

Partisan Hearts and Gall Bladders

Retrospection and Realignment in the Wake of the Great Depression

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Draft: 4 April 2005

Abstract

We have argued elsewhere that retrospective voting is often causally unsophisticated, ideologically confused, and highly myopic (Achen and Bartels 2002; 2004). Here, we extend those assertions to party realignments, arguing that they, too, depend far less on ideological shifts than on the simple cumulation of myopic retrospections in election years. We examine voters' responses to the most far-reaching economic disaster in the history of democratic politics, the Great Depression. In contrast to Key (1958) and others who have interpreted the New Deal realignment in the U.S. as "a popular ratification of the broad features of new public policy," we show that Democratic gains in the 1930s were based primarily on short-term income gains and losses, which cumulated willy-nilly into a durable Democratic majority in the electorate. This interpretation is bolstered by comparison with other democracies in which voters produced equally significant and durable partisan realignments—and equally successful economic recoveries—by punishing whoever was in office at the time—liberal incumbents (Britain, Australia), conservative and then liberal incumbents (Sweden), liberal and then conservative incumbents (Canada), anti-nationalist incumbents (Ireland), or coalitions including many or all of the mainstream parties (Weimar Germany). We also document the role of economic discontent in the Irish realignment, which previous scholars have interpreted as a triumph of nationalist ideology. Finally, we describe the rise of the Social Credit Party in the Canadian province of Alberta, which dramatizes the vulnerability of democratic electorates to demagogues and ideological extremists in times of economic distress.

Prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April 7-9, 2005. Copyright by the authors.

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Retrospection and Realignment in the Wake of the Great Depression¹

Americans are accustomed to thinking of the New Deal realignment as a triumph of both democratic responsiveness and Democratic ideology. In the face of an unprecedented economic catastrophe, a rigidly conservative government resisted public pressure to provide energetic relief and institutional reforms. Voters responded with a historic repudiation of the incumbent president, Herbert Hoover, in 1932. Franklin Roosevelt swept into office with 57 percent of the popular vote, and the Democrats—a minority party for most of the preceding 70 years—won 313 of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives.

Roosevelt's first hundred days in the White House brought a flurry of innovative policies. A robust economic recovery followed in short order. Real per capita income increased by one-third between 1933 and 1936 and unemployment declined by one-third. Voters rewarded Roosevelt with a landslide reelection in 1936; he won more than 60 percent of the popular vote and carried 46 of 48 states. He went on to win an unprecedented four terms in the White House, and the Democratic Party enjoyed a durable reservoir of popular support that allowed it to dominate congressional elections for most of the next 60 years. As V. O. Key, Jr. (1958, 589) summarized these events, "The election of 1936 ratified a sharp turn in public policy and successive Democratic victories clinched the reforms of the New Deal."

Our aim in this paper is to challenge this conventional interpretation of the New Deal era. We do

¹ The work reported here was facilitated by research support to both authors from Princeton University, and by a grant to Bartels from the Carnegie Corporation's Carnegie Scholars program. We are grateful to both institutions for their generous assistance to us. Richard Sinnott gave us his time generously as an invaluable source of information and expertise regarding the political history of Ireland. Cormac O Grada also helped us with several complicated issues in Irish economic history. Archivists in Alberta and Saskatchewan answered numerous queries and requests for data with patience and efficiency. James Snyder kindly shared his U.S. congressional election data. Seminar participants at the University of North Carolina provided stimulating

so in part by analyzing American voters' reactions to the Depression, using aggregate electoral and economic data to document the importance of myopic economic retrospections in accounting for the Democratic Party's success in presidential and congressional elections throughout the 1930s. We bolster our interpretation of the New Deal realignment by juxtaposing the American experience with parallel developments in several other democracies. We note the impressive consistency with which electorates around the world deposed incumbent governments during the worst days of the Depression, regardless of their ideologies. We also note the impressive consistency with which new incumbents presided over robust economic recoveries and were rewarded with long runs in office—again, regardless of their ideologies. Thus, what looks to the American eye like a triumph of both democratic responsiveness and Democratic ideology may instead be an illusion produced by a specific configuration of election dates, partisan alterations, and economic vicissitudes in a world where policies are, in fact, largely irrelevant and voters are blindly and myopically retrospective.

The New Deal Realignment

For their part, academics have tended to dismiss campaign slogans of the past like 'the full dinner pail' and 'a chicken in every pot' on the grounds that something deeper must have been going on in these elections. But perhaps it wasn't.

– David R. Mayhew (2002, 161)

The conventional account of FDR's triumph in 1932 is that it represented a protest vote, a cry for help, with the electorate taking a chance on a largely unknown and cautious moderate whose principal recommendation was that he was not Herbert Hoover. As Key (1947, 268) put it,

The campaign gave to the public no clear-cut alternatives of policy, except with respect to prohibition. The Democrats were thoroughly wet. But no other issue of a major nature presented itself sharply and dramatically in the campaign. The times called for a great debate on measures to lift the American economy out of the morass, but a stranger might

reactions to a preliminary version of the argument, and many colleagues, students, and friends exposed to our previous work on democratic accountability have provided helpful encouragement and criticism.

have presumed that all the fighting was about when and whether one could get a glass of legal beer. . . . [I]t is doubtful that the rational appeals of either candidate had much to do with the election results. All types and classes of people had suffered deprivations; all of them were anxious for a change. Poor men, rich men, middle-class men, farmers, workers, all moved over into the Democratic ranks in sufficient number to give Roosevelt a resounding victory. All these classes could identify themselves with the ‘forgotten man,’ and they could equally feel themselves deserving of a ‘new deal’ without necessarily insisting on exactitude in the definition of what the ‘new deal’ was to be.²

By 1936, however, the character of Roosevelt’s administration had become much clearer, not least to himself, and he campaigned well to the left of where he had stood in 1932. In his famous speech at Madison Square Garden two nights before the election, he attacked “organized money” for their hatred of him, and proclaimed to a thunderous ovation, “I welcome their hatred.” A new political barometer, the Gallup poll, found a striking degree of partisan polarization in the general public: 45% of the poll respondents, and 83% of Republicans, agreed that “the acts and policies of the Roosevelt Administration may lead to dictatorship” (Key 1961, 246).

Despite the breadth and intensity of opposition to Roosevelt, the election result was a historic landslide for the incumbent. The voters joining in that landslide are said to have been “attracted by the Democratic program and the Rooseveltian personality and leadership” (Sundquist 1983, 214). Even the authors of *The American Voter*, no friends to intellectualist interpretations of elections, used virtually identical language, writing that “The program of welfare legislation of the New Deal and the extraordinary personality of its major exponent, Franklin D. Roosevelt, brought about a profound realignment of party strength, which has endured in large part up to the present time” (Campbell et al. 1960, 534).

Key, who had disparaged the importance of policy issues in the 1932 election, interpreted the

² Lest Key’s emphasis on the political significance of repealing Prohibition strike modern readers as exaggerated, we note that a highly laudatory account of Roosevelt’s campaign published in the early months of the new administration (Guilfoyle 1933, 218-219) suggested that the “return of beer in less than a month after the new Administration took office did more than anything else to inspire the people with confidence in the President. . . . Seldom, if ever before in the history of the country, has there been such a major accomplishment

1936 election in a very different light. “The return of a party to power under circumstances [like those] of the 1936 campaign,” he wrote (Key 1958, 578-579),³

gives such an election a special significance. Drastic innovations in public policy aroused the most bitter denunciation by the outs; the ins had to stand on their record. The electorate had before it the question whether to ratify these innovations, few of which had been clearly foreshadowed in the 1932 campaign. The result could only be interpreted as a popular ratification of the broad features of new public policy.

This interpretation of the 1936 election has persisted down to the present, making it a textbook example of a policy-based realigning election. For example, Hershey (2005, 294) wrote that

At critical times in American history, the parties have divided in ways that were, if not truly ideological, at least determinedly policy oriented. In the 1936 presidential election, for example, the Democrats and the Republicans offered dramatically different solutions to a nation devastated by the Great Depression. The hardships of that economic collapse probably focused voter attention to an unusual degree on the possible remedies that government could provide. This, combined with a campaign centered on the pros and cons of the Roosevelt program for social and economic change, may well have produced something close to a mandate in the election for both the president and Congress.

Similarly, in a book-length study of party identification, Green, Palmquist, and Schickler (2002, 106-107) emphasized the importance of enduring social identities in the development and maintenance of partisan attachments but cited the New Deal as a salient exception:

Although we are in general skeptical of ideology-based explanations of party identification, the New Deal represents an instance in which such explanations work. Here was an unusually clear ideological divide between the parties, dramatized again and again as the Republicans denounced relief programs enacted by the Democratic executive and legislature. In the formative moment when the new party system emerged, and issues such as the scope of government replaced the tariff, it is quite possible that ideological affinity shaped party attachments to an unusual extent.

The left panel of Figure 1 charts the course of the Great Depression in the U.S. as measured by

in such a short time. . . . If there was any turning point in the attitude of the people toward this depression it came simultaneously with beer.”

changes from year to year in real personal income per capita.⁴ The right panel charts electoral support for the incumbent president's party (Republicans from 1928 through 1932, Democrats from 1932 through 1940) in presidential and congressional elections.⁵

***** Figure 1 *****

It should be evident that there is a good deal of correspondence between the economic and electoral patterns in Figure 1. In 1930, the first year of widespread economic distress, the Republican Party lost 3.6% of the two-party House vote (and 52 seats, plus 8 in the Senate) in a midterm election. Two more years of accelerating depression triggered a thoroughgoing repudiation of Hoover and the Republicans in 1932. Roosevelt and the Democrats took power in early 1933, at what turned out to be almost precisely the low point of the Depression. Three years of steady improvement saw real incomes return almost to their 1929 level in 1936; the Democrats made modest gains in the midterm election of 1934 and again in the presidential and congressional elections of 1936, adding a total of 2.6% and 3.2%, respectively, to their 1932 shares of the two-party House and presidential votes. The economy continued to improve in 1937 but took a marked turn for the worse in 1938, with incomes falling below their 1936 level and unemployment rising back to 19 percent; the Democrats lost 7.3% of the two-party House vote (and 73 seats, plus 6 in the Senate), leaving them well behind where they had been in 1932. In 1939 and 1940 the recovery resumed, and the Democrats regained some of their lost ground, but they were still less popular than they had been in 1932—and less popular than the

³ The interpolated words are from a subsequent (1958) edition of Key's textbook, which repeats the quoted passage with only minor alteration.

⁴ Data on real per capita personal income are from Table 7.1 of the National Income and Product Accounts available from the website of the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce (<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/dn/nipaweb>). Unemployment figures tell much the same story as the real income figures, except that unemployment remained well above its pre-Depression level throughout the 1930s. According to the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook* (Statistical Office of the United Nations 1949), the unemployment rate increased from 3.2% in 1929 to 23.6% in 1932, peaked at 24.9% in 1933, declined to 14.3% in 1937 before spiking at 19.0% in 1938, then declined back to 14.6% by 1940.

Republicans had been in 1928.

The conventional, ideological interpretation of the voting patterns in the right panel of Figure 1 is that voters punished Hoover for his conservative ideological orthodoxy in 1930 and 1932, rewarded Roosevelt for adopting more appropriate, progressive policies in the early years of the New Deal, and tapped the ideological brakes in 1938 when Roosevelt's court-packing scheme and the "second New Deal" raised concerns that policy might be drifting too far to the left.⁶ ("By 1940," it is said—somewhat arbitrarily—"the New Deal had run its course" (Key 1958, 209).)

Although this period predates the survey-based measure of "Policy Mood" developed by Stimson (1991), it is not hard to imagine shifts in public opinion that were smoothly responsive to the policies adopted in Washington, and that led in turn to both the electoral shifts evident in Figure 1 and short-term policy adjustments by the Democrats during the course of the New Deal. This is the logic of "dynamic representation" outlined by Erikson, MacKuen and Stimson in *The Macro Polity* (2002), which seems to provide a general theoretical framework quite consistent with the historical accounts of Key, Sundquist, and other analysts of the New Deal realignment.

Our alternative interpretation is that the correspondence between income changes and electoral shifts in Figure 1 can be accounted for in the simpler terms suggested by Mayhew (2002, 161): when voters got a chicken in every pot at election time they liked the incumbent party's ideology just fine, whatever it happened to be; but when incomes eroded and unemployment escalated they became ripe for defection to anyone who would promise to make things better.

The authors of *The Macro Polity* allowed in principle for the possibility that "open-minded voters" might "say yes to whatever works," so that "the degree of prosperity and well-being influences ideological choices by ordinary voters, depending on who is in power and how the country is going"

⁵ The popular vote shares shown in the right panel of Figure 1 are taken from Rusk (2001), as are the vote and seat shifts reported in the text.

(Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002, 440). However, they reported finding “little in the way of convincing statistical support” for this sort of interaction between economic conditions and liberal or conservative policy moods in the post-war period (Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2002, 441).

Our own analysis of economic voting in the post-war period (Achen and Bartels 2004) suggests that economic conditions have a substantial direct effect on election outcomes—but only economic conditions at the time of the election. Of course, one might expect that the Depression would be different. The depth of the crisis may have focused voters’ minds. Lost jobs and lost homes, hungry children and ruined lives should not have been forgotten quickly. By the same token, the continuing intense debate in the country over Roosevelt and his program might have allowed voters to see the connection between their circumstances and political decisions in Washington, making them more ideological than usual as well as less myopic than usual.

The elections of the Depression era were conducted in dramatic economic circumstances, with states undergoing very large gains and losses in real income over the period. In 1936, for example, real personal income per capita increased by 19% in Colorado, 20% in Delaware, and 24% in Nevada. At the same time, real income plunged by 16% in North Dakota and by 25% in South Dakota.⁷ Figures for some of the other Depression years are even more variable. Thus there is no statistical difficulty in assessing the impact of state-level economic conditions on the vote. That is why this period provides such fertile ground for statistical analysis of retrospective voting.

Table 1 reports the results of a series of regression analyses exploring the bases of Roosevelt’s

⁶ For example, Sundquist (1983, 226) supposed that “independent voters were by now rebelling against Democratic excesses and swinging to a Republican party that in many states had acquired new progressive leadership, and deviant Republicans, having chastised their party sufficiently, were returning home.”

⁷ All of our state-level data on real per capita income are from “State Personal Income 1929-2000,” a CD-ROM issued by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC, November, 2001. We converted the published figures to 1929 dollars using the ratio of current to constant dollars in the BEA’s Disposable Personal Income series in Table 7.1 of the National Income and Product Accounts (<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/dn/nipaweb>). We define real income change in each year as the difference in logged real income levels. Taking natural logs converts gains and losses to an equivalent scale, so that they count equally (and are more likely to satisfy the usual assumptions underlying regression analysis.) To a good

1936 landslide. We confine our analysis to states that were not part of the Confederacy, since the Solid South of this era, with its heavy Democratic leanings, low white turnout, excluded African-American population, and racially based politics, offers little opportunity to assess the effect of economic conditions on voting behavior. To avoid giving undue influence to sparsely populated states, we weight each observation in the regression analyses by total turnout in the 1936 election.

***** Table 1 *****

Our goal is to assess the effect of economic conditions during the Roosevelt administration on the vote. Doing so is not an anachronism, imposing current ideas on people of a different era. To the contrary, political insiders in 1936 were well aware of the connection between voters' income and their choices at the polls. Indeed, during the campaign James Farley and Harry Hopkins, FDR's powerful aides, were repeatedly accused of trying to buy the election with relief funds (Sherwood 1948, 85).⁸ The pattern of per capita government transfer funds in each year from 1933 to 1936 is not inconsistent

approximation when changes are not large, the differences in the logs represent fractional changes. We multiply them by 100 to express them as percentage changes.

⁸ We tried to assess the direct electoral effect of transfer payments and "relief" during this period. Both are included in personal income, and thus are already counted in our calculations, but we sought to examine them separately because they are more directly under government control. However, it proved impossible to do so. In the early New Deal years transfer payments went primarily to the states with large cities, where the greatest need was concentrated; but those were areas where FDR may have done especially well for other reasons. Not until 1936 were the problems of the drought-stricken lower Midwest fully recognized. Payments to those states jumped dramatically from 1935 to 1936 (they tripled in Oklahoma, for example), but it was too little and too late—those states backed off from Roosevelt in the election. Thus, 1936 transfers turn out to have no apparent effect on Roosevelt's vote gains. Relief money, too, proved impossible to study. Payments per person within each state were quite steady from month to month, with only a small upward drift until late 1935. The rules seem to have been bureaucratic rather than political. Then at that point, the New Deal turned the problem over to the states, with only partial federal subsidies thereafter. The result is that per-person relief payments dropped dramatically in many states during the election year, and the number of people on relief dropped in most states due to improving economic conditions (Whiting 1942). Less money was spent, and that was partly a bad thing (state penny-pinching) and partly a good thing (fewer people were needy). None of the drop was the fault of the federal government in any case, at least not directly, and the payment differences across states appear to reflect differences in state capacity and enthusiasm. Thus any test of the *federal* effect of relief is of doubtful validity, particularly since the amount of money involved is small relative to total transfers, and greatly smaller than changes in personal income.

with that suspicion, showing an unmistakable upward jump in 1936.⁹

In our account, voters' reactions to Roosevelt's first term rested primarily on simple short-term retrospection. In order to test that assertion, we focus on real per capita income growth in each state in the election year, 1936. Figure 2 summarizes the relationship across the 37 non-southern states between these election-year income changes and Roosevelt's popular vote gain in 1936 by comparison with 1932. As an aid in interpreting the scatterplot of state income changes and vote shifts, the figure includes a regression line representing the turnout-weighted bivariate relationship. It is clear that there is a strong and fairly consistent tendency for Roosevelt to gain support in states that experienced significant income growth in 1936, and to lose support in states that experienced declines in real income. On its face, this evidence is quite consistent with our myopic, non-ideological interpretation of the election outcome.

***** Figure 2 *****

Our interpretation is bolstered by the fact that the most prominent residuals in Figure 2 seem very hard to attribute to states' differing ideological tastes for activist policies along the lines pursued by Roosevelt during his first term. Oklahoma, the state with the largest negative residual, was the heart of the Dustbowl in this period, and New Deal policies were often misdirected and mismanaged there (Bryant 1975); thus, one need not appeal to conservative ideology to explain why support for FDR dropped more in 1936 than the raw economic figures would seem to justify. Roosevelt also did less well than economic conditions seemed to warrant in Nebraska and Nevada—but noticeably *better* than the overall relationship would lead one to expect in Montana, Utah, and the Dakotas. In the case of Montana the discrepancy may reflect the fact that real per capita income increased by more than 40% in 1934 and 1935 after Roosevelt officially supported the price of silver in 1934, a victory in a battle

⁹ However, no such pattern appears in the corresponding data from 1937-1940. The recovery was much farther along by then, and payments may have settled into bureaucratic routine.

dating to the nineteenth century; for that reason or some other, Montana's support for FDR was almost ten percentage points higher in 1936 than it had been in 1932, despite the fact that real income declined slightly in the election year.¹⁰ Another state in which Roosevelt gained more in 1936 than its economic conditions would seem to imply was Pennsylvania, almost surely because the Republican Philadelphia machine, which held down the Democratic vote in 1932, was no longer able to do so from 1936 on.

The regression analyses reported in Table 1 elaborate in a variety of ways upon the basic relationship evident in Figure 2 between election-year income changes and vote shifts. For example, three of the six regression models (1, 2, and 5) include measures of state income growth in 1935, 1934, and 1933 in addition to the 1936 income figures. In every case, whereas election-year income growth has a strong positive effect on Roosevelt's vote, previous income growth has little or no effect. Thus, the evidence from the 1930s is quite consistent with evidence from more recent presidential elections in suggesting that voters' retrospective assessments of the economy are quite myopic (Achen and Bartels 2004).

The second and subsequent columns of Table 1 include the percentage change in turnout between 1932 and 1936 as an additional explanatory variable.¹¹ The parameter estimates show that Roosevelt gained more support in states with large numbers of new voters in 1936 than in states where turnout was relatively static. For example, comparing a state with a 5-point turnout gain between 1932 and 1936 and one with a 20-point turnout gain, Roosevelt's expected vote in the latter would be about 1.7 percentage points higher. These estimates imply that Roosevelt's vote share in 1936 was 10 to 15 percentage points higher among new voters than among old voters (who were themselves giving

¹⁰ Another possibility is that in a state so dependent on mineral extraction and lumbering, Montanans' retrospections were focused differently. Of course, it is also possible that the apparent mismatch between income changes and electoral responses simply reflects measurement error in income changes in a small state with many isolated ranchers.

Roosevelt almost 60 percent support). Thus, our analysis is quite consistent with the notion that “The rising strength of the Democratic Party during the Roosevelt years probably depended heavily on new voters drawn to the polls by the Great Depression and the New Deal” (Campbell et al 1960, 89).¹²

The fourth, fifth, and sixth columns of Table 1 include state-level measures of a variety of economic and demographic characteristics that loom large in historical accounts of the New Deal realignment: real per capita income, the rural farm proportion of the population, the percentage of foreign born whites, and the percentage of blacks.¹³ To the extent that poor people, farmers, immigrants, and blacks responded more enthusiastically than other citizens to the New Deal policies implemented between 1933 and 1936, we should expect to see that states in which they were more numerous were relatively more supportive of Roosevelt in 1936 than they had been in 1932. In every instance, the reverse seems to be true. None of the effects is very large or very precisely estimated; but insofar as there are any patterns at all, they suggest that Roosevelt gained *less* support among all these groups than in other parts of the population.¹⁴

Regardless of exactly how we specify the regression models in Table 1, the data provide strong, consistent evidence that Roosevelt’s reelection hinged importantly on his success in producing income growth during the election year. The implications of these parameter estimates may be illustrated by considering what might have happened if Roosevelt had happened to stand for reelection under less favorable economic circumstances than those prevailing in 1936. For example, what if real income per capita had *fallen* by 6.4 percent rather than *growing* by 11.3 percent during the election year? Lest this

¹¹ The increase in turnout between 1932 and 1936 ranged from 2 to 22 percent, except in Kentucky (–6 percent) and Pennsylvania (+45 percent). Excluding these two outliers leaves the estimated effects of turnout on Roosevelt’s vote virtually unchanged.

¹² Additional regression analyses, not detailed here, suggest that the relationship between turnout gains and Roosevelt support was even stronger in both 1932 and 1940 than in 1936. Thus, the cumulative contribution of new voters to the building of a Democratic majority was even greater than is evident in the calculations reported here—perhaps on the order of five percentage points.

¹³ Data on the rural farm population, foreign born whites, and blacks are from the Historical Census Browser developed by the University of Virginia’s Geospatial and Statistical Data Center (<http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus>).

possibility seem far-fetched, we note that real income per capita *did* fall by 6.4 percent only two years later—with dire consequences for the Democrats in the 1938 midterm election.

Table 2 summarizes the results of our historical simulation comparing Roosevelt’s actual performance in the 1936 election with his hypothetical performance under the economic conditions prevailing in 1938. Of course, any calculation along these lines must be far from exact. Most importantly, the statistical estimates of the effect of state-level economic conditions in Table 1 provide no direct evidence regarding the additional impact of *national* economic conditions on Roosevelt’s vote. Voters undoubtedly attended also to the national economy, but since that does not vary cross-sectionally, we have no way to measure its importance here. However, rough calculations based on aggregate vote shifts comport with more detailed calculations based on data from the modern era in suggesting that the impact of national economic conditions were probably similar in magnitude to the impact of state economic conditions, making the total effect of the economy twice as large as suggested by the parameter estimates in Table 1.¹⁵ Thus, in the absence of better evidence, we simply assume that the average parameter estimate for the effect of state-level income changes in 1936 in Table 1 can be applied both to state-level changes and to the national change.

***** Table 2 *****

The resulting calculation suggests that under the economic conditions prevailing in 1938 Roosevelt would have received only about 48 percent of the two-party vote outside the South in 1936.

¹⁴ We also examined regression models including various subsets of these economic and demographic variables in addition to those reported in Table 1. None produced more sensible results.

¹⁵ We know that in the non-southern states, Hoover’s share of the two-party popular vote dropped 17 percentage points when real income fell by 15 percent in 1932; Roosevelt’s vote share increased by 4 percentage points when real income grew by 11 percent in 1936. The former shift suggests a 1-to-1 correspondence between income changes and vote shares; the later a 3-to-1 correspondence. Averaging these two estimates suggests that a president’s popular vote share might shift by roughly 2/3 of one percent with each one percent shift in real income. That total impact is approximately double the estimated effect of state-level variation in Table 1, with the difference presumably attributable to voters’ sensitivity to national economic conditions. Rough tests using data from post-war presidential elections similarly suggest a total effect about twice as large as the state-level

More importantly, he would have lost 17 of the 46 states he actually carried, including New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan. Even with a lock on the Solid South, he would have fallen just short of an Electoral College majority, bringing the New Deal realignment to an abrupt and (from the perspective of hindsight) very premature conclusion.

These results provide a dramatic indication of voters' myopia, even in a situation where the economic stakes were much larger than any observed in subsequent eras of American politics. In 1934 and 1935, Roosevelt presided over an increase in real personal income per capita of more than 17 percentage points, recouping half of the total income lost through the preceding four years of depression. Our analysis suggests that he got little or no electoral credit for doing so. Rather, voters asked "What have you done for us lately?"

Of course, the Democratic realignment was manifested not only in personal support for Roosevelt but also in durable Democratic majorities in Congress. Indeed, the House of Representatives remained in Democratic hands for most of the next sixty years. Thus, the dynamics of congressional voting in the Depression era are crucial to understanding the nature and significance of the New Deal realignment.

Table 3 reports the results of a series of regression analyses relating congressional election outcomes to changing economic conditions through the early New Deal period. The first four columns of the table present separate results for the 1934, 1936, 1938, and 1940 congressional elections; the fifth column presents pooled results using the data from all four election years.¹⁶ The observations are non-southern congressional districts contested by both major parties in both the current and previous

effect—though the electoral shift attributable to each percentage point change in real income seems to be considerably larger in the post-war period than it was in the Depression era.

¹⁶ The 1940 election provides a natural stopping point for our analysis, since thereafter politicians and voters alike were increasingly distracted from economic concerns and domestic policy debates by the coming of war. Limiting our analysis to the period from 1932 to 1940 also allows us to avoid complications attendant on congressional redistricting.

election cycle.¹⁷ Because there was substantial variation in the population of congressional districts in this era, we weight the districts by turnout. The explanatory variables include election-year income changes, income changes in the off-year preceding the election, percentage changes in turnout from the preceding election, and the lagged vote. The data on income changes are only available for states, not for specific congressional districts; for this reason, among others, we cluster the observations within states and report robust standard errors that allow for the possibility of correlated disturbances within each state.

***** Table 3 *****

The parameter estimates for congressional elections presented in Table 3 parallel those for the 1936 presidential election in suggesting a strong effect of election-year economic conditions. Although no discernible effect appears in the 1934 midterm election, the estimated effect is sizable in each of the other three elections of the early New Deal era, and the pooled parameter estimate for all four elections has a *t*-statistic of 2.8. By contrast, economic conditions in the off-year preceding each election had little apparent impact, with only one sizable parameter estimate (in 1940) and a *t*-statistic for the pooled parameter estimate of 0.7. Increasing turnout also had a positive effect on the Democratic congressional vote, especially in 1934 and 1936; however, even allowing for the larger mean and variance of turnout changes, the political significance of this effect was only about half as large as the election-year income effect.

The 1938 midterm election provides a convenient basis for comparison between the congressional election results presented in Table 3 and the presidential election results presented in Table 1. The estimated effect of election-year income changes in 1938 is similar in magnitude to the average estimate in the pooled regression; the parameter estimate for the lagged vote is almost exactly

¹⁷ We include cases in which either or both of the major party candidates also ran on minor party lines; but we exclude several cases in California in which the same candidate ran on both the Democratic and Republican

1.0; and the estimated effects of off-year income changes and turnout changes are both very close to zero. Thus, a simple scatterplot of the relationship between election-year income changes and vote shifts in 1938 captures the essential features of the regression analyses in Table 3 with fair accuracy. That scatterplot is presented in Figure 3. The figure is constructed so as to maximize visual comparability with Figure 2, which presented the corresponding relationship for the 1936 presidential election. The scales for the horizontal and vertical axes are unchanged, despite the fact that there was a good deal less variation in state-level economic conditions in 1938 than in 1936, and also somewhat less variation in electoral shifts. (For visual clarity, we summarize the electoral outcome in each state by showing the average vote shift across all of the state's contested congressional districts, with districts weighted by turnout.)

***** Figure 3 *****

It is clear from the general location of the data points in Figure 3 that economic conditions were much less propitious for the Democrats in 1938 than in 1936. Few states registered gains in real income, and many states *lost* between 5 and 10 percent. It is also clear that the overall relationship between economic conditions and vote shifts, represented in the figure by a turnout-weighted bivariate regression line, is noticeably less steep than the corresponding regression line in Figure 2. Nevertheless, the relationship is strong enough to account for differences of up to five percentage points in the expected Democratic vote over the range of economic conditions observed in 1938.

As with the 1936 presidential scatterplot presented in Figure 2, there is no obvious ideological logic to the most prominent residuals in Figure 3. The Democratic vote held up better in 1938 in Kentucky, Maine, and Maryland than elsewhere; but these states would hardly be expected to appear in the vanguard of support for a further leftward shift in policy during Roosevelt's second term. At the opposite extreme, the states that slipped furthest in their levels of Democratic support between 1936

and 1938 were North Dakota and Montana—prominent *positive* residuals in Figure 2—and Wisconsin—a state hardly remarkable, then or now, for its ideological conservatism.

As with the 1936 presidential vote, we probed the robustness of the results presented in Table 3 by examining a variety of alternative regression specifications. Table 4 presents the most comprehensive of these alternative specifications, which includes as additional explanatory variables the real income level in each state, the rural/farm population, the proportion of foreign-born whites, the proportion of blacks, and the incumbency status of each congressional district.¹⁸ As in Table 3, the first four columns in Table 4 report the regression results for 1934, 1936, 1938, and 1940, respectively, while the final column reports the results of a regression pooling the data from all four election years.

***** Table 4 *****

Generally speaking, the demographic variables in Table 4 have rather unimpressive and sometimes puzzling estimated effects, just as they did in our analyses of the 1936 presidential vote in Table 1. Income levels have inconsistent estimated effects across election years, and only approach conventional levels of statistical significance in 1940. The percentage of blacks in each state seems to depress the Democratic vote in 1934, increase it in 1938, and have no discernible effect in 1936 or 1940. The percentages of farmers and foreign-born whites have consistent but small estimated effects—but the fact that these estimated effects are *negative* seems odd in light of the prominence of farmers and immigrants in conventional accounts of the New Deal coalition. In short, there is little glimmer here of recognizably ideological responses to Roosevelt’s policies at any point in this sequence of elections.

Importantly for our purposes, including additional demographic control variables in Table 4 has very little effect on our conclusions regarding the political significance of short-term retrospections in

the building and maintenance of the Democrats' congressional majority. By comparison with the estimates reported in Table 3, the apparent impact of election-year income changes is somewhat smaller in 1936, somewhat larger in 1938 and 1940, and virtually unchanged in the pooled regression analysis. Prior-year income changes have no apparent effect in three of the four election years, just as in Table 3. The persistence of Democratic support from year to year, as captured by the lagged congressional vote, is a bit less impressive than in Table 3, but that difference is accounted for (and compensated for) by the inclusion of a separate variable capturing the impact of incumbency.

Having confirmed the robustness of the basic findings reported in Table 3, we return to the question of what they tell us about the nature of the New Deal realignment. We have seen that myopic retrospections based upon election-year economic conditions had a powerful effect on the congressional vote, as they did on the presidential vote in Table 1. We have also seen that congressional voting patterns displayed a good deal of continuity from year to year, reflecting the persistence of partisan attachments despite changing political circumstances. Putting these two facts together, it appears that short-term retrospections may have had important long-term consequences for the development and maintenance of the Democratic majority.

However, that conclusion requires one more step: we must assure ourselves that vote shifts deriving from short-term retrospections persisted from year to year along with those deriving from other factors, rather than being forgotten along with the economic conditions themselves. To that end, the regression analyses reported in Table 5 repeat the analyses in Table 3, but with the lagged vote in each election year decomposed into two separate parts—one reflecting non-economic forces and the other reflecting voters' reactions to economic conditions in the previous election year. The decomposition is based on a series of regression analyses like the ones presented in Table 3, but with the direct effect of economic conditions in each election used recursively to estimate the indirect effect

¹⁸ The first four of these five additional explanatory variables are only available for states, not for specific congressional districts. As in the case of income changes, using state values for each of the districts in a given

of the same economic conditions in subsequent elections.¹⁹

***** Table 5 *****

In 1934, the persistence of voters' economic verdict from 1932 was noticeably weaker than the persistence of the non-economic component of the 1932 vote. That may reflect the change in partisan control from 1932 to 1934, or simply the magnitude of the economic disaster that voters were responding to in 1932. In each of the other three election years, however, vote shifts based upon short-term economic conditions seem to have been at least as durable as those stemming from non-economic sources. Pooling the data from all four election years produces a regression coefficient of .738 for economic judgments internalized from the previous election cycle, as against .871 for non-economic judgments internalized from the previous election cycle. (For purposes of comparison, we note that the latter figure matches nicely with estimates of the stability of party identification at the individual level in modern panel surveys.)

The bottom panel of Table 5 illustrates the implications of these internalized economic judgments for the dynamics of the New Deal realignment. The first row shows the average Democratic vote share across non-southern congressional districts (weighted by turnout). The second row shows the portion of the Democratic vote attributable to contemporary economic retrospections, based upon the parameter estimate for "Election-Year Income Change" in the regression analysis. The third row

state probably induces considerable measurement error.

¹⁹ More specifically, we begin by regressing the 1932 congressional vote on the 1930 congressional vote plus 1932 income changes. The estimated effect of 1932 income changes on the 1932 vote (.4623), multiplied by the sum of the 1932 income change in each district plus the national income change, serves as our "Lagged Vote—Economic" in the 1934 regression; the 1932 vote in each district minus this economic component serves as our "Lagged Vote—Non-Economic" in the 1934 regression. In the 1936 regression the "Lagged Vote—Economic" includes the estimated direct effect of the 1934 economy on the 1934 vote (that is, .033 from Table 5 multiplied by the sum of 1934 national- and district-level income changes) plus the estimated carryover of 1932 economic conditions in 1934 (that is, .366 from Table 5 multiplied by the lagged economic vote in the 1934 regression); the 1934 vote in each district minus this economic component serves as our "Lagged Vote—Non-Economic" in the 1936 regression. We proceed in similar fashion to partition the 1936 vote into economic and non-economic components for incorporation in the 1938 regression, then partition the 1938 vote into economic and non-economic components for incorporation in the 1940 regression.

shows the portion of the Democratic vote attributable to previous economic retrospections as reflected in the parameter estimate labeled “Lagged Vote—Economic.” The final row subtracts the immediate and internalized economic effects from the average Democratic vote, leaving an estimate of residual Democratic support net of economic influences.

It should be obvious that these calculations involve a good deal of uncertainty, and the results should be considered no more than suggestive. Nevertheless, they suggest that the long-term effects of short-term economic retrospections played a crucial role in the New Deal realignment. The Democratic Party’s congressional majority in 1934 depended heavily on the persistence of partisan attachments forged in the economic crisis of 1932 and reflected in the statistical relationship between election-year income changes and Democratic votes in that pivotal year. The impressive persistence and accumulation of these economically-based partisan attachments in subsequent election years protected the Democratic majority from fatal erosion in the face of short-term economic fluctuations, most notably in 1938.

We conclude this section by reiterating how dramatically our interpretation of the elections of the 1930s changes the conventional understanding of the realignment. In our interpretation, the voters made no judgment about the ideological appropriateness of New Deal policies. Nor did they provide any cumulative assessment of the economic performance of the Roosevelt administration. Their reactions were decidedly myopic. In 1936, for example, they cared only about 1936 conditions; the substantial gains in real income in the preceding two years were water under the bridge. Roosevelt’s reelection—and the realignment—depended solely on that one year, and if 1936 conditions had approximated those prevailing in 1938 he probably would have been defeated. Judgments about the role of the government in economic life, the value of laissez-faire economics, or specific aspects of the New Deal program were irrelevant—or, at least, unnecessary to account for the outcome.

At the same time, however, the sequence of election outcomes manifested a good deal of persistence stemming in significant part from the extent to which voters developed partisan

attachments consistent with their myopic short-term assessments of economic conditions in each successive election year. The fact that times were good in 1936 had a significant impact on the 1938 congressional vote because much of the heightened Democratic support stemming from good times in 1936 carried over to 1938. Of course, the fact that times were also good in 1935 had no such effect, since 1935 was not an election year and thus was not incorporated in voters' party identifications or voting behavior in 1936 or, as best we can tell, thereafter. The result is not quite a "running tally" in the sense of Fiorina (1981), but more like a "limping tally."

The U.S. Experience in Comparative Perspective

Figure 4 summarizes the timing and magnitude of the Great Depression in eight democracies, as measured by changes in real national income or Gross Domestic Product. Although these data are, no doubt, subject to substantial measurement error, they convey some sense of the relative dimensions of the Depression in different parts of the industrialized world.²⁰ Britain and Sweden (in the lower left panel of Figure 4) experienced relatively mild declines in income in the early 1930s followed by substantial, steady increases through the rest of the decade. Germany and France (in the lower right panel) suffered somewhat steeper income declines in the early 1930s, followed by rapid growth in the case of Germany but prolonged stagnation in the case of France. Australia (in the upper right panel) experienced a sharp income drop in 1930 followed by a fairly steady upward trend through the rest of the decade, while Ireland (also in the upper right panel) seems to have experienced very little fluctuation in real income throughout the whole period.

²⁰ The four income series presented in the top panel of Figure 4 are calculated from data published in the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook* (Statistical Office of the United Nations 1949), and represent national income divided by the cost of living. The four income series presented in the bottom panel of the figure are calculated from data published by Mitchell (1992), and represent GDP in constant prices. For Britain and Sweden both series are available. They are very highly correlated; however, the GDP series suggests a somewhat sharper depression and recovery in Britain (from 89.8 in 1932 to 118.2 in 1938, versus 96.3 and 116.6 for the national income series) and a somewhat milder depression and recovery in Sweden (from 96.0 in 1932 to 123.1 in 1938, versus 90.2 and 148.5 for the national income series).

***** Figure 4 *****

The U.S. and Canada (in the upper left panel of Figure 4) stand out both for the depth of the Depression and for its duration. These data suggest that real income fell by 40 percent in the U.S. and by more than one-third in Canada; in both cases, 1929 income levels were not regained until 1937. The income data are paralleled by data on unemployment, which increased from 3.2% in 1929 to 24.9% in 1933 in the U.S., and from 4.2% in 1929 to 26.5% in 1933 in Canada (Statistical Office of the United Nations 1949).

In the U.S., the New Deal realignment replaced a profoundly conservative government with a liberal – critics would say radical – alternative. The ideological shift seems entirely sensible. Moreover, the subsequent recovery of the national economy seems to validate the efficacy of Roosevelt’s dramatic policy innovations: real income per capita increased by more than 40 percent from 1932 to 1940. However, the story seems a good deal less simple when we canvass the responses of electorates in other established democracies to the economic crises documented in Figure 4.

As it turns out, electoral reactions to the Depression produced long-lasting realignments of established party systems in a bewildering variety of configurations:

□ In Canada, voters punished the incumbent Liberal Party in 1930, giving the Conservative Party a comfortable parliamentary majority. The new Conservative government could do nothing to stem the economic tide; real income continued to plummet and unemployment continued to escalate through 1931, 1932, and 1933 (just as they did in the U.S.). Conditions improved markedly in 1934 and 1935 (again, just as they did in the U.S.), but when the Conservative government stood for reelection in 1935 real income was still well below its 1930 level and unemployment hovered near 20 percent. The voters responded by punishing the Conservatives even more vigorously than they had punished the Liberals in 1930; the Liberal Party, which had been repudiated by the voters only five years earlier, won nearly three-fourths of the seats in the new Parliament elected in 1935. Economic conditions

continued to improve markedly through the rest of the decade (just as they did in the U.S.), though with a notable dip in 1938 (just as in the U.S.). By 1940, unemployment was below its 1930 level and real income was more than 40 percent higher than it had been a decade earlier. The Liberal government was returned with overwhelming parliamentary majorities in 1940, and again in 1945, 1949, and 1953 before finally falling in 1957.

- In Britain, a minority Labour government faced the voters in 1931 and lost 235 of its 287 seats in Parliament. The Conservatives won a comfortable parliamentary majority, were reelected in an expanding economy in 1935, and remained in power through the end of World War II a decade later.

- In Ireland, the nationalist Fianna Fail party took power in 1932 and won a majority early in 1933. They have been the dominant party in Ireland ever since.

- In Australia, the vote share of the incumbent Labor Party fell from 49 percent (winning 46 House seats) in 1929 to 27 percent (winning 14 House seats) in 1931. The new United Australia Party won with 40 percent of the vote in 1931, the economy improved markedly, and U.A.P. held power through three subsequent elections in the next decade.

- In Sweden, a Conservative prime minister was replaced by a Liberal in 1930. Unemployment escalated from 12 percent to 22 percent over the next two years.²¹ Another election in 1932 brought the Social Democratic Party to power; unemployment peaked in 1933 and began to decline in 1934, and the Social Democrats remained in power (except for a brief interlude in 1936, and sometimes in coalition with other parties) until 1976.

- In Germany, the unemployment rate doubled (from 15 percent to 30 percent) between 1930 and 1932. Popular support for the Nazi Party doubled over the same two years (from 18 percent in the Reichstag election of September 1930 to 37 percent in July 1932 and 33 percent in November 1932). The 1932 elections produced a legislative stalemate that ended with the appointment of Adolph Hitler

²¹ Our unemployment figures are from the *United Nations Statistical Yearbook* (Statistical Office of the United Nations 1949).

as Chancellor in January 1933. In March, the Reichstag ceded its powers to Hitler. An election in May was marred by Nazi intimidation of the communist and social democrat parties; the former was banned shortly after the election, the latter in June, and all other parties in July. Meanwhile, unemployment fell steadily beginning in 1933 (back to 15 percent in 1934 and below 5 percent in 1937), real GDP expanded rapidly, and Hitler led Germany on to world war.

A crucial feature of this brief litany of electoral responses to the Depression is that the ideological interpretation customarily provided for voters' reactions in the U.S. does not turn out to travel well. Where conservatives were in power when the Depression hit they were often replaced with liberals or socialists, as in the U.S. and Sweden. But where liberals were in power when disaster struck they were often replaced with more conservative governments, as in Britain and Australia. Where the existing party system was oriented around non-economic issues, as in Ireland, voters rejected the "ins" and replaced them with "outs" whose policy positions cannot even be sensibly categorized as more or less ideologically appropriate to address the economic crisis. Where the timing of elections forced more than one major party to stand for reelection during the worst years of the Depression, as in Canada and Sweden, voters seem to have been perfectly willing to reject both in turn. Where coalition politics discredited all of the major parties, as in Weimar Germany, fringe parties were the primary beneficiaries of voters' discontents. Simply put, there is no consistent ideological logic evident in voters' responses to the Depression when we look beyond the American case.

The Development of Ireland's Party System: The Conventional View

...there is still a tendency to analyse Irish nationalism in the terms of its own rhetoric.
—Hepburn (1957: xv)

At the conclusion of World War I, Ireland was a colony under British rule. The Anglo-Irish War of 1919-1921 ended in a treaty giving essential independence to 26 southern Ireland counties while

keeping six northern counties under British rule. Most Irish political leaders favored the Treaty, and it was ratified by the Dail (parliament). Those opposing the Treaty, known as Republicans, wanted to hold out for full island unity in the name of Irish nationalism. The Civil War, 1922-1923, was won by the pro-Treaty side, as were the 1922 and 1923 elections.²² On principle, and to avoid the required loyalty oath to Britain required of members, the successful Republican candidates refused to take their seats in the Dail.

By 1927, a reorganized anti-Treaty party, called Fianna Fail and led by the redoubtable Eamon de Valera, had reversed course about entering the Dail and had become a respected electoral competitor. By 1932, less than a decade after the end of the Civil War, Fianna Fail took power in coalition with the Labour Party. And by the following year, de Valera won a majority in a snap election. Just ten years after the end of the Civil War, the losers of that war had become the government in a free democratic transition.

The conventional interpretation of the events of this period focuses on Irish nationalism. The Irish preferred more nationalism to less, the argument goes, thus putting Fianna Fail ahead of its principal opponent, the Cumann na nGaedheal party. Exhausted by the War of Independence and the Civil War, however, the Irish electorate wanted a party committed to peace and to working within the current governmental institutions. Thus so long as Fianna Fail refused to take their Dail seats, the voters would choose their opponents, led by W. T. Cosgrave. Hence in the June, 1927 election, running as a party committed to abstention from the Dail, Fianna Fail received essentially the same vote as their Republican predecessors.

Once Fianna Fail entered the Dail in the month after the election, however, the voters soon lost interest in the less nationalist party:

²² Both sides ran under the Sinn Fein banner in a unity ticket in 1922, but cooperation collapsed before the election and newspapers made clear which faction each candidate represented. The Republicans fought the 1923 election under considerable government harassment, including arrests of some of their candidates. Thus

In the last resort, Mr. Cosgrave's government rested on the opposition to the rule of violence. After the immediate threat of violence had been removed, his support began to crumble (Meenan 1970, 33).

The key to Fianna Fail's electoral success...was that they held the green card in the party politics of independent Ireland and, once in the Dail, played it with devastating effect (Fanning 1983, 100).

After the assassination of a government minister, the Cosgrave government adopted a hard line against their domestic opponents. Fianna Fail allied with other elements of the opposition, and forced another election:

A general election ensued in September 1927, and Fianna Fail's vote jumped an impressive nine percentage points, reflecting the electors' approval of the constitutionalist line (Garvin 1981: 156; see also very similar language in Rumpf and Hepburn, 1977: 103, and Carty 1981: 29).

By the 1932 election, so the conventional view would have it, the voters had learned that they preferred Fianna Fail for its nationalist principles:

As long as a majority of the electorate remained convinced that the institutions of the independent Irish state could not be entrusted to the charge of de Valera and his supporters, the Cumann na nGaedheal electoral stance as 'defenders of the state' remained appropriate. But the participation of Fianna Fail in the Dail changed all that and the slogans which had won the 1922 election sounded more hollow in 1932... (Fanning 1983, 107).

Thus Fianna Fail took power in 1932 and went on to win a majority early in 1933. They have been the dominant party in Ireland ever since, as Figure 5 demonstrates with data from Gallagher (1993). As Carty (1981, 29) put it, "Despite the rise and fall of other parties, Fianna Fail's position has remained one of unchallenged dominance."

***** Figure 5 *****

This standard interpretation of the founding of Ireland's party system has several attractive features. First, it corresponds to the understanding of political elites at the time. Second, it accounts in

while neither election is a perfect barometer of popular sentiment, the Republicans were clear losers with just

broad outline for the electoral outcomes. And third, it gives a central role to the Irish electorate for making their own democratic choices about their future after centuries of repressive British rule. After so much misery and so many failed revolts, the story of newly independent Irish voters enforcing a non-violent nationalism on their political leaders is a very appealing interpretation of twentieth century Irish political history. No surprise, then, that this view recurs over and over throughout the political science literature on Ireland.

But is it true? There are some reasons for legitimate doubt. First, the story puts heavy intellectual demands on the average voter. After all the violence and radical change brought on by the war of independent and the civil war, voter turnout never exceeded 68% in the elections of 1923, June 1927, and September, 1927. During these critical early elections, a third of the electorate could not be bothered. In 1923, the most important of the lot, more than 40% of the electorate was AWOL.²³ How dedicated was the electorate?

Were Irish voters really recalibrating Fianna Fail's commitment to democratic principles on the basis of its entry into the Dail? That style of electoral interpretation has gone out of fashion since the development of survey research, precisely because the ideological considerations and political debates that loom so large in the minds of politicians and professors leave so little trace in the thoughts of ordinary voters. Of course, in the immediate aftermath of a war for independence and a civil war, Ireland might be an exception. The point is that without survey evidence and without detailed analysis of electoral returns, neither of which currently exists, the conventional view remains an hypothesis, not a summary of persuasive evidence.

Moreover, the electoral details matter. Fianna Fail gained support from 1927 through 1933 in quite different ways in different parts of the country—sometimes steadily (Wicklow), sometimes quickly at first followed by a near-plateau (Cork Borough), and sometimes slowly initially, followed

27.5% of the 1923 vote.

by a jump (Dublin North). Rumpf and Hepburn (1977) discuss the regional and temporal variations with more care than most, but neither they nor anyone else has shown how the conventional nationalist view can account for these patterns. Indeed, the late, sharp rise in Fianna Fail support from 1932 to 1933 in Dublin, Donegal, Louth and elsewhere, when the voters had long been aware of where the party stood on constitutional and nationalist principles, is somewhat mysterious from this point of view unless one employs another ad hocery about constitutionalist inferences from the party's year in power. And that inference would have to have escaped the voters in Carlow-Kilkenny, Cork West, Kildare, Longford-Westmeath, Meath, Tipperary, and Wexford, where Fianna Fail support was steady or fell from 1932 to 1933.

What is the alternative to the conventional nationalist interpretation? The first requirement is that less be expected of the electorate. To be sure, there is little doubt that positions taken during the civil war continue to structure the views of those who participated in it and their families. The 1971 Irish civic attitudes survey asked those respondents who were at least 20 years old in 1922 whether they or a relative had taken "an active part" in the civil war and on which side. Of those who said yes, had no mixed participation by relatives, and had voted in 1969 for one of the two main parties (43 respondents), 79% had voted in 1969 for the party corresponding to their relative's position in the war (recalculated from Carty 1981, 93, who percentages the tables backwards).²⁴ Thus there is no doubt that nationalist issues influenced and continue to influence some voters.

Most Irish citizens, however, did not take an active part in the civil war. Their descendents inherit the political system created by the war, but in entirely different conditions. The old divisions make little sense today, and the politicians for whom they were real are retired or dead. Thus 56% of Irish citizens in a 1969 Gallup survey reported that the parties are "the same," including a majority

²³ To be sure, the electoral registers were imperfect. However, the valid votes in 1923 were 15% fewer than those of June, 1927, just four years later.

²⁴ That is, Fianna Fail for Republicans; Fine Gael for those pro-treaty. Fully 96% of those whose relatives were anti-Treaty in the civil war voted Fianna Fail in 1969.

within each of the three main parties, and another 13% did not know. Just 31% saw the parties as genuinely different. Yet 80% of those whose fathers were Fianna Fail members were loyal to the same party themselves, and two thirds of the Fine Gael fathers had passed that identity to their children as well (reported in Carty 1981, 80, 81). In short, the civil war-based Irish party system has outlived its meaningfulness for average voters, but it continues to be passed from parents to children, and it continues to structure Irish political life. De Valera indeed is a “long fellow” with a “long shadow” (Coogan 1993). It is not easy to square all these facts with an intellectualist view of the founding and inheritance of the party system. However, there is an alternate view in which the survey research findings are no surprise.

These days, defenders of democracy seeking to interpret elections usually appeal to “retrospective voting,” the notion that most voters approve or disapprove the incumbents at the polls without understanding much about their policy choices or ideological stances (Downs 1957; Fiorina 1981). In particular, the state of the economy plays a large role in this interpretation of elections. As we said above, our own prior work suggests that only very recent economic performance matters, not the overall performance of the incumbents. In a closely balanced party system, then, good times right before the election maintain incumbents in office no matter what else they have done or stand for, and bad times get them thrown out. As Mae West almost said, “Ideological goodness had nothing to do with it.”

Amidst all the lengthy discussions of nationalism, there are occasional brief hints of this modern view of elections in Irish political historiography:

The party’s [Fianna Fail’s] advance was further accelerated by the developing world economic crisis, which put particular pressure on agriculture (Rumpf and Hepburn 1977, 103).

Thus with [political rival Michael] Collins gone, and the government firmly set in the mould of orthodoxy, de Valera operated in an economic climate ever more favourable to an Opposition leader (Coogan 1993, 429).

Elsewhere, Coogan (1993, 408-409) also briefly mentions adverse economic conditions before the election of 1932, as does Sinnott (1995: 44), but neither makes explicit causal claims. Dunphy (1995: chap. 3), too, mentions poverty and poor housing in the Ireland of the Thirties, but he argues that it was the caliber of Fianna Fail's program for dealing with them, not just the misery they engendered, that helped the party at the polls. The great bulk of his electoral interpretation goes to other factors.

All these discussions of economics are skimpy, and many authors ignore the topic entirely. Thus Fanning (1983, 99-109) gives ten pages to the run-up to the 1932 election, discussing Fianna Fail's superior organization, the government's mishandling of the Liquor Act and its attempt to create a Red Scare, but nothing on the economy. Carty (1981, 100-108) emphasizes Fianna Fail's organization and nationalism, leadership, patronage, and creation of a sense of "moral community" through skillful communications, including its own newspaper. Garvin (1981, 165-167) in a brief treatment of the 1932 election focuses on Fianna Fail's nationalist appeal. Only Sinnott (1995, 101), employing the trade war with Britain and its impact on Irish agricultural exports to explain the 4.5 percentage point drop in Fianna Fail support in 1937, give causal priority to economic retrospections, and that only after the key period establishing Fianna Fail's dominance had passed. With rare exceptions, the economy is a sideshow in interpretations of early Irish elections, if it is mentioned at all.

Irish Elections and the Depression Era Economy

Ignoring economic effects on Thirties elections is a questionable intellectual strategy. The worldwide Depression was breaking out just as Fianna Fail took power. For that and other reasons, Ireland faced considerable economic distress:

Irish agriculture, as we have seen, was in trouble by the early 1930s. The market for all but cattle had collapsed by 1931, and the halving of cattle prices between 1930 and 1934, and the collapse of calf prices, hit large and small farmers alike. Agricultural incomes already

in decline—they had fallen by 12.8 per cent between 1929 and 1931—now feel further as ‘cattle exports fell in volume by 33.2 per cent between 1931 and 1934. The value of net agricultural output fell by 37.6 per cent between 1929/30 and 1934/35’ (Dunphy 1995, 151, with quotes from work by Orridge).

Irish cities were, if possible, even worse off, with some of the worst slum conditions in Europe, and many citizens fled Ireland for the U.S., Canada, and Australia (Dunphy 1995, 42, 46). It would be surprising if such drastic economic conditions, including serious malnourishment and even near-starvation, had no political effects. Yet the topic has gone largely unresearched.

A large part of the reason is the unavailability of data. The problems go well beyond the usual difficulties of census districts differing from constituencies, and both differing from administrative units. Irish gross domestic product figures do not exist before 1938. Rural unemployment is often disguised in the census figures as “family and relatives assisting” on farms. Relief was administered in Dublin by a Poor Law Union with no clear administrative boundaries, and relief efforts in the counties varied widely among places with similar official unemployment rates. Formal government unemployment surveys were done only in 1926 and 1936, and we have been unable to locate the “live register” figures by county for those officially seeking work in intermediate years.

Equally importantly, Ireland uses a system of proportional representation (the single transferable vote), so that constituencies have multiple seats and are relatively large in population. As a consequence, these noisy economic data, if they exist at all, fall into just 28 constituencies. Some of these “ridings” are homogeneous. Others contain very mixed populations of Catholics and non-Catholics, urban and rural voters, large and small farms, all jumbled together and obscuring what are undoubtedly quite different electoral responses. There are no electoral returns for smaller units.

Lastly, the returns themselves cover four main political parties in this period, plus fringe candidacies, splinter groups from the main parties, and independents. In the first 1927 election, the worst case, 25% of the vote went to candidates not affiliated with the four main parties. Thus party shares bounce up and down in particular constituencies because some well loved local notable has

retired, or has split from his party to run as an independent, or has founded a short-lived new party.

With so few observations, these local idiosyncracies do not always average out.

For all these reasons, statistical inference with Irish data in this period is very difficult, and distinguishing the conventional nationalist view of elections from retrospective voting interpretations is bedeviled by sheer lack of information. It will require more painstaking investigation and careful interactive statistical specifications than we managed for this version of the paper to discover how much the Depression affected Irish electoral outcomes.

For now, we content ourselves with making a start. For one sector of the Irish economy is well measured throughout this period—agriculture. Detailed crop reports are available by county from 1926 onward. Moreover, 57% of all employed males were engaged in agriculture in 1926, as were 54% of all males in 1936 (Department of Industry and Commerce 1929, Table 3B; 1940, Table 3B). These substantial percentages do not include small business owners and others in small towns whose clientele consisted primarily of farmers and who were therefore indirectly dependent on the crops for their income, nor those who shipped grain, meat, and live cattle to Britain from the ports, nor many others. Agriculture was the central business of Ireland in this period.

In 1927, most Irish land under cultivation was devoted to hay and pasture for livestock. Of the remaining 1.5 million acres, 650,000 were devoted to oats and 365,000 to potatoes, jointly more than two thirds of the total.²⁵ The same pattern held through the period of the late Twenties and early Thirties, with little variation until wheat become more important after 1934 (Central Statistical Office 1931-1937). Thus knowing how good the oats and potato crops were in a given year tells us perhaps the most reliable information we have about the state of the Irish economy in this period.

***** Figures 6, 7 *****

²⁵ The rest of the acreage was devoted to turnips with 185,000 acres, and smaller amounts of wheat, barley, rye, mangels, sugar beets, cabbage, flax, fruit, and other minor categories.

Figures 6 and 7 show the total annual production of oats and potatoes in the Irish Free State (the southern 26 counties) during the late Twenties and early Thirties (Central Statistics Office, 1931-1937). We have also indicated the years in which elections took place, along with the result. In both instances, the result is striking: oats and potatoes did well and poorly in the same years. Moreover, good harvests that preceded an election kept incumbents in power. Bad years reduced their majority or removed them from office.²⁶

Thus Irish nationalism is not the only possible interpretation of the broad patterns of electoral outcomes in Ireland in the Thirties. Myopic retrospection will also serve: If Irish voters turned against incumbents when the harvest was bad and rewarded them when the harvest was good, then the outcomes of the two 1927 elections and the 1932 and 1933 elections fall into place. The same economic perspective that undermines the conventional interpretation of the American realignment during the Depression subverts the standard view of Ireland during that period as well.

Now of course, aggregate correlations at the national level cannot be decisive. Neither for the economic interpretation nor for the nationalist view has the necessary detailed treatment of individual constituencies been produced to allay all doubts. For reasons already mentioned, doing so is a complex task, which we have not completed. We simply note that the case for the conventional view is weaker than it may seem. Irish nationalism may have played a role in the elections, but economic conditions may have been equally influential or more so. As de Valera, the leader of Fianna Fail during this period—a master of nationalist rhetoric but no fool about human motivations—put it himself, “If men are hungry, they will not be too particular about the ultimate principles of the organization they would join, if that organization promises to give them bread” (cited in Dunphy 1995, 140).

²⁶ The four Irish elections noted in the charts occurred in June, 1927, mid-September 1927, February 1932, and January 1933. The immediately preceding crops are therefore taken to be those of 1926, 1927, 1931, and 1932,

Social Credit Sweeps Alberta

The functioning of the democratic process in Alberta during the rise of the Social Credit movement provides a much needed corrective to the abstract concepts of the classical philosophers of democracy from John Locke to John Dewey.

– John A. Irving (1959, ix-x)

The politics of the Canadian prairie in the Depression years and afterward raise a variety of puzzling questions for any ideological interpretation of electoral politics:

□ Why did the adjacent provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan react so differently to the Great Depression, with the former electing a funny money party led by a charismatic preacher and the latter electing an avowedly socialist government? As Lipset acknowledged in a revised edition of his classic study of agrarian socialism (1968, xxii), “There has not yet been an adequate explanation, or even a detailed descriptive account of the factors involved that resulted in such different reactions from two quite similar social units.”

□ How did these ideological parties of the right and left both manage to build durable electoral pluralities in the years following the Depression? In Saskatchewan, the economic hardships seem to have led directly to the eventual demise of the incumbent Conservatives, as Figure 8 suggests. Conversely, the socialists profited. As Silverstein (1968, 435-436) noted, “While the socialists in Saskatchewan were elected as a reaction to the deprivations of the great depression, they were retained in the most extended period of prosperity the province had ever known.” Indeed, the socialists in Saskatchewan won five consecutive provincial elections and governed without interruption from 1944 through 1964.

*** Figure 8 ***

In Alberta, the Depression took just the opposite course, ruining the incumbent socialist party, the

respectively.

United Farmers of Alberta, as Figure 9 shows. Coming from near irrelevancy and winning for the first time in this period, the right-leaning Social Credit Party won nine consecutive provincial elections and governed without interruption from 1935 through 1971 (see Figure 10).

***** Figures 9, 10 ******

□ How did many of the same voters who regularly elected Social Credit governments in Alberta and CCF (socialist) governments in Saskatchewan continue to support mainstream parties in Canadian federal elections? (Bennett and Krueger (1968, 359) noted that “the prevailing pattern of Saskatchewan voting can be summarized by the remark: ‘They vote CCF in provincial elections, and Conservative in Federal. It makes sense only if you live here.’”

Bennett and Krueger’s own proposed solution to the last of these puzzles seems to us to go a long way toward resolving the first two as well. “The sense in this situation,” they wrote (Bennett and Krueger 1968, 359), “is clear enough; the farmers voted for those parties that furnished or were associated with solutions to their problems, regardless of ideological doctrine.”

Our final example of voters’ responses to the Depression comes from Alberta, where voters driven to desperation by a combination of national and local economic crises abandoned all of the province’s established political parties in favor of an improbable, totally untried alternative, the Social Credit Party. We have nothing to add to existing scholarship on the remarkable rise of Social Credit; indeed, most of our description of the events is repeated verbatim from the detailed historical account of Irving (1959). Nevertheless, the case seems to us to shed considerable light on the combustible potential of blind retrospection under conditions of economic distress.

“In 1935,” as Morton (1950, 286) put it, “the rural electors of Alberta refused to listen to their former leaders. They closed their ears to reason; in their despair, they sought only a promise of salvation.” Although early Social Credit members embodied a certain “reforming impulse” (Finkel 1989: 40), careful analysis of the subsequent vote shows that they were what they appeared to be—a catch-all party whose appeal had little to do with conventional economic cleavages or policies. The

voters' desire for "a strong-willed, dauntless leader who would take them out of the wilderness" (Irving 1951, 340) produced one of the most colorful and chilling episodes in the history of modern democratic politics.

As we have already seen, the national government of Canada had been in Liberal hands before passing to the Conservative Party in 1930. At the provincial level, an agrarian populist party, the United Farmers of Alberta, had been in power since 1921. By the early 1930s the U.F.A. was split between monetary reformers and socialists, but a conference of farm and labor leaders in the summer of 1932 gave the socialists the upper hand, and a successful by-election the following winter

gave rise to a buoyant optimism within U.F.A. circles concerning the future of their movement in Alberta politics. After years of searching, the key to that future had been discovered. It was not monetary reform, as many had long and erroneously supposed. It was socialism (Irving 1959, 148).

In the summer of 1933 U.F.A. leaders played a prominent role in the creation of a national socialist party, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Most of the U.F.A. members of the federal parliament pledged their support to the C.C.F., which in turn supported the U.F.A. provincial government of Alberta. Thus, Alberta entered the first provincial election campaign of the Depression era with what was, at least nominally, North America's first socialist government.

The central figure in Alberta's Social Credit movement was William Aberhart, a charismatic preacher, educator, and radio broadcaster. Though he had earlier dismissed the Social Credit philosophy as "crazy," he was won over by a highly popularized version he encountered in a book borrowed from a colleague in the summer of 1932. He "decided that Social Credit was exactly what the people of Alberta needed to redeem their province from the depths into which the bankers and financiers had plunged it" (Irving 1959, 48-49)—and he proceeded to give it to them.

Aberhart's crusade on behalf of Social Credit drew upon the resources and prestige of the Calgary Prophetic Bible Institute, a powerful religious institution which he had built and directed

throughout the 1920s. Thus, by happenstance, the Social Credit Party of Alberta was “an extension of an already well-established fundamentalist and prophetic movement. . . . Under his leadership the Social Credit movement glided almost imperceptibly from a religious to an educational to a social to a political movement, but throughout that evolution the people’s perception of Aberhart as a Man of God was never dimmed and was one of the principal factors in inspiring them with loyalty and devotion to the Social Credit movement” (Irving 1959, 50, 259).

Aberhart and his followers employed an impressive variety of organizational and propaganda techniques, including study groups, parades, open-air meetings, and a “United Mammoth Basket Picnic” (Irving 1959, 97-99). Aberhart’s radio broadcasts spread the Social Credit gospel throughout the province. Often the broadcasts featured a “Man from Mars” who personified the confusion of ordinary Albertans in the face of economic chaos. For example, in a special broadcast timed to coincide with the U.F.A. convention in January 1935,

The ‘Man from Mars’ appeared in person, leaning heavily on a staff and wearing a long white robe, a white beard, and Arab head-dress. His ‘perplexities’ were still uppermost in his mind. He could not understand why people were not receiving enough food and clothing in a land where food and clothing were being needlessly destroyed. Why were some people driving around in big cars, well-fed and prosperous, while others did not have even the barest necessities of life? Aberhart informed the Martian visitor that, if he could stay for the meeting, he would learn that Social Credit was the only way out of the present financial chaos, the only solution of the paradox of ‘poverty in the midst of plenty.’ (Irving 1959, 113)

Until just a few months before the 1935 provincial election, Social Credit retained the character of a social movement rather than a political party. Nevertheless,

During the summer and autumn [of 1934] Social Credit speakers did not hesitate to whip up the people’s resentment at the government’s seeming indifference to their sufferings. Small-town weeklies began to suggest in their editorial columns that thousands of people were persuaded that Aberhart was the Moses of a new economic deal. It followed that the Social Credit movement should enter politics without further delay.” (Irving 1959, 121).

The Social Credit platform called for the distribution of \$25 monthly Basic Dividends to every

citizen, the establishment of Just Prices on all goods and services, and a suspension of foreclosures pending the issuance of interest-free loans by the provincial government. Critics charged that

‘basic dividends’ could not be issued in Alberta because of constitutional limitations, and that, if they could be initiated, inflation would result. The prevailing attitude of educated people in the small towns to such arguments was aptly summed up by a local editor: ‘The hope of the people, long deferred, has made hearts sick. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. Perhaps people cannot be blamed for accepting unconstitutional and unintelligent prescriptions when constitutional and rational ones are platitudinous’” (Irving 1959, 121).

According to Irving (1959, 256),

interviews are replete with admissions of a lack of understanding of the technical mechanisms or procedures that would be involved in carrying out monetary reform or in the provision of basic dividends and the just price. All such matters, people constantly insisted, could safely be left to Aberhart and the experts he would call in to implement his Social Credit programme.

Editorialists railed in vain against “the uncritical belief of Aberhart’s followers in Social Credit as a magic formula” (Irving 1959, 86). The Economic Safety League, a pro-business interest group, complained that “the whole Social Credit scheme is impracticable. It can be defended only by those who close their eyes to simple reasoning or those who are utterly cynical and reckless in what they say to electors. The religious atmosphere of Social Credit blinds people to these dangers” (Irving 1959, 362).²⁷

²⁷ The critique of Social Credit provided in a pamphlet issued by the Economic Safety League (quoted by Irving 1959, 361-362) sheds light both on the flavor of the Social Credit plan and on the exasperation of its opponents at its apparent illogic: “Social Credit proposes to issue toy or make-believe money (which it calls credit) at the rate of \$10,000,000 a month. It does not disclose any method by which this toy money can be given the same purchasing power as Canadian money. . . . Existing provincial taxes are about \$15,000,000 a year. Dividend payments alone would require \$120,000,000, which is eight times this revenue. . . . Mr. Aberhart himself admits the need for revenue, but does not show how it can be obtained. His attempts to do so are childish. . . . In 1933, Retail Sales were \$112,000,000. How can anyone believe that these sales contained \$120,000,000 in price spreads. . . . Social Credit claims to be able to pay \$120,000,000 a year with a much smaller sum (such as \$10,000,000) if the toy-money is turned over fast enough. This is a crude fallacy. \$120,000,000 a year can be paid with 10,000,000 dollar coins, notes, or even dollar-certificates if these are used over and over again (12 times a year is the example chosen). But the Government cannot use the dollars a second time till it gets them back from the public. The process of getting them back is called taxation. . . . Since continued inflation will

The appeal of Social Credit no doubt stemmed in part from its resonance with existing political ideas; “in ‘explaining’ the causes of the depression it did not run counter to, but rather accentuated, the extremely hostile attitudes towards the existing economic system that had arisen in a period characterized by ‘poverty in the midst of plenty.’ . . . The response of many farmers in Alberta to the doctrines propounded by Aberhart was due, in some measure, to the fact that he was merely pouring old wine into new bottles. . . . Socialism, as contrasted with Social Credit, had no real roots in the Alberta community” (Irving 1959, 334, 227, 344).

The electoral potency of the Social Credit movement was enhanced by the weakness of voters’ attachments to the existing political parties. A non-partisan territorial government had been succeeded by unbroken Liberal Party dominance from 1905 to 1921, at which point an agrarian populist uprising brought the U.F.A. to power. According to Irving (1959, 230), “The traditional national parties had been under criticism even before the province entered Confederation; and after 1905 there is a continuous tradition of great dissatisfaction with the conventional party system. . . . The operation of democracy in Alberta in terms of the two-party system had therefore been tenuous and uncertain.”

As for the incumbent provincial government, as Morton (1950, 287) put it, “the U.F.A. was old in the sense that it had been tried.” The U.F.A. election manifesto

surveyed ‘the notable record of achievement’ of the farmers’ administration in many fields, outlined the social dividends being paid to the people of Alberta, and concluded by setting forth in sixteen clauses the further steps that were necessary for the realization of the ultimate objectives of the U.F.A. movement. Replying to the challenge of the Social Credit movement, the government claimed that it had brought Alberta through the greatest depression in the world’s history to better advantage than any other government anywhere (Irving 1959, 352).

Regarding the possibility of more radical change, the U.F.A. declared that it was hamstrung by Alberta’s shortage of sovereign powers and the province’s economic dependence on the rest of

make the toy-money valueless; and since the means for raising \$120,000,000 a year are absurd, the whole Social Credit scheme is impracticable.”

Canada.

The voters were clearly not impressed by these excuses. After his final campaign rally, U.F.A. Premier R. G. Reid overheard a young man “say, to nobody in particular, ‘Well, I guess Social Credit’s no darn good, but who’s there to vote for anyway—I guess I’ll vote for Social Credit anyway’” (Irving 1951, 330-331). Many others did the same. The result was a startling political earthquake, even by Depression-era standards. The fledgling Social Credit Party won 56 of the 63 seats in the provincial parliament; the incumbent U.F.A. won none.

Voters who lined up to receive their \$25 bonuses on the morning after the election were to be disappointed. Nevertheless, as Irving (1959, 290) concluded,

To Social Crediters the provincial election of 1935 was a glorious episode in a glorious movement. To the leaders of the U.F.A. it was a demoralizing ordeal from which they were never fully to recover. To Liberals and Conservatives it was an exhibition of mass hysteria unparalleled in the history of democracy.

As Johnson (1979) puts it, the Social Credit Party in Alberta was “an accident of history.”

Conclusion

Looking at evidence from the United States, Ireland, and two Canadian prairie provinces, along with an array of Thirties election outcomes in Europe, we have argued for an understanding of partisan alignments and realignments quite different from the usual contemporary views. Most voters, we argue, are overwhelmed by the complexities of politics in the best of times, and doubly so when they are under great economic pressure in recessions and depressions. Not knowing what the best policies are, they content themselves with asking at election time whether events have gone well or badly lately. Then they vote that myopic judgment.

When the state of the economy during the election season is particularly dreadful, as it surely was during the Depression, the voters feel more strongly about their retrospections. Then they form strong partisan aversions to the incumbents, and strong attachments to the parties that replace them if

times improve. The resulting preferences endure in less stressful periods and are passed on to their children, imposing a long-term stamp on the party system. The voters will adopt respectable ideological explanations for their behavior, the policies of the lucky party will be enacted, and a country may be substantially remade. The realignment period may then appear to political scientists and historians as an intellectual decision by the electorate. But we find in the cases we have examined that the evidence for all such interpretations is weak. Elites debate policy alternatives, but the electorate as a whole votes on another basis.

This view of democracy is less cheery than the romantic alternatives, and thus less appealing. Its skepticism raises a host of new questions. And it imposes a substantial obligation on those who propound it to make normative sense of the largely successful workings on contemporary democratic governments, an obligation we are not yet ready to fulfill. Nevertheless, just as a critical step toward democracy occurred when intellectuals lost faith that the king had been appointed by God, so also a similar step needs to be taken in shaking off blind obeisance to the divine right of voters. An empirically honest defense of democracy is not yet in sight. But the first step is to get the history right. We have attempted to take a step in that direction. There is a great deal more to do.

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Table 1: Retrospective Voting in FDR's 1936 Landslide

Dependent variable is the Democratic share of the two-party presidential vote in non-southern states. States are weighted by turnout. Ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates (with standard errors in parentheses).

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
1936 Income Change (%)	.396 (.166)	.390 (.156)	.283 (.084)	---	.303 (.204)	.272 (.119)
1935 Income Change (%)	.024 (.092)	.069 (.089)	---	---	.121 (.134)	---
1934 Income Change (%)	.019 (.087)	.057 (.083)	---	---	.150 (.107)	---
1933 Income Change (%)	-.130 (.147)	.065 (.140)	---	---	.093 (.179)	---
Income Level (1929 \$100s)	---	---	---	1.031 (.941)	.391 (.962)	.460 (.916)
Rural/Farm (%)	---	---	---	-.113 (.159)	-.051 (.162)	.003 (.158)
White Foreign Born (%)	---	---	---	-.391 (.180)	-.016 (.252)	-.102 (.211)
Black (%)	---	---	---	-.389 (.219)	-.248 (.242)	-.355 (.206)
Turnout Change (%)	---	.125 (.054)	.112 (.050)	.094 (.059)	.130 (.059)	.117 (.056)
1932 Vote (%)	.613 (.094)	.705 (.097)	.698 (.094)	.690 (.125)	.752 (.122)	.704 (.117)
Intercept	20.83 (6.12)	13.16 (6.63)	16.35 (6.05)	19.89 (8.44)	9.65 (9.20)	14.94 (8.19)
Std error of regression	3.07	2.88	2.83	3.04	2.87	2.85
Adjusted R²	.53	.59	.60	.54	.59	.59
N (non-southern states)	37	37	37	37	37	37

Table 2: The 1936 Election With a 1938 Economy

	1936 Conditions (Actual)	1938 Conditions (Simulated)
National Income Change (%)	+11.3	-6.4
Roosevelt Vote, Non-South (%)	60.1	48.2
States Carried (including South)	46/48	29/48
Roosevelt Electoral Votes (including South)	523/531	255/531

Table 3: Retrospective Voting in Congressional Elections, 1934-1940

Dependent variable is the Democratic share of the two-party vote in non-southern congressional districts contested by both major parties. Districts are weighted by turnout. Ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates (with robust standard errors in parentheses).

	1934	1936	1938	1940	Pooled
Election-Year Income Change (%)	.002 (.086)	.277 (.127)	.242 (.125)	.519 (.264)	.182 (.064)
Prior Year Income Change (%)	.024 (.075)	.082 (.079)	.033 (.125)	.265 (.167)	.026 (.042)
Turnout Change (%)	.051 (.021)	.068 (.018)	-.011 (.053)	.020 (.030)	.024 (.015)
Lagged Vote (%)	.773 (.054)	.876 (.048)	1.047 (.034)	.796 (.042)	.867 (.017)
Intercept	13.84 (2.99)	2.22 (4.25)	-7.56 (1.94)	5.10 (2.39)	Election fixed effects
Std error of regression	6.27	5.13	5.07	4.62	5.45
R²	.62	.78	.84	.84	.79
N (non-southern districts)	299	304	306	304	1213

Table 4: Congressional Voting with Demographic Controls, 1934-1940

Dependent variable is the Democratic share of the two-party vote in non-southern congressional districts contested by both major parties. Districts are weighted by turnout. Ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates (with robust standard errors in parentheses).

	1934	1936	1938	1940	Pooled
Election-Year Income Change (%)	.020 (.080)	.188 (.139)	.362 (.149)	.567 (.272)	.171 (.065)
Prior Year Income Change (%)	.029 (.081)	.068 (.088)	.049 (.122)	.226 (.148)	.052 (.046)
Income Level (1929 \$100s)	.475 (.968)	-.293 (.954)	.010 (1.168)	-1.180 (.664)	-.183 (.416)
Rural/Farm (%)	-.069 (.101)	-.095 (.101)	-.010 (.169)	-.235 (.100)	-.104 (.040)
White Foreign Born (%)	-.137 (.211)	-.104 (.268)	-.095 (.245)	-.027 (.106)	-.092 (.086)
Black (%)	-.502 (.217)	.143 (.225)	.485 (.198)	.024 (.154)	.058 (.117)
Turnout Change (%)	.039 (.020)	.072 (.021)	.021 (.046)	.043 (.027)	.025 (.015)
Incumbency (-1=Rep; 0=Open; 1=Dem)	.77 (.64)	.80 (.58)	.87 (.33)	1.20 (.68)	.81 (.26)
Lagged Vote (%)	.771 (.065)	.827 (.062)	.973 (.037)	.714 (.065)	.817 (.028)
Intercept	15.28 (6.43)	9.99 (5.59)	-3.36 (10.80)	22.55 (7.61)	Election fixed effects
Std error of regression	6.20	5.09	4.89	4.46	5.39
R²	.63	.79	.86	.85	.79
N (non-southern districts)	293	304	306	304	1207

Table 5: The Persistence and Impact of Economic Partisanship, 1934-1940

Dependent variable is the Democratic share of the two-party vote in non-southern congressional districts contested by both major parties. Districts are weighted by turnout. Ordinary least squares regression parameter estimates (with robust standard errors in parentheses).

	1934	1936	1938	1940	Pooled
Lagged Vote— Non-Economic (%)	.801 (.052)	.876 (.047)	1.023 (.033)	.792 (.043)	.871 (.018)
Lagged Vote— Economic (%)	.366 (.210)	1.227 (.561)	1.511 (.368)	.768 (.108)	.738 (.102)
Election-Year Income Change (%)	.033 (.076)	.164 (.070)	.310 (.134)	.550 (.266)	.166 (.046)
Turnout Change (%)	.053 (.021)	.063 (.016)	-.017 (.055)	.011 (.029)	.023 (.015)
Intercept	18.32 (3.81)	2.36 (5.14)	-10.88 (3.66)	7.46 (1.88)	Election fixed effects
Std error of regression	6.19	5.14	5.02	4.67	5.45
R²	.63	.78	.84	.84	.79
N (non-southern districts)	299	304	306	304	1213
Democratic Vote, Non-South (%)	54.7	56.3	49.0	50.0	---
Election-Year Income Effect (%)	0.6	3.5	-4.3	6.4	---
Internalized Economic Effect (%)	5.3	7.2	16.2	9.2	---
Residual Democratic Support (%)	48.8	45.5	37.1	34.5	---

Figure 1: U.S. Income and Incumbent Votes, 1928-1940

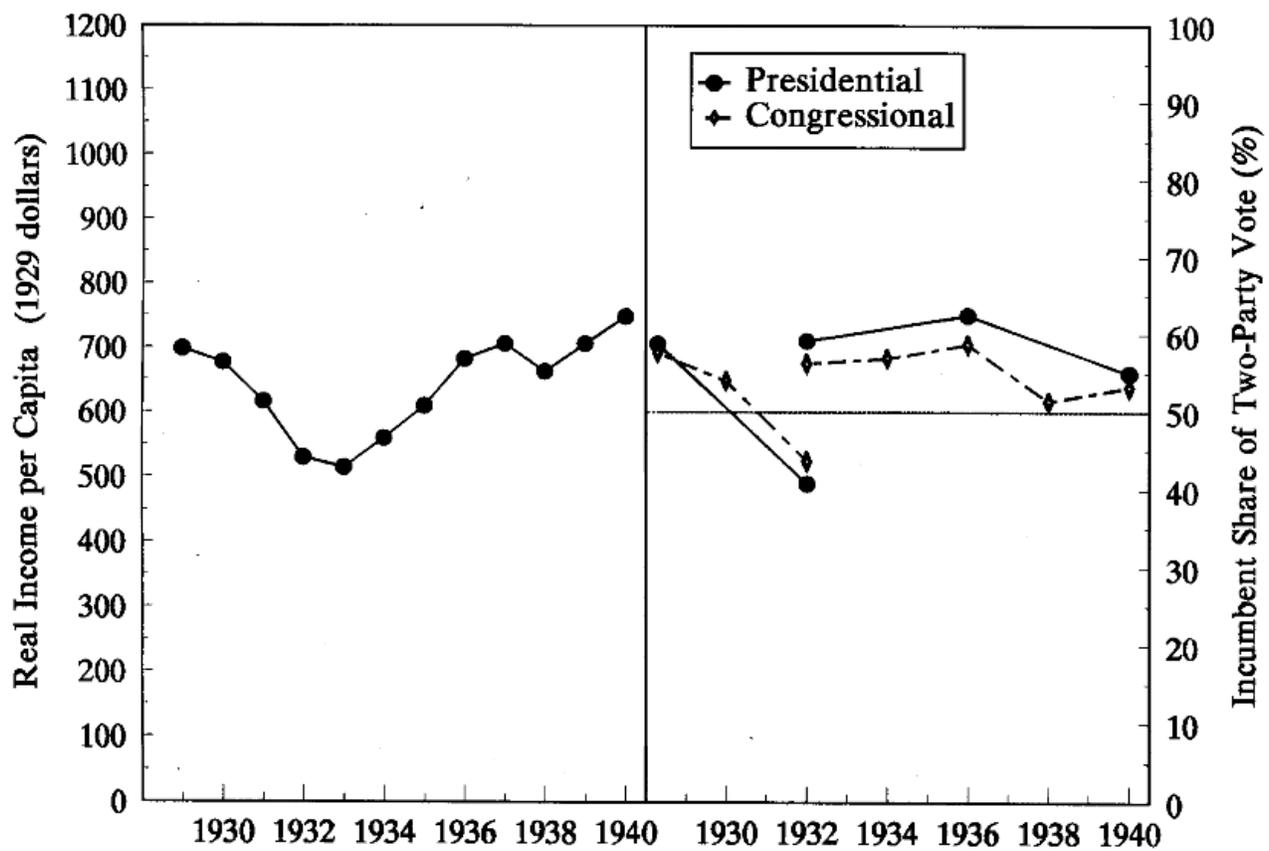


Figure 2: Short-Term Retrospection in the 1936 Presidential Election

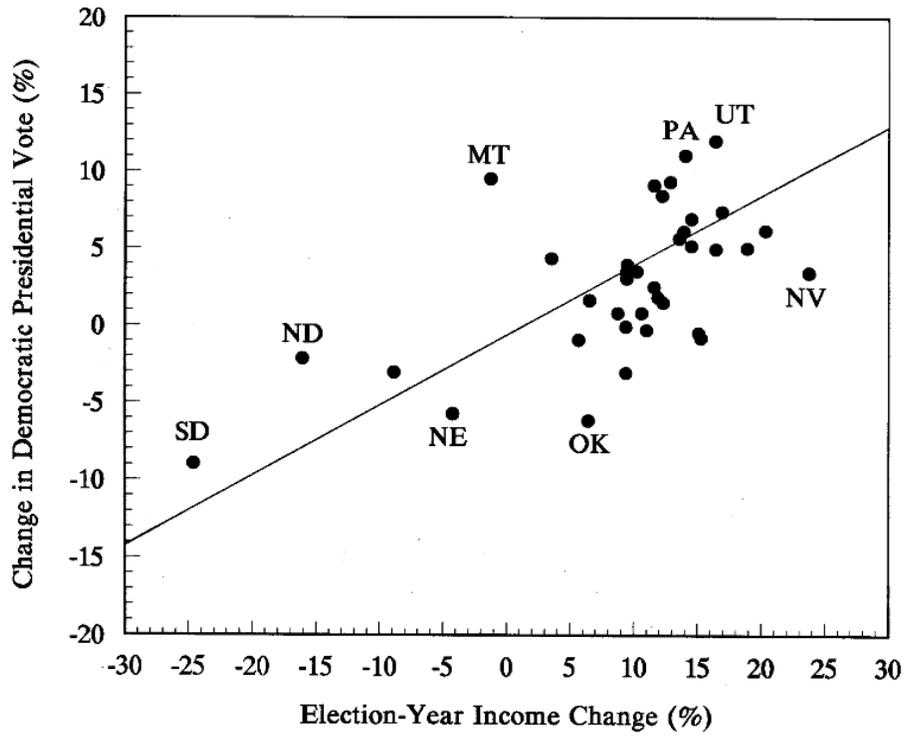


Figure 3: Short-Term Retrospection in the 1938 Congressional Election

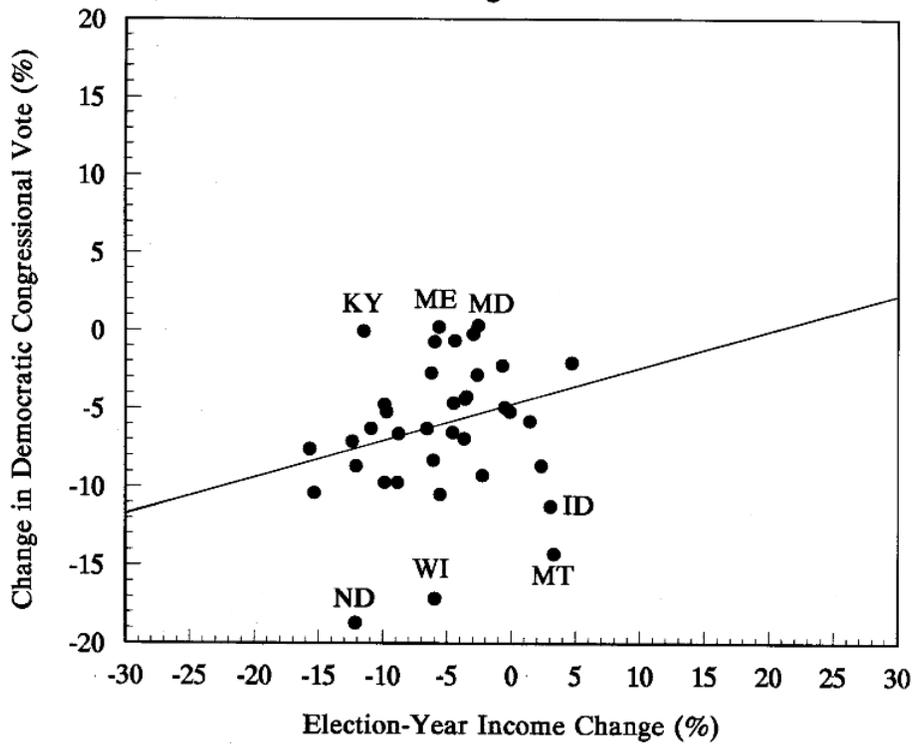
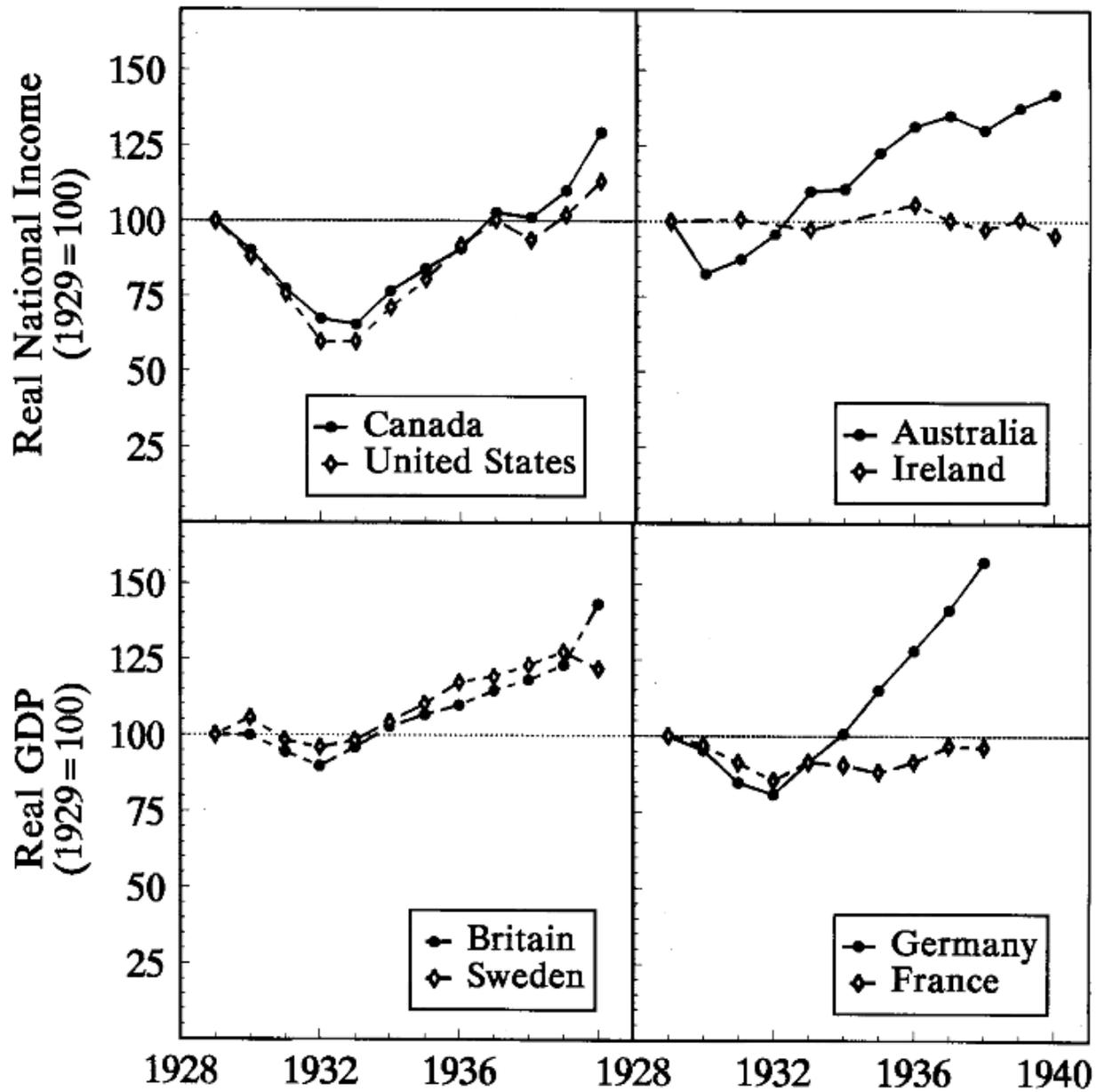


Figure 4: Depression and Recovery in Eight Democracies



Anti-Treaty Sinn Fein/Fianna Fail Election Outcomes

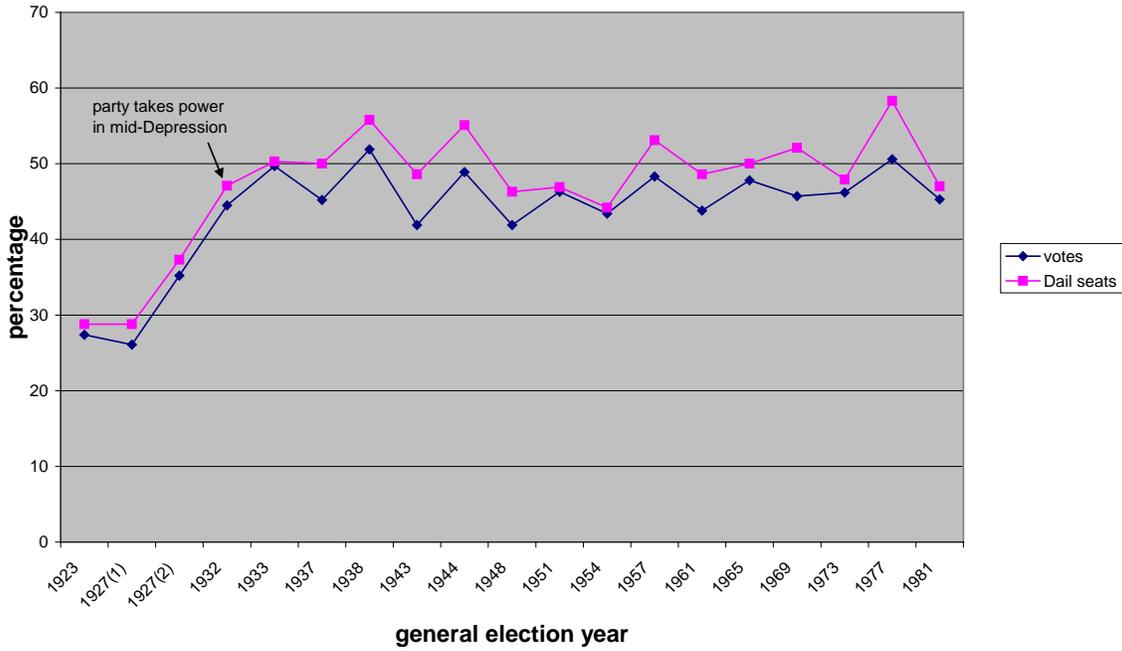


Figure 6: Average Produce of Main Crop (Oats) in Ireland

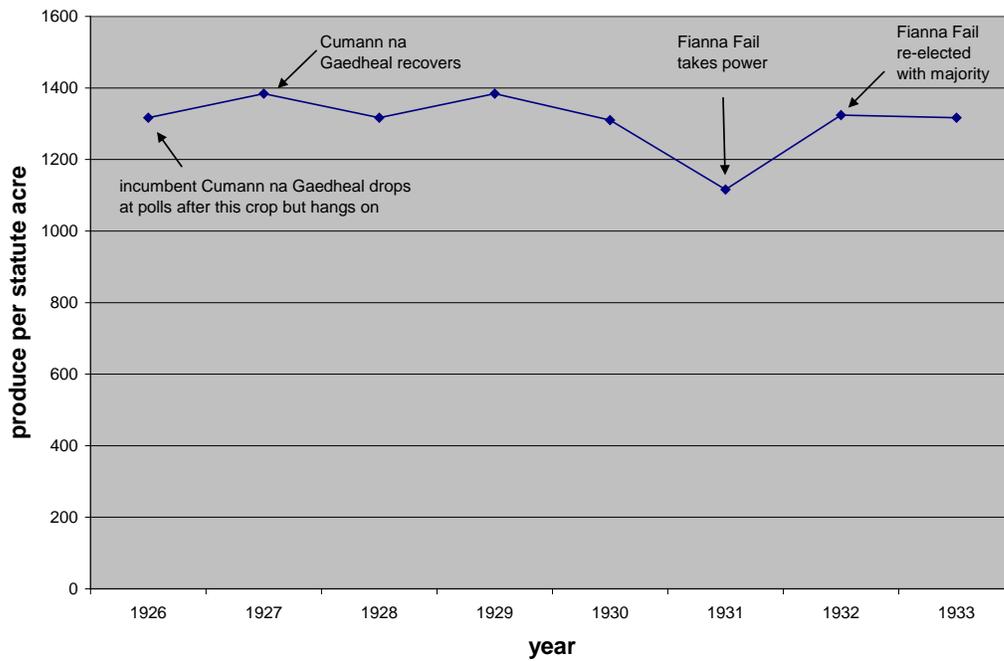


Figure 7: Average Produce of Second Main Crop (Potatoes) in Ireland

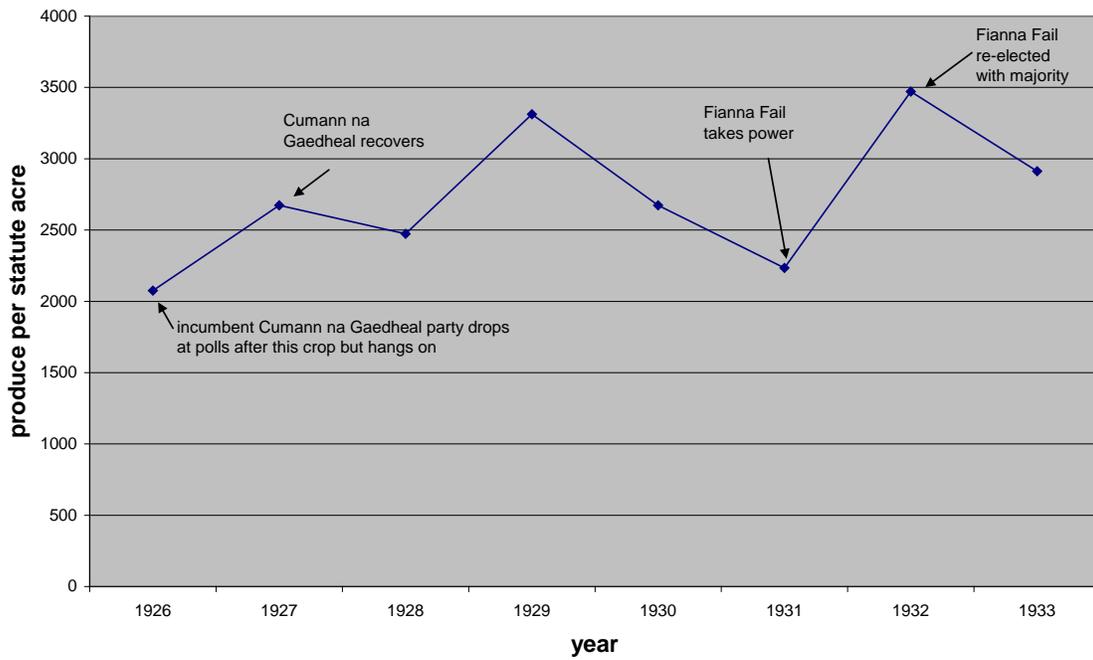


Figure 8: Saskatchewan Conservative Party Election Outcomes

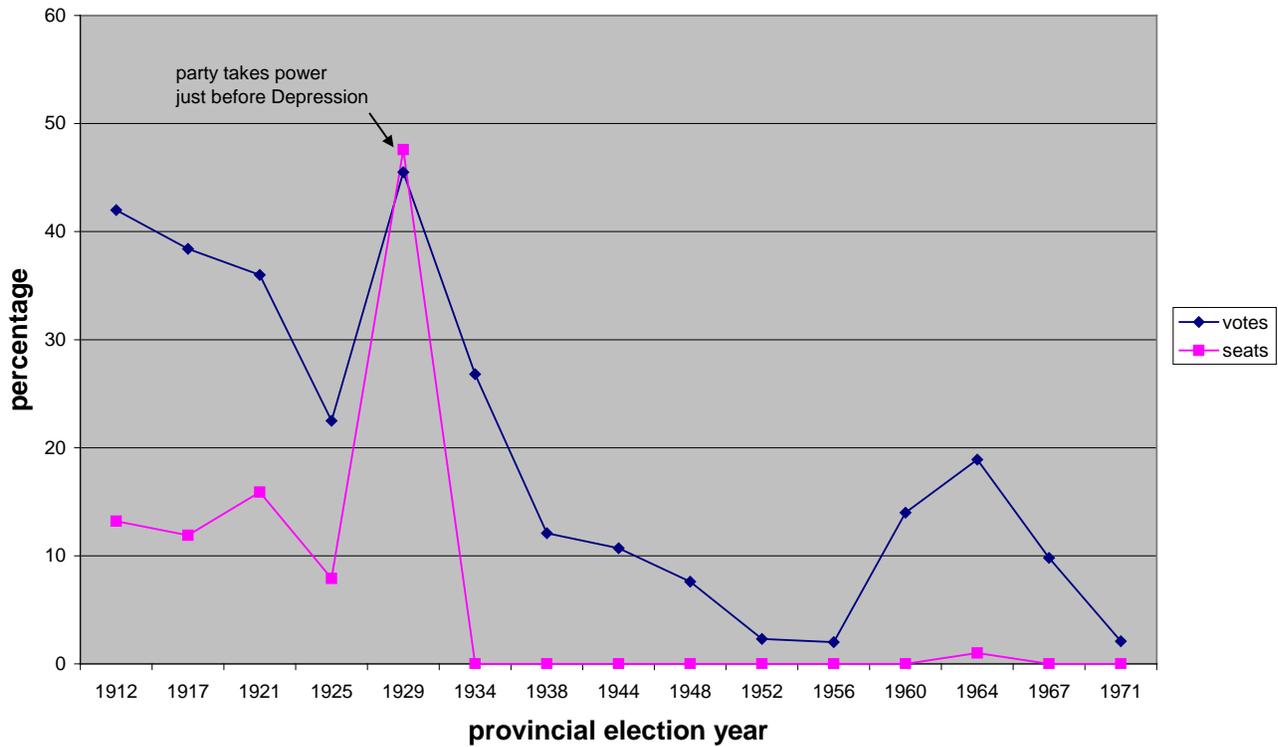


Figure 9: Alberta Farmer + Labor Parties Election Outcomes

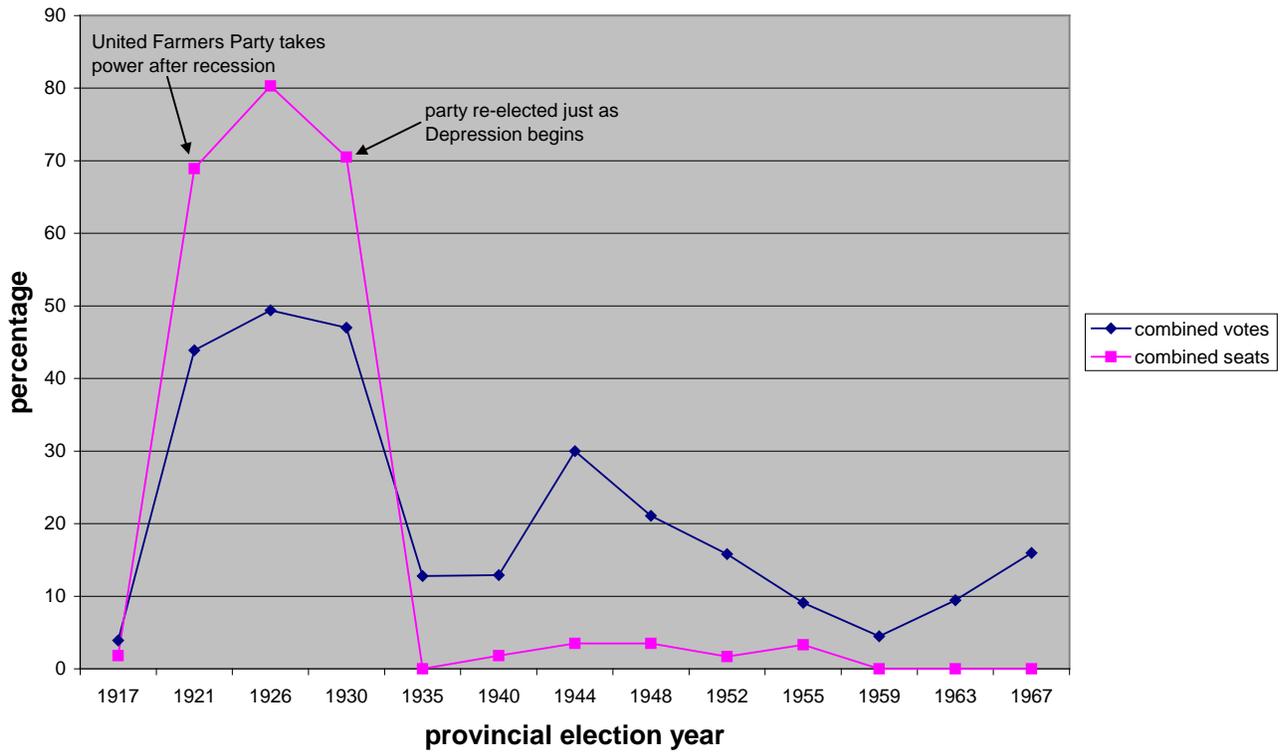


Figure 10: Alberta Social Credit Party Election Outcomes

