothing at all" or "not very much" about the proposed MMP system. It would appear that the educational efforts on the part of the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future helped to eliminate some of this confusion, but not by a great deal. When polled again in October, the number of Islanders who knew "nothing at all" or "Not very much" about the proposed MMP system remained significant at over 60% -- a marked improvement, but still an alarmingly high number. Researchers also attempted to test the actual knowledge of survey participants by having them describe the proposed MMP system. They found that of those who professed to know "not very much", a "fair amount", or a "great deal" about the proposed system, 58% did not adequately understand the proposed system. (Baker 2005:7). Interestingly, polling done in

October also found that even among those who professed to know a fair amount about the system, almost 40% in fact did not. (Baker 2005:7).

When interviewed, members of both the Yes and No Coalitions agreed that a great deal of confusion surrounded the proposed system. Robert Henderson observed that "people were really uninformed about [the MMP system]. I did two or three presentations to community groups that wanted more background. I was obviously biased against PR but tried to make sure they had all the facts" (Henderson interview). No Coalition spokesperson Pat Mella agrees: "The majority of people didn't have clue what this was about. I think it was very poorly handled in terms of the education component" (Mella interview). When asked if people understood exactly what reforms were being proposed, Yes Coalition Mark Greenan replied "of course not" (Greenan interview).

Not only did few Island voters understand the proposed reforms, but there is also evidence of confusion among politicians and those involved in party politics. Current Premier Robert Ghiz relates two stories which illustrate this point:

> I'll tell this one story about an MLA: And this is an MLA that [the Conservative government] used as their spokesperson in an event that we were at... I remember this person came up to me and said "How dare this committee propose this [MMP] model". And I said "well this is what you voted on in the legislature", and he said "No its not". And I said "You voted on the Carruthers proposal in the legislature", he goes "Yes we did", I go "This is what Carruthers proposed". He goes "No its not". And I said "Mr. Carruthers is this what you proposed? (And he answered) yes."

> I remember I was at the Superstore one day, I am talking to a gentleman who is a Conservative, but he was poll captain, somebody who is involved in the political process - he has no idea how the new system will work. And this was a week before the vote. So it was too confusing a system (Ghiz interview).

The confusion surrounding the proposed system is illustrated by an exchange that occurred between Leonard Russell and then Conservative MLA and government house leader Jim Bagnall at the Montague meeting of the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future. In the

exchange, Jim Bagnall seemed confused about how seats are awarded under the list system and claimed that the system being proposed was difficult to understand. He argued that he doesn't personally support the MMP system because it won't be a "true reflection of the vote", and went on to state: "The system that you're bringing in, you've made it so difficult and so hard, that people are going to vote against it for that reason". Mr. Bagnall then suggested using a different system (the plurality system) to award legislative seats. What makes this exchange telling is the fact that Jim Bagnall was on the government committee that created the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future and gave it its mandate - one which included developing the MMP model which he now appeared not to understand and even to argue against.

When asked about the apparent confusion among elected officials regarding the MMP system, former Premier Pat Binns remarked:

> I think the MLA's generally understood [the proposed MMP system], but I found that it was very late in the game before very many people understood the model and what results it would bring. I think that late understanding by MLA's and the general public was of some concern. I think that as I recall, the model that was put forward at the end of the day was not understood by most people till fairly late in the process. And when they did understand the model, there was a definite (in my view) dampening of enthusiasm (Binns interview).

Addressing the general confusion surrounding the system, Mitch Murphy offered this opinion:

> I will say this, people can become informed about things that they want to become informed about if they are interested and they think there is some merit in them. But if you have made your mind up fairly early in the process that there is not merit in something then usually people do not become informed (Murphy interview).

People who opposed the system right from the start may have had little incentive to inform themselves about how it would work - this applies to MLA's as well as the public at large.

The Yes Coalition planned its campaign around arguing for the proposed system, not

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explaining how it works. In their flyer, as well as in statements to the press, they offer little by way of explanation regarding the mechanics of the MMP system. This probably worked to the Yes Coalition's disadvantage. Several Coalition members noted that Islanders were much more receptive to the proposed MMP system when it was explained to them: "Once you had a chance to communicate and talk (to Islanders) on the doorsteps, and dispel the MMP myths, people were receptive" (Broderick interview). If confusion worked to the detriment of the Yes Coalition's efforts, it certainly did not hurt the No Coalition campaign, to which we will now turn.

The No Message

The No Coalition agreed that PEI's electoral system was in need of change, but disagreed that the proposed MMP system was an appropriate remedy. As they say in their flyer: "We recognize the need for electoral reform to reflect a better balanced legislative assembly. However, we believe the present proposal presents more problems than it solves." (No Flyer). The No Coalition did not contest values espoused by the Yes Coalition such as democracy or fairness; rather, they argued that the proposed MMP does not live up to them. Their main criticism of the proposed MMP system revolved around how party lists are selected and how seats are awarded. Here are some examples from their "Top Ten Reasons to Vote No to MMP Proposal" flyer:

1) Every vote counts for less because the party with the highest district seat count and highest popular vote is unlikely to be rewarded with seats from the "list".
2) Political parties are given much more power - while voters lose the power to choose.
3) 37% of MLAs would be appointed to the legislature with direct vote of the people.
4) 17 Larger districts will result in loss of "community interest" and "geographical representation" (No Flyer).

In exploiting these arguments, the No Coalition was able to effectively frame the MMP system as elitist, giving party operatives and leaders, rather than Island voters, ultimate say in who gets elected. They argued that MLA's elected through the list system would not only be less

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accountable to voters, but would also have weak community ties in general.

The Yes Coalition was highly critical of the manner in which the No Coalition framed its arguments, particularly its insistence that the so called "party elite" cannot be trusted to make up fair party lists. One Yes Coalition member, Leo Cheverie, saw the irony in this argument, pointing out that the No Coalition was in fact made up of party elite; the same group whom they were saying could not be trusted (Cheverie interview). True or not, the argument that party elites or insiders would create unfair or unrepresentative party lists was quite effective; Kirsten Lund notes that of all the No Coalitions arguments, this one in particular became one of the hardest messages to counter (Lund interview).

Yes Coalition members also accused the No Coalition of "muddying the waters" (Leo Broderick interview) and purposefully making the proposed system appear much more difficult to understand than it actually was. Leo Broderick relates that "At one of the first meetings Pat Mella said she couldn't do the math [in the d'Hondt formula], it was too difficult. And she was a former finance minister - I find that really astounding" (Broderick interview). He notes that rather than extolling the virtues of the proposed system, Yes Coalition members spent more time combating the "negative campaign" run by the No Coalition.

Did opponents of the proposed MMP system deliberately attempt to confuse people? Norman Carruthers thinks so:

> I think that some of the people who would get up and speak at those public meetings - there's one or two in particular, I am not sure how thoroughly they understood the whole thing they were talking about. But it wasn't hard to get the impression that they were making statements just to confuse the public, rather than clarify, in the hopes that they would be so damn confused that they wouldn't know what was going on and therefore vote against it. I still firmly believe that (Carruthers interview).

Members of the No Coalition deny that they promoted confusion to aid their cause, but agree that confusion over the proposed system played a large role in its ultimate defeat:

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> I don't think [The Commission on P.E.I.'s Electoral Future] fully explained
> how the lists will work. They may have thought they did but people didn't fully
> understand it. It could have been much better explained. I talked to lots of
> people who didn't understand the system... I think that's the reason they perhaps
> didn't show up [to vote] (Allan McIssac interview).

The No Coalition's campaign was not limited to criticism of the proposed MMP

system. The group also argued for alternative electoral systems which they claimed could

satisfy the need for proportional representation while avoiding the pitfalls of MMP. No

Coalition member Gordon Cobb authored a series of opinion pieces in the Guardian newspaper

advocating for the introduction of a single transferable vote system (July 2, July 26, Aug 30)

claiming it would "enable proportional representation without sacrificing direct

representation". (July 26). This argument received an endorsement from an unlikely source -

Every Vote Counts founder Harry Baglole, who publicly questioned the merits of the proposed

MMP system. Yes Coalition member Kirsten Lund expressed some frustration at this, calling

his actions "not very helpful". To have Harry Baglole, one of the earliest and most high

profile proponents of PR, suggesting that the proposed MMP system may not be the best

solution to the Island's electoral maladies must have been a blow to the Yes Coalition. It may

have lent credibility to the No Coalition's argument that the proposed MMP system was not the

most effective means to introduce PR to the Island's Legislature.

The resonance a message has with its intended audience is not simply a function of how

well it is framed or argued, but also a reflection of the credibility of the individual or group

delivering it. With the political experience of its members and their connections to the major

political parties, No Coalition members may have seemed better qualified than Yes Coalition

members to talk about the inner workings of the Island's electoral system, and also better able

to predict the likely effects that the proposed changes would have. To return to the backgrounds

of each Coalition's respective memberships, it is likely that Yes Coalition members' previous

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work on other issues and organizations may have been a liability for the Yes Coalition. Harry

Baglole observed that people might have been getting tired of hearing from the so-called

protest crowd:

> Strong opinions are healthy for democracy. I think that sometimes, if the same
> people have strong opinions on everything there is a little bit of fatigue. I did
> hear from my constituents - people would say "Well you know so and so is
> supporting this and I pretty much disagree with everything else that they have
> done so this is probably not a good thing". Sometimes I think that association
> may be detrimental (Baglole interview).

This point can be illustrated by comparing the backgrounds of Sharon Labchuck and Leo

Broderick, both vocal public supporters of the MMP system, and Allan McIssac, a member of

the No Coalition. Yes Coalition leader Mark Greenan pointed out that Sharon Labchuck "has

been a very outspoken activist on agricultural issues related to pesticides and industrial

agriculture" and that as a result, "she is not the most popular person in rural PEI" (Greenan

interview). Leo Broderick has a similar background and has written letters to the editor

advocating pesticide bans on P.E.I. (Guardian Jun1/00 & Dec9/02). This can be contrasted with

Allan McIssac, who is publicly known as former Chair of the Milk Marketing Board of PEI,

and who has represented Atlantic Canada on the National Holstein Board. Which spokesperson

would likely have had more credibility with rural Islanders?

Though the No Coalition lacked the financial resources of the Yes Coalition, they did

have a significant grass-roots network through which to disseminate their message. This would

have been especially useful in rural areas of P.E.I. Allan McIssac remarked that talking to

people in their communities "at coffee shops or whatever" was a major part of their campaign

(McIssac interview).

In assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the Yes and No campaigns, two

keys points merit emphasis: First, the Yes Coalition faced a considerably more daunting task

than the No Coalition in framing and disseminating their message. Convincing a reluctant

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population that change was necessary is difficult enough, but this was compounded by the fact that relatively few Islanders understood the proposed MMP system. This ignorance, if not fostered by the No Coalition (as has been suggested by some Yes Coalition members), was certainly effectively exploited in the No Coalition's campaign. Second, the Yes side lacked the grassroots communication network, and possibly the credibility of the No Coalition - especially in rural areas of PEI. This meant that even well-framed messages may not have been enough to sway Island voters.

Given the obstacles faced by the Yes Coalition, it seems likely that a larger, more sophisticated campaign (one beyond the means of a relatively small informal group like the Yes Coalition) would have been necessary in order to convince Islanders to endorse the proposed MMP system. However, a case could be made that even a much larger campaign would still have failed. It has been suggested that the Binns government, in its opposition to the MMP system, not only structured the plebiscite rules such that failure was inevitable, but also actively engaged in a "behind the scenes" campaign against reform. It is to these charges that we will now turn.

Government Opposition to Reform

Members of the Provincial Legislature, party leaders and officials, poll captains, and many, if not most, of the Conservative and Liberal rank and file did not support the proposed MMP system. Supporters of electoral reform charge that PEI's political elite opposed PR because it threatened to break the Liberal and Conservative parties' traditional monopoly over political power. Leonard Russell agrees with this thesis, arguing that Island politicians recognized PR as a threat, one that could radically alter the political landscape.

> I think sitting MLA's and retired MLA's and close party workers, when they saw how the formula applied - they realized that good old days might not re-appear. I think people close to the inside of government and government parties began to realize that it would be a new day as far as how MLA's would

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be elected and how the legislature would operate in the future (Russell interview).

A frequent claim made by opponents of MMP, including MLA's and Liberal and Conservative party elite, was that they weren't against change. They just didn't like the system being proposed. There is reason to doubt this claim however. Former Conservative MLA Mitch Murphy revealed that most Conservative MLA's opposed *any* change to how MLA's are elected:

> There was lots of debate in caucus [about the proposed MMP system], some heated. I'll be frank with you, some people were absolutely diametrically opposed to any change whatsoever taking place...By far, the majority of the feeling was to protect the status quo, the so called "first past the post" system (Murphy interview).

Former Premier Pat Binns expressed a similar assessment:

> I think it would be fair to say that there was a fair bit of opposition, in my opinion at least, to the concept. [This opposition to reform existed among] most elected people whether on the government's side or not. I didn't detect any great desire for change. It was most people's view that the existing system was serving their needs (Binns Interview).

Mitch Murphy argues that this opposition was not only directed at the proposed MMP system, but was in fact a broader opposition to any change at all. There was no perception among elected members that the current FPTP system was problematic or in need of major reform (Murphy interview).

Why were government members opposed to PR? Was it a desire to preserve their monopoly over legislative power? Mitch Murphy argues that it was in fact the list system that caused MLA's concern. This concern stemmed not from a belief that party lists would put too much power in the hands of party elite, or because it would lessen representation, as was often claimed by No supporters. Rather, this resistance was rooted in the fear that MMP would create two classes of MLA's:

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I think that some of the internal discontent within the party was from the MLA's
who were saying "you expect me to go out and knock on doors and do
everything that is required to be done during an election campaign, and yet
some fella who has his name on the list is not going to have to do that. And here
I am I'm doing all the work and he is going to have the same salary, the same
benefits, the same things as I am going to do, and who is he going to be
accountable to? He doesn't have to go home in the evening and answer to his
constituents" (Murphy interview).

Their lack of enthusiasm for PR then, comes not from a fear that a change in electoral rules may

make it harder for any particular MLA to stay in power, but because of a perception that PR

would lead to an unfair distribution of work among MLA's. Mitch Murphy also claims that

MLA's were motivated to oppose PR for less selfish reasons as well.

People felt that the party or the individual that garnered the most votes in an
election should get the right to represent their constituents. People were afraid
of so called special interest groups - that a group with a very narrow focus or a
one or two issue political party - because the way that votes would be dispersed
on what was proposed (MMP) - they would gain seats and voice in the
legislature where they never had the overall interests of the province at heart,
they would just be focusing on an issue or two (Murphy interview).

He also points out that a significant amount of resistance to change was simply the result of

MLA's not fully understanding what was being proposed: "I think there was a lack of

knowledge and education about what proportional representation was. And I think we have

seen in various plebiscites across the country that it is not the easiest of subjects to get your

head around" (Murphy interview).

Stewart et al. (2001:319) argue that every organization has a series of explicit or

implicit purposes that include (among others) self-preservation and perpetuation. One can

speculate that resistance to the proposed MMP system was also motivated, at least in part, by

an unspoken desire on the part of both major political parties to preserve the current system and

the benefits it brought them, but it is difficult to find concrete evidence of this. No Coalition

member and former leader of the provincial Conservatives Pat Mella did note that neither

Conservatives nor Liberals had much incentive to reform a political system which they were

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accustomed to and which inevitably returned each party to power: "People liked where they were. Conservatives liked where they were and Liberals were hoping to get where the Conservatives were so there wasn't a big motivation [for change]" (Mella interview). Even current Premier Robert Ghiz agreed that the proposed MMP system was a threat to the traditional Liberal and Conservative monopoly of political power: "Under the model that was proposed, it absolutely [would have made it more difficult for the mainstream parties to gain power]. You would very rarely have majority government and then by one or two seat margins" (Ghiz interview).

Government as Reform Filter

Whatever the motivation, government opposition to PR may have been the most important single factor in the defeat of the proposed MMP system. As discussed in Chapter 3, there are several tactics typically employed by governments to counter social movements: evasion, counter persuasion, coercive persuasion and adjustment. We will now examine how each of these tactics was or was not employed by Conservative government members and what if any effect they had on the plebiscite outcome.

Evasion is the most common, and one of the most effective means of countering a social movement's demands. When possible, governments will simply ignore the demands of social movements. In this case, the issue of PR was brought to the attention of government in the early 1990's. With so little public interest in the issue, the government of the time had little trouble keeping PR off the agenda. However, a series of lop-sided legislatures, as well as the lobbying efforts of several activists, made the strategy of evasion less effective, especially once the media became interested in the issue. As it became more difficult to ignore electoral reform, Conservative government members began using other tactics to resist it, such as mounting a discreet counter-campaign.

All of my interview participants agreed that at least some MLA's actively worked to

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undermine support for change and played some part in influencing Islanders to reject MMP. Says Kirsten Lund "There was an active but quiet campaign for the no side that wasn't in the media but it was definitely happening" (Interview). Exactly how much 'quiet campaigning' went on and how much effect it actually had was a point of contention among my interview subjects. Then Premier Pat Binns notes that he encouraged MLA's not to participate in the debate "I didn't impose any hard and fast parameters on MLA's but my suggestions were along the line that the party shouldn't take a position" (Binns interview). He doesn't believe there was "a lot of campaigning one way or another... [but is] sure that a number [of MLA's] expressed their own opinions in their constituencies. There was little outside of that as I recall". Former MLA Mitch Murphy agrees that there was no formal campaign conducted by MLA's, but that they still would have had ample opportunity to communicate their opinions to constituents:

> I don't think MLA's were actively out knocking on doors saying [MMP] is a bad thing, however, remember where we are... We are on PEI, a very small place. Elected members would know a good percentage of the people that they are representing and you are always out in the community and people know who you are. So if you are at the store or at the rink, if you are coming from church or whatever, you're out there and the questions are being asked (Murphy Interview).

It is difficult to get a firm grasp on just how active and coordinated Liberal and Conservative MLA's who opposed MMP actually were. Several MLA's attended the meetings held by the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future and voiced opposition to reform. Commission Chair Leonard Russell expressed suspicions that behind the scenes campaigning was taking place across the Island while his commission was holding its series of public meetings. "I am not sure it's true that the political parties didn't get involved. I think as the thing developed there was perhaps some behind the scene involvement of local political candidates" (Russell Interview). One thing in particular he noticed was that part way through the Commission's mandate, various politically connected citizens began approaching him with

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a suggestion for an alternative system of PR for the Commission to consider. What makes this noteworthy is that each of these people, regardless of their political stripe, suggested the exact same model and used remarkably similar arguments to support it. Leonard Russell takes this as indicative of at least some behind the scenes organizing and collusion between the Liberals and Conservatives. He also claimed to have more first-hand knowledge of political parties directly working against MMP but did not want to reveal specific details.

Pat Mella agreed that MLA's likely played an informal role in influencing Islanders to reject the proposed MMP system, but dismissed arguments that there was an organized effort amongst MLA's or the major parties to influence the vote:

> What happens is that the political parties have another route to [disseminate] information. Every MLA -- there are 27 MLA's in the province --could have held district meetings in 27 areas across the province and talked about this, there was no reason why they couldn't. They [MLA's] had a chance to influence a lot of people... [But] I don't think there was any concerted underground effort to [influence the vote]. It may have happened in rural areas because they feared they were going to lose their representation or whatever. But I don't think there was any insidious plan to subvert this whole thing (Mella Interview).

Even if they did not actively campaign against the proposed changes, the mere fact that the major political parties refused to take a public stance on the issue likely influenced the outcome of the plebiscite. This point is argued by Norman Carruthers: "It doomed it to failure when the politicians weren't actively involved in it; it gave the general public the impression that, well, you know -- if they're not taking the lead there must be something fishy going on here" (Carruthers Interview). Harry Baglole also agreed that some MLA's and party members were quietly and informally working to convince people not to support MMP but did not provide specific information.

There is evidence that both major parties used their organizations to "get out the vote" on plebiscite day: "If you look particularly at voter turnout and the results in more rural areas of PEI, there were much more active 'get out the vote' activities by PC and Liberal poll captains"

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(Greenan interview)."In around Summerside they were setting up drives to the polls. There was

an attempt at collaboration between the Liberals and Conservatives..." (Lund interview). Both

the Liberal and Conservative parties have organizations in place to ensure voters get to the

polling stations on election days, and they appear to have utilized them in the 2005 plebiscite.

Another strategy employed by governments to counter social movements is coercive

persuasion. As far as I have been able to discover, government members did not overtly

threaten or attempt to coerce supporters of the proposed changes or members of the Yes

Coalition. However, when a member of a large organization like a political party takes an

unpopular position, one that may be perceived to threaten the fortunes of the party itself, one

does invite possible negative reactions. During the course of my research I found two stories

where party members (both Liberal) who supported MMP received a certain amount of

backlash from other party members. One was even accused of not being a "true" Liberal. These

stories were off the record, however, and I have been unable to corroborate them.

With its ability to allocate jobs and resources, the P.E.I. government wields a

considerable amount of power, especially in rural areas. Was there a threat, either subtle or

implicit, that PR would make it more difficult for rural Islanders to get the government jobs

they depend upon? Or were rural communities scared into believing that PR would make it

more difficult for them to obtain infrastructure dollars in the future? Several members of the

Yes Coalition certainly think so. Leo Broderick argues this point:

> The two big parties were not neutral. In fact, they made comments that put fear
> into people. In a province where patronage plays such a significant role,
> particularly in rural ridings, they [voters] were very much afraid. [They were]
> also saying that the 17 ridings would be larger, so some areas of the province
> would not be properly represented. The ten MLS's wouldn't do anything
> because they weren't representing anybody. All that clouded the issue
> (Broderick interview).

One Conservative MLA in particular was accused by several Yes Coalition members of

specifically expressing the belief that MMP will make it more difficult for rural Islanders to get

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jobs. (In one instance, he was allegedly overheard explaining this to a constituent). It should be noted that most Islanders likely would not have needed politicians to tell them that PR could threaten the patronage system. Said one rural Yes Coalition member, "You don't understand the fear around jobs and patronage" (Lund interview).

The final strategy employed by governments to counter social movements is adjustment. This involves making concessions to a social movement without actually accepting the movement's demands or goals (Steward et al. 2001:334). Using this strategy of adjustment, a government is able to cultivate the appearance of being responsive to a movement's goals without having to actually adopt them. In this case, the Binns government agreed to examine PR and to sponsor an education process. However, they structured the plebiscite process in such a way that defeat for reformers was virtually assured. This allowed the Binns government to claim they gave PR a fair chance, but in the end it was rejected by the electorate, not the government.

The Binns government virtually assured the defeat of MMP through several tactics. First, they were only willing to spend a very small amount of money on the plebiscite. This meant that they did not provide funding for either the Yes or No Coalitions to conduct a thorough public debate... Norman Carruthers was particularly critical of this decision:

> The Yes side - what resources did they have to mount their campaign with? There was nothing provided to them by government to ensure that there was a proper debate taking place. And if they were really serious about bringing in change and they wanted a really serious debate, then the government should have set up a proper system whereby finances were available to both sides of the debate (Carruthers interview).

Perhaps more significantly, the Binns government also provided what would appear to be an inadequate amount of funding to run the plebiscite itself. A typical provincial election on PEI requires a budget approaching one million dollars. However, the November 28 plebiscite was limited to a budget of only $280,000 (CBC News 2005:1). This reduction in budget meant that

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the number of polling stations had to be cut by 75% of those used during provincial elections.

During the last provincial election, there was an average of 12 polling stations in each of the

province's 27 districts; but only 3 stations were allotted per district for the plebiscite.

It is likely that the Binns government was aware that lowering the number of voting

stations could have a negative effect on voter turnout. Leonard Russell, chairman of the

Commission on PEI's Electoral Future, stated before the plebiscite:

> There's no question, based on some of the inquiries we've had in the public
> meetings about whether or not voting could take place in the same manner as a
> provincial election, that if there is a significant reduction in polling stations that
> will have a significant impact on voter turnout (CBC News 2005:1).

Members of the Yes Coalition were particularly critical of this decision to reduce the number

of polling stations, believing it would severely limit their chances for success and discourage

potential supporters of change from voting:

> When it was announced that there would be few polling stations and no voters
> list it created the perception that this wasn't an important issue (this was made
> clear from talking to people). When we were at the polling stations, a lot of
> people couldn't get in; they were turned away, waiting for over an hour to get in.
> If you compare it to the referendum on the fixed link - what was put in place for
> that was completely different from what was put in place for this (Broderick
> interview).

Lowell Croken, Chief Electoral Officer for P.E.I., explains that Elections P.E.I. told the Binns

government before the plebiscite that a reduced number of polling stations could cause

problems and line ups for voters: "We gave them all of the scenarios. We told them if you give

us two polling stations and we have a 75% voter turnout you are looking at two hour line ups all

day. If we have a 30% turnout we can accommodate it" (Croken interview). He acknowledges

that there were indeed line-ups at polling stations. Islanders it seems, were not happy with the

reduction in polling stations:

> There is generally no voter feedback after a provincial election, but there was
> after the plebiscite. If memory serves me correctly, we [Elections P.E.I.]

recorded 850 phone calls that day. People wanting to know first of all where they go to vote because there are a percentage [of voters] who don't do any preparation for it as to where they go...People saying they were mad, they went home, or saying "you changed the polling station, I always went to New London fire hall to vote why did you change it?"... During a provincial election this [confusion] doesn't necessary happen because they have the confirmation record on their fridge if they put it they are visited at their door. It's advertised, the politicians are visiting them through the process. So they are quite aware of it (Croken interview).

Mark Greenan argues that the reduced polling stations definitely had a negative impact on

Voter turnout:

The polls closed at 7 but anyone already in line could vote. At the Stratford riding, voting ended at 9:15. That tells you the extent of the lineups. If there was that long of a line, then people would have seen it and left. There was great confusion over poll locations. Islanders have been voting at the same polling stations for 3 elections, sometimes for 12 elections. I was getting calls for the entire week before asking "where do I vote". (Greenan Interview)

The final, and perhaps most important, actions that the Binns government took to

assure that the proposed MMP system would not be implemented were setting the plebiscite

threshold for victory at un unattainably high level of 60%, and not making the plebiscite results

binding. The Commission on PEI's Electoral Future recommended that 50% of eligible votes

cast plus one vote be accepted as the threshold indicating a wish for change. In justifying this

50% plus one threshold the report stated:

Commissioners could find no historical precedent in this province which would suggest a threshold level other than 50% + 1 of those who voted. The 1998 plebiscite on the "fixed link" question required only a simple majority. Governments can be changed or returned during provincial elections with that simple majority, indeed, major national issues (e.g. Quebec Referendum) have been pursued using the 50% + 1 threshold (2005:20).

The Commission also recommended that the plebiscite results be binding:

The Commission recognizes that, according to the plebiscite act, the result of a plebiscite is an expression of opinion of the voters and that government is not bound by the result. Having noted that, but with the recognition that the issue of electoral reform has been officially ongoing in this province since 2003, it is the view of the Commission that the outcome of the November 28 plebiscite should be sanctioned by government (2005:21).

Both these recommendations were rejected by the Binns Government. When asked why the

Conservative government set such a high voter threshold, Pat Binns responded: "I think a lot of

people were concerned that a bare majority, especially if there was a low turnout, could mean a

relatively small group could be deciding on change... our feeling was that wouldn't be

desirable" (interview). This high threshold was also supported by Harry Baglole:

> I think (the plebiscite rules such as the 60% threshold) were fair. I think if you
> are going to change the electoral system that's a major change. If it had have
> been a 51% threshold with a very small turnout that would have been a poor
> mandate. You would have had a lot of unhappy people and it would have been
> just a mess. (Baglole interview).

It is important to note that no political party has ever win 60% of the vote in any provincial

election on PEI. Furthermore, other recent major changes to the electoral system (such as

getting rid of dual ridings) did not require a plebiscite, let alone the endorsement of 60% of

Island voters. Finally, the only major referendum in PEI in recent years (the fixed link) was

decided with a simple majority voting yes.

The Binns government must have known that in setting the margin for victory so high,

they virtually assured the proposed MMP system would not be adopted. Norman Carruthers

stated: "The whole thing was designed for failure. It didn't have a hope in Hades of success

after the Premier came out and announced the conditions. If there ever was any question as to

what was going to happen, it was soon dispelled" (Carruthers interview). Pat Binns denies that

his government set a high margin for plebiscite victory with the specific intent to make

electoral reform unlikely. However, considering how strongly opposed to reform this

government was, it strains credibility when they argue that this opposition didn't influence

their structuring of the plebiscite.

In summary, there is significant evidence to indicate that, despite attempts to appear

neutral, the ruling Conservative government was in fact adamantly opposed to PR and took

steps to ensure that it would not be implemented. Not only did MLA's (both Conservatives and Liberals) engage in a behind the scenes campaign against electoral reform, but they also used their legislative powers to structure the plebiscite process such that rejection of the proposed MMP system was virtually assured. The Binns government accomplished this by providing no funding to the Yes or No Coalitions, by not ensuring that Islanders understood the proposed electoral reforms before they voted, by slashing the numbers of voting stations, and by demanding that 60% of voters approve the MMP system for it to be adopted. In light of these obstacles, I would argue that the social movement to introduce PR to the Island's legislature had little hope of success.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has explained why the Yes Coalition was unable to achieve its goal of introducing proportional representation to the PEI legislature. Both McKenna (2006) and Lea (2006) fault the Binns government for structuring the plebiscite process so that the defeat of the proposed MMP system was virtually assured. If true, McKenna's and Lea's charges against the Binns government confirm the arguments of Quintal (1970), Cales (1999), and Dieter (1984) each of whom cited self-interest of elected officials as one of the greatest impediments to electoral reform.

Rational choice theory suggests that people in power have little incentive to change the electoral system that put them there. Having enjoyed a virtual monopoly over political power in the province under the FPTP system, neither of the Island's major political parties had any reason to endorse change. This research found that both Conservative and Liberal MLAs, despite public claims of neutrality on the issue, overwhelmingly opposed any substantive change to how MLAs are elected. The Island NDP and Green Parties on the other hand, both of whom had been traditionally marginalized in PEI politics, supported the introduction of proportional representation believing it would increase their prospects in future provincial elections. Interestingly, former MLA Mitch Murphy argued that government opposition to PR was not grounded in anxiety over future electoral prospects, as Quintal (1970) has argued is frequently the case. Instead, Mr. Murphy pointed to a fear among MLAs that the proposed list system would have created two classes of MLAs and led to an unfair distribution of politician's work load. Even if this is so, it still makes rational self-interest a prime motivator in Island MLA's opposition to reform.

Even though Premier Binns claims to have discouraged MLAs from participating in the debate, there can be no doubt that at least a few MLAs actively, if quietly, worked to generate opposition to the proposed MMP system. Several MLAs participated in the public meetings leading up to the plebiscite, and there is evidence to indicate that MLA's likely took advantage

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of the Island's informal but well-developed grassroots political communication networks to encourage opposition to proportional representation. There is also reason to believe that both the Liberal and Conservative parties used their organizations to help 'get out' the no vote on election day. The precise effects this informal campaign or the party's efforts to 'get out' the no vote, had on the eventual plebiscite outcome is difficult to determine. However, something that can be much more readily assessed is the effect of the plebiscite rules, laid down by the Binns government, on the eventual outcome.

The evidence this research has collected indicates that both the Binns government's lack of enthusiasm for electoral reform, and the manner in which they structured the plebiscite, contributed to making the already slim prospects for introducing MMP to the PEI legislature even slimmer. First, the Binns government did little to facilitate informed debate about electoral change. The educational process they created (headed by The Commission on PEI's Electoral Future) was woefully insufficient. Confusion about the proposed system was rampant right up until voting day. Furthermore, no resources were given to either side in the debate. This limited the ability of both sides to get their message out and engage Islanders in the discussion. Second, the Binns government, claiming frugality, cut the number of voting stations. This action was taken despite the objections of Elections PEI, and while knowing full well that such a move could negatively affect voter turnout. A typical PEI election requires upwards of a million dollars in expenditures. Total funding for the plebiscite in question was less than three hundred thousand. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, by setting an unrealistically high threshold (60% approval) for the reforms to be adopted, the Binns government virtually ensured the initiative's defeat.

Despite evidence that the Binn's government did all it could to maintain the electoral status quo, the evidence also indicates that the reasons for the plebiscite's outcome are complex and cannot be reduced to the actions or inactions of any one social actor or organization. Unlike

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other jurisdictions in which proportional representation was successfully introduced, the lead up to the electoral reform debate and eventual plebiscite on PEI was not preceded by a popular sense of political crisis. Other jurisdictions which have recently seen the introduction of proportional representation, such as Japan, New Zealand, or Italy, had populations who were disenfranchised and dissatisfied with their respective systems of representation. In such climates, the prospects for reform were ripe. Not so on PEI. Islanders seemed content with their system of representation and expressed little desire for change. Indeed, with some of the highest levels of voter turnouts in North America, it would be difficult to argue otherwise. Little surprise then, that despite their best efforts, advocates of proportional representation were unable to generate a popular desire for reform. The so called 'lop-sided' legislature issue had almost no traction with Islanders despite the enormous amount of press coverage it received, while other reasons for change advanced by the Yes Coalition (such as making the legislature more democratic, or allowing for more women or minorities to be elected) also appear to have fallen flat.

The Island's political elite, with only a couple notable exceptions (former MLA Mitch Murphy and former Premier Pat Binns), were united in their defense of the status quo. That the issue of proportional representation made it onto the public agenda at all had more to do with the efforts of a few highly motivated individuals than with the existence of favourable social and political opportunities.

Resource mobilization theory locates a social movement's formation, longevity, and success in its ability to marshal and mobilize various types of resources: cash, membership, facilities, expertise, and influential allies. Despite the daunting task before them, the Yes Coalition was not without certain key resources which helped them mount a reasonably effective campaign. They were able to raise a significant amount of cash; they were allied with a number of influential organizations such as CUPE and the PEI Federation of Labour; their

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membership included a number of experienced social activists; they had access to offices and office equipment; and they had an effective leader in Mark Greenan. On the other hand, most Yes Coalition members had little experience with this type of campaign, the group had trouble attracting members (perhaps because their chances for success were perceived as quite small, even by coalition members themselves), and they had few allies from the major political parties. The Yes Coalition may have also been perceived as a little too left-leaning politically for some Islanders, especially with part of its leadership composed of the so called 'protest crowd'. This may have made their message less credible in the eyes of some Islanders. This research also found that the Yes Coalition lacked the informal communication networks needed to disseminate political messages on PEI; this was especially true in rural parts of the Island. Finally, the Yes Coalition was burdened by a late start. They really only got organized approximately one month before the plebiscite, giving them little time to organize and carry out a successful campaign.

The No Coalition, which arose as a counter-movement in response to the Yes side, was far less organized and had significantly less funding than the Yes Coalition. Yet the No Coalition did have some important advantages. First, its membership comprised several well connected, high profile political figures -- none more so than former MLA and former Conservative party leader Pat Mella. An experienced campaigner and high profile spokesperson, she not only had a degree of credibility with the public that Yes Coalition members may have lacked, but also had well developed networks and connections built during her long political career. She also had extensive campaign experience. It is also noteworthy that two members of the No Coalition went on to becomes MLA's -- again underlining the political savvy and connections of No Coalition members.

As the campaign progressed, the Yes Coalition was aided by extensive media coverage. Despite receiving far more media attention than the No Coalition, the Yes Coalition was unable

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to generate the levels of popular support they sought for the proposed reforms. A possible reason for this may be the manner in which they framed their messages. The Yes Coalition chose to focus on several perceived shortcomings of FPTP, and posited MMP as the solution. Yet this message appears to have had little resonance with Island voters who seemed quite content with the way MLAs are elected. By focusing on broader or more abstract frames such as representation, fairness, and diversity, the Coalition was unable to connect what they saw as the FPTP system's failures to the average Islander's daily life. Their campaign failed to resonate with Islanders' beliefs, interests, and concerns. Furthermore, one could question the degree of thought put into some of the Yes Coalitions literature, as several of their arguments seemed to undermine their own cause.

With such a short campaign, the Yes Coalition simply did not have the time to test out different frames and messages, nor did they have time to modify them as the campaign progressed. Because they did not have extensive networks in the more rural parts of P.E.I., they likely lacked input and feedback from these areas in terms of how to frame their messages to extend their appeal. Finally, a perception that the Yes Coalition was left-leaning likely affected the coalition's credibility with a number of Islanders. Several Yes Coalition members were widely known to have taken controversial, unpopular, and very vocal stands on social and political issues in the past. This may have led some Islanders with otherwise differing views to uniformly distrust the coalition and it's message.

A confusing electoral model and an inadequate educational process meant that many Islanders did not understand the proposed MMP system. Small wonder they did not endorse it. The D'Hondt formula -- which would have determined the seat allocation -- was complicated and counter-intuitive, especially when compared to the relatively simple FPTP system. This meant that few Islanders understood how MLAs would have been elected under the proposed system, making it a rather tough sell. Even if Islanders agreed that the old system was in need

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of reform, a successful replacement would have to be one they could feel comfortable with and understand. The proposed MMP system did not meet either of these criteria. It may be that Islanders did not understand what was being advocated simply because they did not care to understand. If most Islanders were content with the status quo -- as it appears they were -- then what incentive would they have had to take the time and effort to learn about a complicated new electoral procedure?

In light of the evidence this research gathered, I would argue that, even had the plebiscite rules been more favourable to the Yes Coalition's cause (more voting stations, more money for education, a plebiscite threshold of 50% rather than 60%), it seems that the proposed MMP system would still have likely been defeated. However, the limited scope of this thesis makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions in this regard. Several key questions need to be answered in order to achieve a more complete understanding of why the proposed MMP system was rejected. These unanswered questions relate to the views and opinions of the Island electorate: Why did so few Islanders vote in the plebiscite? What are some of the specific reasons Islanders had for rejecting reform? What were the popular perceptions of the Yes and No Coalitions? Which messages and frames did or did not resonate with Islanders? Would the Yes Coalition's message have had more resonance if delivered by different people? Would Islanders have been more willing to support electoral reform if the proposed model had been easier to understand? In order to answer these questions, a questionnaire or survey of Islander's opinions would be necessary. Unfortunately, this type of research requires resources beyond the scope of this project.

Other fruitful areas of research would include a more thorough investigation of the behind-the-scenes campaigning on the part of MLAs. Specifically, it would be interesting to explore the role that patronage and fears of job loss, or the threat of diminished representation may have had in convincing Islanders, especially rural residents, to reject electoral reform.

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Throughout my research I heard many unconfirmed accounts of MLAs covertly attempting to subvert the plebiscite process or scare Islanders into rejecting change. These rumours need to be investigated in a more thorough manner than this research was able. Also, the informal communication networks utilized in Island politics merit further investigation. Exactly how important are these networks? How do politicians use them during the course of a campaign? Are they losing their relevance in the face of electronic media?

During the course of this research, the merits and drawbacks of investigating social phenomena several years after it took place became quite apparent. On the one hand, most of the MLAs who played roles in the reform process had retired from public life. This may have made them more willing to speak frankly about their experiences and opinions. Also, the elapsed time may have given them a chance to reflect on the process and provide insights they may otherwise not have had time to develop. On the other hand, in the time lapse between the event and the research, several key players in the electoral reform debate were no longer available for interviews, either because they had passed away or had left the Island. Also, many interview subjects could no longer recall some specific details of events in question. It may be that some important information about the plebiscite process cannot at this point be recovered.

Despite its limitations, this research demonstrates the utility of the social movement theories it employed, especially when these theories are used together. Political and cultural opportunities conducive to movement formation do not on their own guarantee that a social movement will form or that it will be successful. Nor does the absence of these opportunities preclude such formation. Similarly, other factors such as the presence (or absence) of resources, the rise of counter-movements, the ability to effectively frame and communicate political messages, and the desire and ability of government to suppress dissent, cannot each on their own determine the success or longevity of social movement. Rather, each of these factors interact with the others in a complicated, dynamic process. By drawing upon multiple

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theoretical perspectives, this research was able to provide a more complete picture of the plebiscite process, and point to more credible reasons for its eventual outcome, than would have been possible utilizing a single perspective.

As a case study, PEI's relatively small size and informal, traditional political culture allowed for easy access to the major players in the electoral reform process. It also made constructing a reasonably complete picture of the electoral reform debate an achievable task for a masters thesis. A project such as this in a larger jurisdiction, such as Ontario (a province which at the time of this research was also grappling with electoral reform), would have been quite difficult. Despite it advantages, the unique political and social culture of PEI also brought with it some limitations. A case could be made that the unique social and political culture of PEI makes it difficult to apply what has been learned in this research to other jurisdictions. Lessons regarding what worked or did not work for advocates of electoral reform on PEI may not be readily applied to other cases.

I have already argued that political change regarding the structure of democracy is not easy. The PEI example aptly demonstrates this difficulty. Even in such a small jurisdiction and with a reasonably well organized and motivated social movement, reformers were unable to bring proportional representation to the PEI legislature. Despite this apparent failure, the social movement to bring proportional representation to PEI has not conceded just yet. As already mentioned, several members of both the Yes and No coalitions have come together in an effort to keep the issue of electoral reform on the public agenda and plan for another possible plebiscite sometime in the future. The success or failure of this effort will likely depend upon reformers' ability to learn lessons from past failures. Whether this will happen remains to be seen.

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