PART III

The electorate

9

The development of a party-oriented electorate

Part II of this book dealt chiefly with the development of party discipline in the House of Commons in the 1860s and 1870s. No obviously satisfactory explanation of this development has been found. The traditional argument, due to Ostrogorski, that the establishment of local party associations after the second Reform Act led directly to increased discipline does not hold water for the 1870s (Chapter 5). The increasing number and complexity of divisions in which MPs participated probably had only a marginal impact by this decade (Chapter 6). The desire for ministerial position, while no doubt important later in the century, probably affected only a relatively small proportion of MPs in the 1870s, simply because of the paucity of government posts. Moreover, the prospect of the reward of office did not always lead to higher discipline (Chapter 7). The increasing tendency of governments to threaten the House with dissolution, while the most important factor identified thus far, is extremely difficult to assess (Chapter 8).

In this part of the book, attention turns from an exclusive concentration on the voting behavior of MPs to include the voting behavior of ordinary electors. The main focus will fall upon three fairly well defined and narrow questions: (1) When did English voters begin to vote for parties rather than men? (2) Why did they do so? (3) What were the consequences?

In answering these questions, it is necessary first to clarify what is meant by "voting for parties rather than men." The staunch declaration of one Englishman in 1951 that he would "vote for a pig if the party put one up" (Butler 1952: 173) can serve as an indication. While this quotation may exaggerate the extent to which English voters are willing to ignore the personal characteristics and policy beliefs of their MPs, it certainly jibes with the textbook picture of twentieth century British voters. Citizens of the United Kingdom can register a preference for the executive only through their votes for the House of Commons. Since the

Cabinet is the effective locus of power and since individual MPs have relatively few political resources – scant control over campaign finances, little institutional power in Parliament, a small staff – voters naturally tend to use their votes chiefly as vehicles to affect party control of the executive. Consequently, voting decisions are based primarily upon the partisan affiliations of the candidates, rather than upon their personal policy beliefs or characteristics; voters are party-oriented rather than candidate-oriented.

Although there is a consensus that British voters have been and are party-oriented in this sense, there is no consensus on when they became so. It is natural to look for an answer by examining the historical development of the conditions which encourage voters to view their vote as a means to control the executive. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the power of the Cabinet over legislation had not yet developed, and private members of Parliament still played important roles in the policy process. Moreover, individual MPs controlled their own campaign finances and organization. All of this had changed by the twentieth century, and one might suppose that the development of a party-oriented electorate followed the changes. This and the following chapter will argue that the crucial change was the decline in the parliamentary stature of the individual MP. Indeed, it will be shown that no real change in electoral finance or organization occurred until *after* the electorate had become predominantly party-oriented.

The basis of such conclusions is a lengthy time series of electoral statistics which directly reflect the degree to which English voters behaved in a party-oriented fashion. These statistics pertain to elections held in the double-member districts which once dominated the English electoral system, and cover the century from 1818 to 1918. Electors in double-member districts had two votes, and one obvious measure of the degree to which they based their electoral choice chiefly on partisan preference is the percentage of electors who split their votes between the two major parties, voting both for a Conservative and for a Liberal. This percentage (and another which also taps the extent of party-oriented voting) has been calculated for over one thousand election contests held at general elections between 1818 and 1918. The trends in these percentages reveal a clear answer to the first of the narrow questions posed above: there is a permanent and large reduction in the split voting rate in the period 1857–68. While there is some continued downward trend in split voting in the period after 1868, it is small relative to the previous decline. The tendency of English voters to vote for parties rather than for men appears to be a permanent feature of English politics from 1868 onward.

The data presented in this chapter are intriguing also for the light they cast on the mutual impact that party-oriented voters and partisan MPs

had on one another. The broad outline of changes in party voting in the electorate is remarkably similar to the outline of changes in party voting in the legislature. As intra-party unity in the Commons increased after 1835 (Close 1969), non-partisan voting rates fell. Leading into the Parliament of 1841–47, which Aydelotte (1962–63) shows to have been highly partisan, the election of 1841 registered the lowest split voting rate of all general elections held under the terms of the first Reform Act. After the dispute over the Corn Laws shattered the Conservative party, a period of low party discipline both in Parliament and in the constituencies followed, lasting well into the 1850s. Party voting resurged decisively in the electorate after the election of 1857, achieving previously unmatched levels by 1868. A resurgence in party discipline in Parliament was visible by 1871, and unprecedented levels were achieved by the 1874–80 Parliament.

The correlation at the aggregate level between legislative and electoral party voting naturally prompts the question of why such a correlation exists. Chapter 12 shows that there was a constituency-by-constituency relationship: the more split votes an MP received when elected, the more often he dissented from his party's position in Parliament. The decline in split voting in the electorate, then, suggests an electoral side to the development of party discipline in Parliament. This suggestion is pursued in Chapters 11 and 12.

In the next section, a brief review of previous work relevant to the question of when English voters became party-oriented is given. In the second and third sections the data are described, and the basic pattern of evidence is presented in the fourth section. Why voters began to vote for parties rather than men is investigated in the following chapter.

PARTY-ORIENTED VOTERS

By 1963, R. T. McKenzie could write that "most observers are now fairly firmly agreed that a particular candidate, whatever his merits, is not likely to add or subtract more than about 500–1,000 votes to the total his party would win, regardless of who had been nominated" (McKenzie 1963: 5). A very similar judgment was given by Ivor Jennings twenty years earlier: "In general, the electors vote not for a candidate but for a party. A bad candidate may lose a few hundred votes and a good candidate may gain a few hundred" (Jennings 1939: 27). Estimates of the personal vote have increased for recent elections, but still remain well below those given for U.S. Congressmen (Butler and Kavanagh 1980: 407–10; Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina 1984).

Surprisingly, however, the question of when voters began to vote for parties rather than candidates has not been the subject of much sustained

quantitative research. There appear to be three different answers given in the historical literature. On the one hand, Alan Beattie (1970: 145) argues that "neither the fact of party voting nor its widespread acceptance as the normal state of affairs was established before the 1880s." Apparently agreeing with this position, Kenneth Wald, in his recent study of class- and religion-based voting, writes that "during the period of the third Reform Act, elections acquired their decisive modern function as the major mechanism linking the actions of the rulers with the wishes of the ruled. . . . As the concept of the popular mandate gained legitimacy, elections were treated as referenda upon current issues, and the distribution of the vote was taken as a measure of public reaction to party policy" (Wald 1983: 6–7).

A second perspective on the influence of party in electoral voting sees it first becoming significant after 1867. Writing of the period between the second and third Reform Acts, E. J. Feuchtwanger asserts that "members of Parliament and their leading supporters now saw public opinion swayed predominantly by national issues and by the manner in which the national leaders handled these issues" (Feuchtwanger 1968: 218). Similarly, J. P. Mackintosh writes that electors after the second Reform Act "voted for a party and a programme" (Mackintosh 1962: 162).

Yet a third, and very strongly stated, opinion on the development of partisan attachments in the electorate is offered by John Vincent. According to Vincent, the explosive growth in the number of newspapers after the removal of the Stamp Tax in 1855, and the highly partisan propaganda to which the new press exposed their readers, caused a rapid and "massive development of party loyalties throughout the country" in the 1860s (Vincent 1966: 82).

Although these answers are clearly at variance with one another, not much progress has been made in arbitrating between them. In part, this is because all three answers are based largely on local evidence which is difficult to compare across time. Of the authors cited above, only Wald makes much reference to electoral statistics, and he is interested in a different (although related) topic. Recent quantitative work on Victorian electoral behavior, while pointing in the direction of a more definitive answer, has not yet gone far enough.

This more recent and quantitative work can be divided into two streams based on the primary electoral document used. The most detailed analyses are offered by those scholars using poll books. Before the establishment of secret voting by the Ballot Act of 1872, voting at parliamentary elections was public and *viva voce*, and the decision of each elector was often recorded, together with his name, in documents known as poll books. Using techniques of nominal record linkage, scholars have recently begun to examine the voting behavior of individual electors over a series of

elections (Drake 1971; Mitchell 1976; Mitchell and Cornford 1977). While this work is extremely useful and obviously bears directly on the question of whether voters tended to vote consistently for the same party, thus far there are too few studies to support generalizations about the country-wide level of party voting across time.

A second stream of quantitative work on Victorian electoral behavior has used documentary evidence available for the double-member districts, which predominated before 1885. Using this evidence, T. J. Nossiter was able to calculate the rate at which Victorian voters in 25 northern and 12 southern double-member boroughs split their votes between the parties. Interestingly, Nossiter found no tendency for voters to split their votes less frequently in the 1860s, which would certainly count against Vincent's thesis (Nossiter 1975: 178). However, J. C. Mitchell's similar study of 32 "frequently contested" boroughs did find a "secular trend toward firmer party voting over time" and would lend more support to Vincent's contentions (Mitchell 1976: 121). Unfortunately, both Nossiter and Mitchell halted their investigations with the election of 1868, so that not only is it difficult to gauge the national trend of party voting in the 1860s, given that the evidence is in dispute, but no statement at all is possible about later years. So the question remains: When did party voting take hold in the electorate?

The aim of this chapter is to provide an answer to that question based on an analysis of split voting (and what we refer to as "non-partisan plumping") in over a thousand election contests held in 198 double-member constituencies in the period 1818–1918. The next section begins the analysis with a discussion of voting and voting statistics in double-member districts.

DOUBLE-MEMBER DISTRICTS

Virtually all English constituencies were double-member before the passage of the first Reform Act, with only five being single-member and two multi-member. In the period between the first and second Reform Acts, 53 English constituencies (21%) returned one member, 193 (76%) returned two members, and 8 (3%) returned three or four members. After 1867, the number of English double-member districts fell to 163, or 61% of all English constituencies. Only 24 double-member districts remained after the massive redistricting connected with the third Reform Act.

Electors in the double-member districts had two votes, which they could cast in any manner they wished, short of giving both votes to the same candidate. Thus, in a three-candidate contest, such as that held at the 1874 general election in Pontefract among the Right Honourable H. C. E. Childers (a Liberal), Samuel Waterhouse (a Conservative), and

Table 9.1. *Vote count for election of 1874 in Pontefract*

Candidate	Party	Plumpers	Total votes
Rt. Hon. H. C. E. Childers	Liberal	699	934
Major Samuel Waterhouse	Conservative	60	861
Viscount Pollington	Conservative	37	709
		796	
Candidate pair		**Double votes**	
Childers/Waterhouse		182	
Childers/Pollington		53	
Waterhouse/Pollington		619	
		854	

Note: Total persons voting = 1,650.

Viscount Pollington (also a Conservative), there were six legal patterns of votes. Electors could vote for Childers and Waterhouse, or for Childers and Pollington, or for Waterhouse and Pollington (these three being all the possible "double" votes, in contemporary parlance), or they could vote for Childers alone, or for Waterhouse alone, or for Pollington alone (these being all the "single" votes or "plumpers"). As it turned out – and this was typical – the electors of Pontefract employed all six legal patterns of votes in 1874, as can be seen in Table 9.1, which shows the number of vote patterns of each kind cast in that election. Elections in Victorian England (even those after the secret ballot had been introduced in 1872) were often documented in the format of Table 9.1 in the newspapers or at the backs of poll books, and it is on these invaluable electoral records ("vote counts") that the analysis in this chapter is based.

Two basic statistics are easily computed from vote counts, both tapping the degree to which voters based their electoral decisions on their attitudes toward the parties. The most obvious of these statistics is the "split voting rate," equal to the percentage of electors who cast votes for candidates of different parties. In Pontefract, 182 voters cast Childers/Waterhouse and 53 cast Childers/Pollington double votes, these amounting to 14.2% of the total voters. Hence, the split voting rate for this contest is 14.2%.

Another simple statistic calculable from vote counts, the "non-partisan plumping rate," is the percentage of electors who cast a plumper for a candidate when another candidate of the same party was available. For example, in Pontefract, 60 voters cast single votes for Waterhouse, thereby snubbing the other Conservative, Pollington. As these voters were

distinguishing between members of the same party, they evidently employed criteria other than partisan preference.[1]

Both the split voting (SV) and non-partisan plumping (NPP) rates (or similar measures) have been employed by various scholars in previous studies (e.g., Miller 1971; Nossiter 1975; Speck and Gray 1975; Mitchell 1976; Hanham 1978; Phillips 1982). However, for Victorian elections, the only major investigations are those of Nossiter and Mitchell mentioned in the previous section, and some limitations of these studies should be noted. First, both scholars deal only with borough contests – in Nossiter's case, those contests documented in Bean (1890), which he supplements with some southern borough contests for comparison; and in Mitchell's case, those contests held in 32 "frequently contested" boroughs. Second, both studies cover only the 1832–68 period (although Mitchell does have a few figures for 1874 and 1880). The data set collected for this chapter was intended to contain all available vote counts – whether for county or borough contests – in the period 1832–1918. While falling a bit short of that ideal, the sample is large enough to permit generalizations about nation-wide trends in English voting behavior after 1832 with some confidence. A smaller sample covering the period 1818–31 is included for comparison.

THE DATA

In total, the data set contains 1,085 vote counts from the twenty-five general elections held between 1818 and 1918.[2] The yearly distribution

[1] The term "non-partisan plumper" is in some respects rather misleading, and indeed I have been advised not to use it. The problem is that one of the usual denotations of "partisan" is "a militant supporter of a party, cause, faction, person or idea." Yet what I call "non-partisan" plumpers were often cast by persons whom one might describe as partisans in the above sense. The sense in which I use the term here is closer to that indicated in the phrase "partisan politics." A plumper is non-partisan if the person casting it could have used his other vote to support another candidate of the same party, but did not, indicating the use of criteria other than the party label.

[2] Five major sources were used to collect these ballot counts: (1) Smith (1973) for the period 1832–47; (2) Bean (1890) for the six northern counties in 1832–80; (3) the collections of poll books in the Institute of Historical Research (University of London), the Guildhall Library (City of London), and the British Library for the period 1832–68; (4) the collection of newspapers at the Colindale Annex of the British Library for the period 1868–80; (5) Craig (1974) for the period 1885–1910. Approximately 15% of the ballot counts in the data set have been "reconstructed." That is, the original source document gave only the plumpers (or some other partial information), from which it was possible to infer the rest of the information based on certain mathematical relationships holding between the aggregate totals and ballot count information. The method used has been described in Mitchell (1976: 112). All ballot counts have been checked for internal consistency. That is, each candidate's

of these is given in Table 9.2. As can be seen, the number of vote counts is considerably greater on average for the twelve elections held between 1832 and 1880 (73.5) than for the eight elections held afterward (15.4) or the five elections held before (16.0). The size of the yearly subsamples can be gauged relative to a number of standards. First, one can compare the number of vote counts actually collected to the number which might possibly have been collected. This latter number is equal simply to the number of double-member constituencies which were contested; for if a constituency was not contested – that is, if there were no more candidates seeking office than there were seats to be had – no poll of the voters was taken at all, and hence, of course, no record of their votes was possible. By this standard, the sample after 1832 is fairly large. In the period 1832–80, generally over 50%, and on average over 60%, of the contested double-member constituencies in any given year are represented in the yearly subsample; after 1885, 77% of the contested double-member constituencies are represented in the average year. Before 1832, on the other hand, an average of only 21% of double-member contests are documented in the yearly subsamples.

A second consideration in assessing the size of the sample is the number of voters whose behavior is summarized in the data. For each year after 1832 the total number of persons who voted in constituencies for which a vote count exists is given in column 3 of Table 9.2, and this figure is expressed as a percentage of all voters, and of all registered electors, in columns 4 and 5. The average number of persons represented in the sample in any given year between 1832 and 1910 is 237,725. Before 1885, the yearly subsamples constitute on average 31.9% of the total English voting population, and 20.7% of the total registered population (where both these populations refer to the whole of England, not just to English double-member districts). After 1885, the corresponding figures are much lower, 6.8% and 4.8%, respectively.

Although the sample is not random, between 1832 and 1880 it is broadly representative of the target population, all regions of the country having substantial representation in each yearly subsample. The only obvious bias is a rather mild tendency for the borough population to be oversampled relative to the county population. As seen in Table 9.3, which refers to a subsample to be explained presently, about 55% of all contested boroughs were sampled on average (i.e., had ballot counts),

total number of votes has been calculated by adding up his plumpers and double votes, and this figure has been compared to the totals given in the source document (if available) or to the official returns. In roughly 80% of the cases, the two figures agree exactly. In only 13 ballot counts do the figures disagree by more than 3%, and these have been excluded from analysis.

Table 9.2. *Available vote counts, 1818–1910*

Year	Number of contests with vote counts	Percentage of all double-member contests[a]	Number of electors involved	As percentage of all English voters[b]	Percentage of all registered electors[c]
1818	13	15	23,157	—[d]	—
1820	7	10	11,953	—	—
1826	19	23	25,653	—	—
1830	20	26	40,500	—	—
1831	21	32	24,109	—	—
1832	102	68	231,768	51	38
1835	90	73	140,585	37	22
1837	89	64	189,291	37	26
1841	84	77	155,778	37	20
1847	80	79	140,029	36	17
1852	68	55	129,702	24	15
1857	52	49	112,880	25	13
1859	53	54	96,762	22	11
1865	63	52	150,402	26	16
1868	60	47	313,824	22	17
1874	55	47	439,687	29	21
1880	86	61	741,540	37	32
1885	17	85	214,491	6	5
1886	15	79	177,566	8	4
1892	14	74	205,780	6	5
1895	15	75	218,817	7	5
1900	14	82	218,559	8	4
1906	15	68	270,992	6	5
1910 (Jan.)	16	73	299,377	6	5
1910 (Dec.)	17	81	306,675	7	5

[a]Column 2 gives the figures in column 1 as percentages of the number of double-member constituencies which were contested. Percentages for the first four years are based on Mitchell's figures for the total number of contests in English constituencies, double-member or not (Mitchell 1967: 116).

[b]Column 4 gives the figures in column 3 as percentages of the estimated numbers of voters in all English constituencies (both single- and multi-member). Before 1885, the estimated number of voters is arrived at by taking no. contested constituencies / no. constituencies × no. registered electors. Because county constituencies (which were larger) tended to be more often uncontested, and because we do not take account of turnout (essentially assuming that it was 100%), the estimated numbers of voters for years before 1885 should be overestimates, and hence the size of the sample relative to the population of voters is probably understated. Exact figures are available for the number of voters after 1885.

[c]Column 5 gives the figures in column 3 as percentages of the total registered electorate in England (not confined to the electorate in double-member districts).

[d]Dash indicates data not available.

Table 9.3. *Usable vote counts, 1818–1910*

Year	Number of vote counts in						Total number of voters	Percentage of all English voters
	Boroughs	%	Counties	%	All constituencies	%		
1818	8	—	5	—	13	15	23,157	—
1820	5	—	2	—	7	10	11,953	—
1826	16	—	3	—	19	23	25,653	—
1830	15	—	5	—	20	26	40,500	—
1831	16	—	5	—	21	32	24,109	—
1832	46	—	30	79	76	50	179,228	40
1835	71	40	10	56	81	66	126,024	33
1837	72	66	16	53	88	63	188,199	37
1841	73	66	9	50	82	74	153,173	36
1847	58	79	6	46	64	63	104,310	27
1852	49	66	6	29	55	44	93,697	17
1857	38	48	6	33	44	42	100,587	22
1859	43	43	4	30	47	48	83,183	19
1865	50	51	11	50	61	50	149,958	26
1868	28	41	23	50	51	40	282,532	20
1874	35	35	18	56	53	45	407,669	26
1880	50	58	34	63	84	60	704,890	35
1885	15	75	0	—	15	75	179,486	5
1886	15	79	0	—	15	79	177,566	8
1892	14	74	0	—	14	74	205,780	6
1895	12	60	0	—	12	60	171,034	6
1900	12	71	0	—	12	71	184,864	7
1906	15	68	0	—	15	68	270,992	6
1910 (Jan.)	16	73	0	—	16	73	299,377	6
1910 (Dec.)	17	81	0	—	17	81	306,975	7

[a] Data not available.

while only about 47% of contested counties were sampled.[3] The explanation for this seems to be that poll books and vote counts were more difficult to compile for larger constituencies.

After 1885, constituencies in the sample are no longer representative of English constituencies generally, since only 23 provincial boroughs (ignoring London, for which no data survive) remained as double-member districts after the third Reform Act. These provincial boroughs were geographically dispersed, however, including, for example, Bath, Blackburn, Derby, Ipswich, Portsmouth, and York, and they are not unrepresentative, at least before 1885: if average SV and NPP rates for these boroughs are computed for each general election to 1880, these figures correlate at .92 with the averages based on the full sample.

Similar statements can be made about the pre-1832 subsample. Although only a relative handful of constituencies are sampled each year, they tend to be fairly dispersed geographically and are not unrepresentative in the sense that, after 1832, they behave similarly to the sample as a whole.

For the most part, the data will be interpreted here as a sample of voters from the entire English voting population, rather than as a sample of double-member election contests from the population of all contests, on the reasoning that what is of interest is nation-wide trends in individual voting behavior. Practically speaking, all this means is that instead of computing SV and NPP rates for each constituency, and then taking the simple average of these figures as an indication of national voting behavior, a weighted average of the constituency figures (where the weights are the total numbers of voters) will be used. This is equivalent to pooling all the voters in each yearly subsample and computing the statistics directly, as if the whole subsample were one constituency. None of the conclusions reached in the text depends on the choice of weighted rather than simple averages.

Since pooling all voters into a national sample could hide significant differences in voting behavior between county and borough electorates, I have computed SV and NPP rates for counties and boroughs separately. The distinction between large and small boroughs and the possibility of regional variation have also been investigated and are discussed later.

For present purposes, another factor that merits attention is the type of election contests contained in the yearly subsamples. For example, a contest between a Conservative, a Liberal, and a Chartist must by definition have a zero NPP rate and will probably have a high SV rate. But it is unlikely that the split votes cast in such a contest reflect clearly "non-

[3] Of course, since there were fewer counties than boroughs, and since counties were contested far less frequently than boroughs, the *number* of ballot counts in counties is much less than the number in boroughs.

partisan" motivations. Hence, such three-way contests, and indeed, any contests involving more than two parties (which are rare in any event), will be excluded from analysis. Similarly, contests between three Liberals must by definition have a zero SV rate and will probably have a high NPP rate. But once again, it seems inappropriate to consider plumpers cast in such an election as indications of non-partisan motivations. Hence, any contest with more than two candidates of any party (also a rarity) will be excluded from analysis.

These exclusions – which are not crucial to any of the conclusions that follow – mean that only two kinds of contests will be considered in the tables that follow: those with two candidates of one party and a lone member of another (two-against-one contests), and those involving a pair of candidates from each of two parties (two-against-two contests).[4] These contest types were by far the most frequent, together accounting for 901 contests, or 89.7% of the full sample, after 1832. Before 1832, vote counts were collected only for two-against-one and two-against-two contests, so that all 80 pre-1832 contests appear in the tables to come. The size of the post-1832 data set can be gauged from the figures in Table 9.3, which also gives a breakdown of the information on vote counts for boroughs and counties separately. On average, the yearly subsamples before 1885 represent 28.2% of the total English voting population. After 1885, this average falls to 6.4%.

A distinction between two-against-one and two-against-two contests should be noted. One reason suggested by contemporaries for split voting in two-against-one contests was that the followers of the party putting up only one candidate had an incentive to use their second votes to help the lesser evil from the other party. This incentive to cross vote did not exist when there were two candidates from both parties, and it was often argued that running a single candidate was bad strategy, since the second votes of one's own partisans might be the cause of defeat (Hanham 1978: 197). Whether running one candidate was bad strategy or not, contemporaries were correct that the incentive to cast split votes in two-against-one contests was greater than in two-against-two contests; the mean split voting rate in the 594 three-candidate contests from the post-1832 sample was 17.1%, while that in the 307 four-candidate races was 6.2%. Hence, if the yearly averages are not to reflect simply changes in the mix of

[4]It should be noted that in a two-against-one or two-against-two contest, candidates of the same party were by no means necessarily united. Indeed, a general prejudice against candidates "coalescing" and running joint campaigns lasted into the 1830s and beyond, and relations between candidates of the same party were not always amicable. See Davis (1972: 113–14, 117, 132–33, 208), Olney (1973: 129), and Nossiter (1975: 48).

Table 9.4. *Trends in split voting, 1818–1910*

	All constituencies		Boroughs		Counties	
Year	%	N	%	N	%	N
1818	26.6	23,157				
1820	19.1	11,953				
1826	19.1	25,653				
1830	26.2	40,500				
1831	14.7	24,109				
1832	15.6	179,228	20.0	44,848	14.1	134,380
1835	18.8	126,024	20.9	81,608	14.8	44,416
1837	10.6	188,199	13.0	92,151	8.2	96,048
1841	7.3	153,173	8.1	98,886	5.8	54,307
1847	22.9	104,310	25.3	75,995	16.3	28,315
1852	16.3	93,697	16.6	64,497	15.7	29,200
1857	19.0	100,587	17.7	67,300	21.5	33,287
1859	11.6	83,183	13.6	60,996	6.2	22,187
1865	8.5	149,985	10.3	81,129	6.3	68,856
1868	5.5	282,532	6.0	109,836	5.2	172,696
1874	4.8	407,669	5.1	258,722	4.2	148,947
1880	4.5	704,890	4.7	397,073	4.3	307,817
1885	3.5	179,486	3.5	179,486	—[a]	—
1886	2.3	177,566	2.3	177,566	—	—
1892	2.7	205,780	2.7	205,780	—	—
1895	3.0	171,034	3.0	171,034	—	—
1900	4.4	184,864	4.4	184,864	—	—
1906	2.7	270,992	2.7	270,992	—	—
1910 (Jan.)	1.8	299,377	1.8	299,377	—	—
1910 (Dec.)	2.0	306,675	2.0	306,675	—	—

Note: The table is read as follows; In 1832, of the 179,228 voters in the sample, 15.6% split their votes; of the 44,848 voters in boroughs, 20.0% split their votes; and so on.
[a]There were no double-member county districts after 1885.

contest types (rather than changes in voting behavior), it is sensible to consider controlling for contest type.

EVIDENCE ON NON-PARTISAN VOTING IN THE ELECTORATE, 1818–1910

The basic trends in voting behavior at English elections between 1818 and the fourth Reform Act can be seen in Table 9.4 and Figure 9.1 (for split voting) and in Table 9.5 (for non-partisan plumping). Averages are presented for all constituencies, and for boroughs and counties separately,

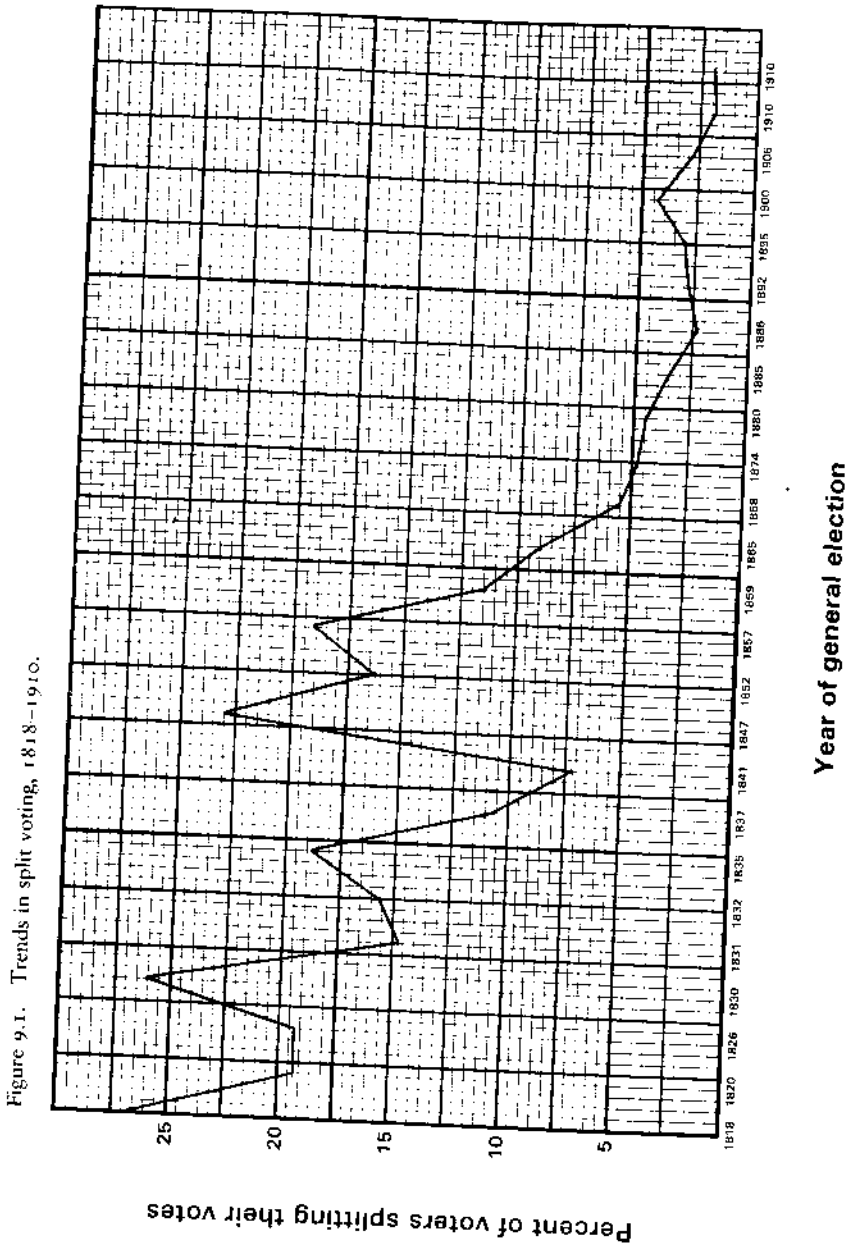


Figure 9.1. Trends in split voting, 1818–1910.

without controlling for contest type. The effect of contest type, as well as of decisions regarding the identification of partisan affiliations for candidates, will be discussed presently.

One way to summarize the findings on split voting in Table 9.4 is as a testimonial to the electoral significance of the Reform Acts. The elections held under the first (1832–65), second (1868–80), and third (1885–1910) Reform Acts appear to reveal three successively more party-oriented electorates: the highest figure for the 1832–65 period (22.9%) is four times the highest figure for the second period, and five times the maximum for the third period; the lowest figures for each period exceed the highest figures for the next; and no clear trends are perceptible throughout any period except the second. This contrast between reform periods is heightened if the split voting rates before 1832 are considered. SV rates were clearly even higher on average before 1832 than they were after 1832. The overall average SV rates for the four periods 1818–31, 1832–65, 1868–80, and 1885–1910 were respectively 21.9%, 13.9%, 4.8%, and 2.7%.

What might explain such a pattern? One hypothesis, at least as regards 1867 and 1884, might run as follows. The newly enfranchised voters, largely from a lower social class than the older electorate, were less well informed about politics in general and about the personal characteristics of the candidates in particular; hence, they made cruder decisions, often relying simply on party labels and the recommendations of the partisan press. Nossiter's finding that split votes in the northern counties "seem to have been more often cast by the professional and upper classes... than by the retailers or craftsmen" (Nossiter 1975: 179) lends some color to this hypothesis. Another hypothesis might focus on the redistricting process: perhaps only the most party-oriented double-member districts survived the reallocation of seats associated with the three Reform Acts.

Neither of these ideas, as it turns out, really furnishes an explanation. First, Mitchell has found, in an extensive poll-book-based study of the behavior of the newly enfranchised in 1868, no difference in the behavior of the pre- and post-1867 electorates.[5] Even if it is granted that the social class hypothesis ought to hold more strongly in 1885, since it was then that the lower working class first entered the electorate in large numbers, the point is of limited significance as far as the overall decline of split voting is concerned, for most of the decrease comes before 1885. The poorer information of the working class may explain the modest decline from the second to the third reform period, but of course one cannot prove this using poll books, as these cease to be available after 1872. Anent the first Reform Act, one would have to posit a very large difference

[5]Personal communication from Jeremy Mitchell.

in the behavior of pre- and post-reform voters in order to account for the observed 8 percentage point drop in split voting. What evidence there is shows no such difference (Phillips 1982).

As to redistricting, the average SV rate in 1865 for districts which were reduced to single-member status in 1867 does exceed the SV rate in districts which kept both their seats, but the NPP rate goes the other way. The total non-partisan voting rate (defined as the sum of the split voting and non-partisan plumping rates) is 19.9% for reduced constituencies, as opposed to 19.5% for unreduced constituencies. The redistricting hypothesis might hold more water in 1885. The non-partisan voting rate in 1880 for the 23 boroughs which remained double-member was 5.8%, as opposed to 9.4% for constituencies which became single-member. Hence, it might be best to discount comparisons made between pre- and post-1885 figures.

Another approach to explaining the evident contrast between reform periods, which focuses on the sheer size (and expansion) of the electorate, is put off to the next chapter. In the remainder of this section, we examine some finer patterns which lie within and cut across reform eras.

Looked at in more detail, the post-1832 figures in Table 9.4 and Figure 9.1 can be classified into four periods. First, there is a sharp decline in split voting from 1832–35 to 1841. Second, SV rates are extremely high for the 1847–57 period. Third, the rate declines sharply and monotonically, from 19% in 1857 to 5.5% in 1868. Fourth, split voting continues to decline from 1868 to 1886, fluctuating thereafter, but always remaining below the 1868 level.

It is interesting to note that the figures for boroughs and counties separately can be described in the same fashion. Although in most years the SV rate was lower in counties than in boroughs, the patterns of change follow almost parallel lines. The chief difference is that the SV rate for counties drops precipitously from 1857 to 1859, without much further decline thereafter, while the figures for boroughs show a more gradual declivity from 1857 to 1868. Since the county statistics are underpinned by less than ten contests in the period from 1841 to 1859, probably not too much should be made of this difference.

Analysis of split voting by regions reveals that, in any given year, the highest SV rates were generally to be found in the north. What is more important for our purposes, however, is that the patterns of change in split voting over time are quite similar for all regions. In each region there was a decline to 1841, a reinstatement of high rates in 1847–57, a sharp decline between 1857 and 1868, and a further but small and gradual decline thereafter.[6] An investigation of split voting in boroughs

[6]Readers familiar with Nossiter's work will be surprised to hear this statement

with fewer than 1,000 voters, between 1,000 and 2,000 voters, and more than 2,000 voters tells a similar story. Although smaller boroughs tended to have higher split voting rates (see Chapter 10), all three classes of boroughs showed roughly the same pattern of change over time.

It appears, then, that the trends in split voting visible in Table 9.4 and Figure 9.1 are to a considerable extent *national* trends. Pooling the data within each year does obscure cross-sectional variation, but the longitudinal pattern is basically the same in counties, in large and small boroughs, and in the various regions of the country.

Roughly speaking, the same four-period description of trends can be applied to the NPP figures presented in Table 9.5. Generally, when SV rates were high, so were NPP rates, and this is true for boroughs and counties separately as well. Two differences seem worth noting. First, the decline in the NPP rate from 1857 to 1859 is sharper than the corresponding decline in the SV rate. Second, after 1895, NPP rates increased considerably; indeed, one has to go back to 1857 to find a figure higher than the 7.8% registered for 1906. The reason for this recurrence of high NPP rates in the 1900s is the appearance of the Labour party and the decision made to consider Lib/Lab and Labour candidates as part of the Liberal party.

In general, the policy on party affiliations adopted for Tables 9.4 and 9.5 was to construe the Conservative and Liberal parties as broadly as possible. Thus, Tories, Protectionists, and Liberal Unionists were classified as Conservatives; Radicals, Reformers, Whigs, Gladstonian Liberals, Lib/Labs, and Labourites were classified as Liberals. Peelites, or Liberal Conservatives, were dealt with as A. L. Lowell did for the later years of his study of party discipline in Parliament (Lowell 1902); that is, most were labeled as Conservatives, some as Liberals, on the basis of their voting behavior and later affiliation.[7]

applied to the north. The discrepancy between our findings and those of Nossiter is not because we have more data (although we do) or use weighted rather than simple means. In previous work (Cox 1983), we used only the data used by Nossiter and still arrived at a different conclusion. Nossiter apparently accepted the party affiliations given by Bean (1890) for the most part, although it is evident that he used other sources as well. In any event, a few of the higher split voting rates reported by Nossiter appear to stem from errors in Bean's attributions of party. The only really large discrepancy between Nossiter's figures and our yearly average figures comes in 1859, for which Nossiter reported a mean split voting rate of 26.7, and the difference here stems from three constituencies – Lancaster, Preston, and Bradford – in which Bean reported the party of some candidate(s) as Liberal whereas Craig (1977) reported the same candidate(s) as Conservative (or vice versa).

[7]The final authority used here on party affiliations before 1885 is *British Parliamentary Election Results, 1832–1885* (Craig 1977). Indeed, since Craig's policy is identical with that described in the text, all party affiliations before 1885 agree with his. The problem of identifying which Liberal Conservatives were really Liberal and which were Conservative was, according to Lowell, "rendered less difficult by the

Table 9.5 *Trends in non-partisan plumping, 1818–1910*

Year	All constituencies (%)	Boroughs (%)	Counties (%)
1818	12.1		
1820	13.8		
1826	10.7		
1830	16.2		
1831	6.7		
1832	6.4	8.1	5.8
1835	8.8	10.1	6.2
1837	5.0	4.2	6.1
1841	3.1	3.2	2.7
1847	15.4	17.4	10.1
1852	9.0	10.4	5.7
1857	13.7	10.0	21.4
1859	5.3	6.3	2.4
1865	4.8	6.5	2.7
1868	4.2	4.7	3.8
1874	4.1	5.0	2.2
1880	2.3	2.8	1.8
1885	3.2	3.2	—[a]
1886	2.3	2.3	—
1892	2.3	2.3	—
1895	2.8	2.8	—
1900	3.4	3.4	—
1906	7.8	7.8	—
1910 (Jan.)	3.4	3.4	—
1910 (Dec.)	3.8	3.8	—

Note: *N* values are the same as those in Table 9.4.
[a]There were no double-member county districts after 1885.

The consequences of this policy on party affiliations are illustrated most clearly in the post-1900 NPP figures. Although the Labour party ran relatively few candidates before the Great War, the urban constituencies which remained double-member after 1885 were particularly likely venues for Labour or Lib/Lab activity, in part because they tended to have a larger working class population, and in part because the Liberal and Labour candidates could split the representation (whereas in single member constituencies, one or the other candidate would have to step down if open conflict was to be avoided). Hence, there are proportion-

curious psychological fact that most of them, though disliking to call themselves by a party name, were unusually constant in going into the lobby with the party whip" (Lowell 1902: 326). After 1885, party affiliations are as given in Appendix 1 of Craig (1974), except that Liberal Unionists have been classed with the Conservatives, and Lib/Labs and Labour candidates with the Liberals.

Table 9.6. *Split voting and non-partisan plumping, 1832–1910*

	Split voting		Non-partisan plumping	
Year	(1) Mean	(2) Difference	(3) Mean	(4) Difference
1832	17.5	1.9	9.7	3.3
1835	19.5	.7	9.5	.7
1837	10.9	.3	5.3	.3
1841	7.8	.5	3.5	.4
1847	20.8	−2.1	11.9	−3.5
1852	16.5	.2	7.8	−1.2
1857	20.3	1.3	13.5	−.2
1859	11.5	−.1	5.2	−.1
1865	8.5	0	4.8	0
1868	5.2	−.3	4.6	.4
1874	4.7	−.1	3.4	−.7
1880	4.4	−.1	2.3	0
1885	3.5	0	3.2	0
1886	2.3	0	2.3	0
1892	2.7	0	2.3	0
1895	3.0	0	1.8	0
1900	4.4	0	2.9	−.5
1906	2.9	.2	2.0	−5.8
1910 (Jan.)	1.3	−.5	1.8	−1.6
1910 (Dec.)	1.4	−.6	1.5	−2.3

Note: The figures given here are based on the party affiliations given in Vincent and Stenton (1971) for years before 1885. From 1885 on, affiliations are as given in Craig (1974), except that Liberal Unionists are classified as Conservatives. These affiliations differ from those used in Tables 9.4 and 9.5. Columns (2) and (4) give the differences between the figures in columns (1) and (3) and the corresponding figures in Tables 9.4 and 9.5.

ately more contests involving Labour or Lib/Lab candidatures in the sample than in the post-1900 polity as a whole.[8] And these contests, pitting two Conservatives against a Liberal and a Labourite, for example, tended to have high NPP rates, due chiefly to the large numbers of plumpers polled for the Liberal and Labour candidates. Naturally, this species of "non partisan" plumper does not seem nearly as non-partisan as plumpers cast for two Liberals, and the question is raised as to what

[8]Of 162 Labour candidates in the first decade of the twentieth century, 38 (or 23.5%) ran in double-member districts. This is more than twice as many as would be expected on the basis of the number of seats available in such districts. Looking just to the 94 Labour victories between 1900 and 1910, 27 came in double-member districts. Thus, although two-member districts constituted only 5.1% of all districts, they produced 28.7% of all Labour MPs.

Table 9.7. *Split voting by contest type, 1832–1910*

Year	2L/1C	N	2C/1L	N	2/1	N	2/2	N
1832	15.2	152,001	19.1	19,969	15.7	171,970	13.1	7,258
1835	21.0	73,807	17.4	36,173	19.8	109,980	11.7	16,044
1837	11.8	80,733	12.4	59,306	12.1	140,039	6.2	48,160
1841	7.8	35,412	12.3	51,793	10.5	87,205	3.1	65,968
1847	27.9	48,703	18.6	28,617	24.5	77,320	18.4	26,990
1852	18.3	41,555	18.6	34,352	18.5	75,907	7.2	17,790
1857	22.3	59,086	14.3	27,507	19.7	86,593	14.5	13,994
1859	13.9	46,789	13.4	14,617	13.8	61,406	5.7	21,777
1865	10.9	66,336	9.7	35,810	10.5	102,146	4.2	47,839
1868	8.4	100,424	6.7	48,748	7.9	149,172	2.8	133,360
1874	5.3	151,718	6.9	74,740	5.8	226,458	3.5	181,211
1880	5.5	195,063	6.1	148,433	5.7	343,496	3.4	361,394
1885					3.9	64,797	3.4	114,689
1886					2.4	56,709	2.3	120,857
1892					2.9	73,003	2.7	132,777
1895					4.3	69,844	2.1	101,190
1900					10.2	41,190	2.7	143,674
1906					4.6	73,928	4.0	197,064
1910 (Jan.)					2.1	14,381	1.8	284,996
1910 (Dec.)					2.6	76,126	1.8	230,549

Note: The figures in column 1 refer to contests pitting two Liberals against one Conservative; those in column 3, to contests with two Conservatives and one Liberal; those in column 5, to all two-against-one contests; and those in column 7, to all two-against-two contests. Party affiliations are the same as those used in Tables 9.4 and 9.5.

effect a different policy on party affiliations would have on the figures – both for non-partisan plumping and split voting.

In the case of the Labour party, the question does not seem too important. If Labour is preserved as a separate party, the number of two-against-one and two-against-two contests after 1900 falls, and so does the NPP rate, the SV rate being largely unaffected (see Table 9.6). So no important conclusion is affected – indeed, the trend toward firmer party attachments is made clearer. In the case of the Peelites, however, one might expect a more important modification of results – in two ways. First, the high rates of non-partisan plumping in 1847, 1852, and 1857 may be due to classifying Peelites with the two main parties. Second, since the Peelites occupied the "middle ground" between the Liberals and Conservatives, classifying them with the main parties might also have inflated the SV rates.

The best way to address these questions is simply to classify all Liberal

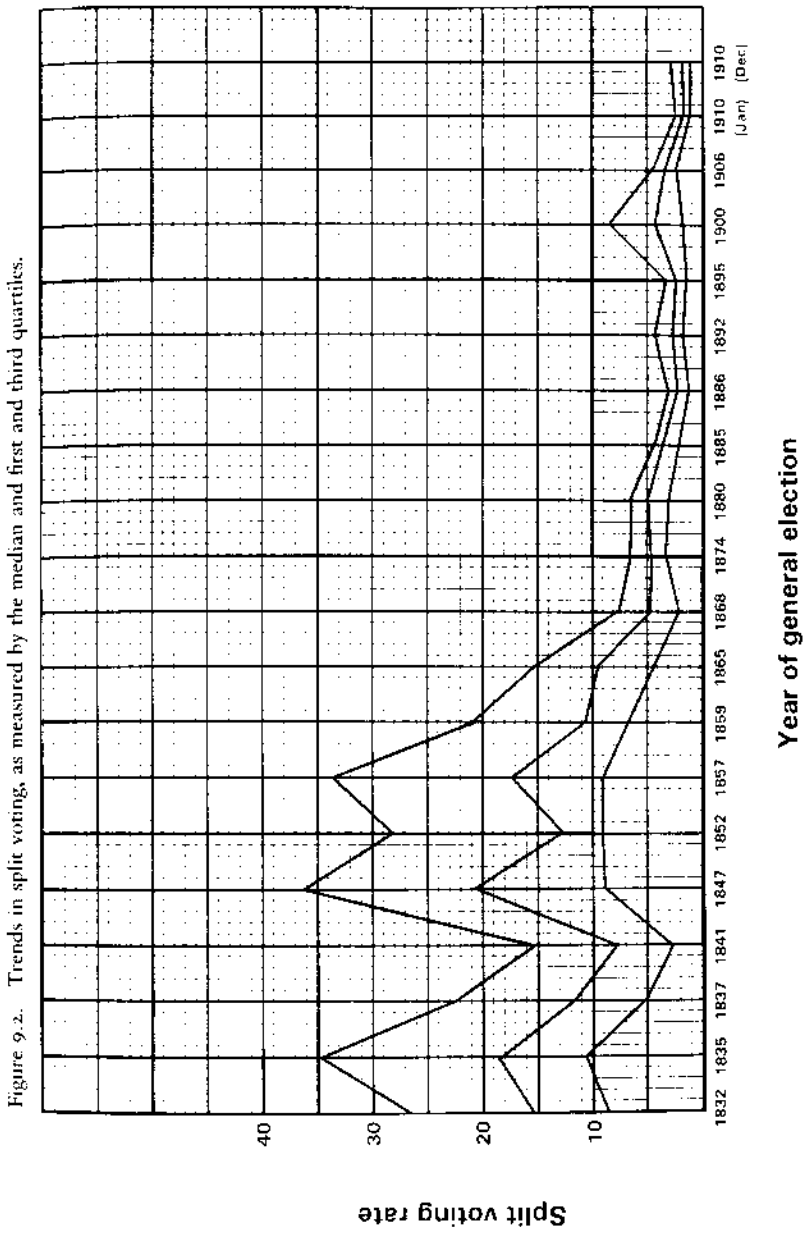


Figure 9.2. Trends in split voting, as measured by the median and first and third quartiles.

Conservatives as members of a separate party, and recompute the figures. If one does this, nothing much changes, as can be seen in Table 9.6. The figures in Table 9.6 were computed according to a policy on party affiliations which is more or less opposite to that underlying Tables 9.4 and 9.5. The Conservative and Liberal parties were construed narrowly, not broadly; and Tories, Whigs, Radicals, Protectionists, and Liberal Conservatives were preserved as separate parties.[9] Although it does appear that the SV and NPP rates in 1847, and the NPP rate in 1852, could have been inflated by the previous decision regarding Liberal Conservatives, the effect is not large. Most of the yearly figures are essentially unaffected by the change in policy on party affiliations, and the basic patterns discovered in Tables 9.4 and 9.5 are preserved in Table 9.6.

If the policy on party affiliation has no effect on the basic patterns in the data, neither does the mix of contest types. Table 9.7 presents yearly split voting figures for four subsets of contests: those involving two Liberals and a Conservative, those involving two Conservatives and a Liberal, all two-against-one contests (the union of the first two subsets), and all two-against-two contests. Within all categories of contests, the basic trends visible in the combined data are preserved. Thus, these trends cannot be attributed to changes in the mix of contests from one year to the next.

Nor, finally, are the trends due to a few exceptional contests in the early years inflating the averages. If one calculates the SV rate for each contest in a given general election, one can compute the first quartile, median, and third quartile of the resulting set of figures; if these statistics are plotted for each general election from 1818 to 1910, the result is Figure 9.2. As can be seen, the entire distribution of contests shifts in accord with the weighted means reported earlier.[10]

[9]Party affiliations in the pre-1885 period were taken from Vincent and Stenton (1971) and Henry Stooks Smith (1973). After 1885, party affiliations are as given in Craig (1974), except that Liberal Unionists have been classed with the Conservatives.

[10]It might also be noted that if all contest types – not just two-against-one and two-against-two contests – are included in the analysis, the basic pattern remains the same.

10

The causes of a party-oriented electorate

The evidence in Chapter 9 reveals clearly that split voting and non-partisan plumping declined markedly in the hundred years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Whereas 38.7% of all sampled voters cast non-partisan votes in the general election of 1818, only 5.8% did so in December 1910. The decline, however, was neither linear nor monotonic. Each Reform Act seems to have introduced a new era in terms of the levels of non-partisan voting registered at general elections, and the downward trend could be interrupted, as shown by the resurgence of non-partisan voting in the decade following 1847.

These findings raise three questions. First, why was there any long-term decline in non-partisan voting at all? Second, why are the figures periodized by the Reform Acts? Third, what explains the "short-term" or year-to-year fluctuations within reform periods? To answer these questions, which concern the trends over time in national non-partisan voting rates, it will help to examine constituency rates cross-sectionally as well. Both longitudinal and cross-sectional analyses should be grounded in a proper understanding of the causes of split voting and non-partisan plumping at the individual level. To establish such an understanding is the first objective of this chapter.

EXPLAINING NON-PARTISAN VOTING

Both split voting and non-partisan plumping indicated the use by electors of some criteria other than partisan affiliation. In order to explain non-partisan voting, then, it is necessary to identify what those other criteria were. This process of identification will be facilitated if we first recognize the fundamental fact of early Victorian elections: open voting. As noted above, electors before 1872 declared their votes *viva voce*, and their decisions were publicly recorded in poll books. As a consequence, the individual voter was subject to a variety of sometimes intense local pres-

sures, which historians have generally discussed under the headings of bribery and "influence."

Influence, like water, generally flowed downhill. The vice chancellor of Cambridge University, for example, on occasion sent the marshal of the University to the licensed lodging-house keepers in order to recommend a candidate, and pointedly deferred the day for renewing licenses until after a parliamentary by-election in 1834. In the counties, the influence of landlord over tenant was taken for granted, and the typical county poll book was considered "almost a topography of the estates" (Gash 1977: 174, 178). In some boroughs, rich men could make or purchase influence: Robert Richardson-Gardner, going to Windsor in 1866 to "create an interest," spent lavishly on clubs, charity, and entertainment; purchased property and erected dwellings which would qualify their tenants for the franchise; accepted only Conservative tenants; evicted those who voted against him in 1868; and was returned in 1874, by which time he had 220 voting tenants representing more than 10% of the legal electorate (Hanham 1978: 67). Norman Gash has offered the generalization that "wherever in ordinary social and economic relationships there existed authority on the one side and dependence on the other, political influence was always liable to be exercised" (Gash 1977: 174–75).

Not all electoral influence flowed downhill, however. The unenfranchised, for example, could affect elections not only through physical intimidation but also by the practice of "exclusive dealing": giving their custom only to shopkeepers who had voted as they wished. Nor were electoral pressures always or even often so coercive as those indicated thus far. Historians generally have a far more organic view of influence, stressing that the bloc voting evident in poll books arose from a more complex tie than that of coercion and subservience (Kitson-Clark 1951; Moore 1966; Clarke 1972; Nossiter 1975; Hanham 1978).

Whether coercive or "legitimate," whether flowing uphill or downhill, electoral influence was the natural concomitant of open and publicly documented voting, and historians have accorded it first priority in their researches; most would agree with Hanham's assessment that "the electoral history of the period between 1832 and 1885 is largely the history of electoral influence" (Hanham 1968: 13). The question at issue here is what impact electoral influence had on the rate at which Victorian electors split their votes or cast non-partisan plumpers.

An interesting suggestion in regard to split voting is made in an 1866 article from the *Fortnightly Review*:

> At present we see the larger proportion of the electors in the boroughs and county constituencies, where two members are to be chosen, give one vote to a Liberal and another to a Conservative. Thus they secure the grand object of giving offence to neither party. (Wilson 1866: 435)

The author was referring to competing or cross-pressuring electoral influences. A shopkeeper, for example, faced with a Tory landlord and an important Whig customer, may have split his vote in order to offend neither. Electoral influence is believed by some to have been declining in the 1860s and 1870s (Moore 1976), and if it was generally cross-pressuring, then this provides a possible explanation of the decline in split voting.

There is, however, no firm basis for considering cross-pressuring influence to be significant. Most historians do not mention it at all. Nossiter (1975: 179) considers it unimportant as a cause of split voting, at least in the boroughs; O'Gorman (1982: 75–76) refers to influence in general as a cause of *party* voting rather than *split* voting.

If influence was complete rather than cross-pressuring – that is, if it controlled both votes – then its importance for a study of split voting is chiefly that it magnifies the decisions of influential men in the statistics. One can consider a hypothetical county constituency in which the electorate is dominated by a relatively few landed magnates together with their numerous tenants, and suppose that tenants always vote exactly as their landlords wish. This would be a rather extreme construal of Lord Stanley's comment in 1841 that "when any man attempted to estimate the probable result of a county election in England, it was ascertained by calculating the number of the great landed proprietors in the county and weighing the number of occupiers under them" (Kitson-Clark 1951: 112). The split voting rates in such a county would for the most part reflect the decisions of the landlords, each being weighted by the number of his tenants. One can hold the amount of influence constant, and produce virtually any rates of split voting by stipulating the decisions of the landed magnates. Or, conversely, one can vary the amount of influence, without any necessary implication for split voting.

It would seem, then, that there is no necessary relationship between influence and split voting, if influence was complete. Even if influence was often cross-pressuring, it is hard to see how variations in the amount or nature of influence could explain the short-term trends in split voting. Did influence decline or become more complete until 1841, then increase or become more cross-pressuring in 1847–57, and so forth? It seems unlikely.[1]

[1] Another kind of cross-pressure may have occurred when the voter faced an influence contrary to his own opinions. If the influence was only powerful enough to secure one vote (Nossiter 1975: 48, 53), a split vote may have resulted. Here again there is

If electoral influence was largely unrelated to the rate at which Victorians split their votes, what of bribery? There is no doubt that votes were purchased at Victorian elections, and corruption in general ranks a close second in the historical literature as a determinant of election outcomes. The significance of the purchase of votes for split voting, however, depends on a distinction analogous to that made between cross-pressuring and complete influence. If bribers generally purchased both votes, then the rates of bribery and of split voting should have been largely uncorrelated; but if only one vote was purchased, then increased bribery may have increased split voting.

As in the case of influence, very little attention has been given to whether bribery was complete (two votes) or incomplete (one vote only). John Phillips has argued the latter position as regards the boroughs of Northampton, Lewes, and Maidstone in the 1820s and 1830s (Phillips 1982). He suggests that at two-against-one contests in these boroughs the adherents of the singleton candidate sold their second votes, and he thus interprets the observed decline in split voting in these boroughs during and after the reform crisis as evidence of a decline in bribery.

Despite Phillips's work, we discount bribery as a general explanation for split voting, on several grounds. First, Phillips's argument is of course restricted both geographically and temporally. Second, there is no evidence that bribery was especially prevalent in years when split voting was high, or rare in years when it fell off; indeed, the correlation between yearly split voting rates and a crude measure of national trends in corruption (the number of elections declared void or undue on petition) is insignificant and *negative* ($-.21$). Third, evidence presented in Chapter 12 shows that the policies which MPs supported in Parliament influenced the number of split votes they received. For example, the more Conservative measures which a Liberal MP supported in the Commons, the more split votes he was likely to receive at election time, ceteris paribus. Such findings suggest a policy-based explanation of split voting and put a limit on the possible importance of bribery.

Before investigating the possibility of policy-based split voting, let us recapitulate the argument thus far. Open voting exposed electors to a variety of pressures, both directly pecuniary (bribery) and otherwise (influence). One can divide the Victorian electorate conceptually into three classes, based on their susceptibility to such pressures. First, those whose votes were neither bought nor determined by influence can be termed the *independent electorate*. Some of these electors may have purchased votes or exerted influence on their own. Indeed, the independent electorate should be construed broadly enough to include peers, who, while legally debarred from voting in parliamentary elections, nonetheless sometimes had the de facto disposal of the votes of their dependents. Second, those electors both of whose votes were controlled or bought by some other person can be termed the *dependent electorate*. Finally, those electors who were cross-pressured or only one of whose votes was sold or influenced can be termed the *cross-pressured electorate*.

no real evidence that this kind of cross-pressuring influence can explain the short-term trends in split voting.

Thus far, our discussion has focused on split voting in the cross-pressured electorate. It is clear that explaining non-partisan voting in the independent electorate is also an important task. Since by definition independent electors were not subject to controlling pressures from others, any explanation for their behavior must lie in their own values and motivations. It is assumed here simply that independent electors sought to use their votes in order to elect the candidates they most preferred.[2]

[2]The discussion of split voting in the text is derived from an expected utility analysis presented more fully in Cox (1984). An abbreviated version of this analysis is presented here for readers interested in a more formal derivation of the results used. Consider an election between two Conservatives, C_1 and C_2, and one Liberal, L. For any given voter i, let $u_i(C_1)$ be the value or utility to i of having the first Conservative elected; interpret $u_i(C_2)$ and $u_i(L)$ similarly. Assume that the utility of having any two candidates elected is simply the sum of the individual utilities; thus, the value of C_1 and C_2 winning is $u(C_1) + u(C_2)$, and so forth (subscript i's will be suppressed). The kind of decision facing a voter in double-member districts can be illustrated by considering a voter for whom $u(C_1) > u(C_2) > u(L)$. The most preferred outcome for this voter is a Conservative sweep (C_1, C_2), the next most preferred outcome a (C_1, L) return, and the least preferred a (C_2, L) victory. Clearly, the voter should vote for C_1, since the only effect such a vote can have on the outcome is to defeat either L or C_2 (those two candidates receiving the most votes win, and a vote for C_1 may raise him above either L or C_2). Similarly, the voter should never vote for his least preferred candidate, L. This leaves two options: voting for the two most preferred candidates, C_1 and C_2, or voting for C_1 alone. Why would a voter vote only for C_1? Because the vote for C_2 is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it might defeat L, a desired result. On the other hand, it might defeat C_1, thus replacing a more preferred by a less preferred candidate. Depending on how large the utility differentials between C_1, C_2, and L are, and on the probabilities that the vote for C_2 will defeat L or C_1, it makes sense for a voter with these preferences to plump. For example, if the voter intensely prefers the arch-Tory views of C_1 to the middle-of-the-road Conservatism of C_2, and does not see much difference between C_2 and L, he is more likely to plump; and if the voter thinks it certain that L will be elected, then the only possible effect of the vote for C_2 is to defeat C_1, and again he is more likely to plump. Similar points can be made about split voting. Consider another voter for whom $u(L) > u(C_1) > u(C_2)$. This voter is more likely to cast a split vote for L and C_1 (a) the larger the utility differential between C_1 and C_2 relative to that between C_1 and L, and (b) the larger the probability that a vote for C_1 will defeat C_2 relative to the probability that such a vote will defeat L. For the purposes of this discussion, the important point is that both non-partisan plumping and split voting are more likely when voters perceive significant differences in the value (to themselves) of the election of candidates of the same party. Hence, from a theoretical perspective, any trend which reduces the differences which voters perceive between candidates of the same party will tend also to depress split voting and non-partisan plumping.

Which candidates were preferred naturally depended on the criteria that each elector used in evaluating his alternatives. These criteria presumably included the personal and local characteristics, partisan affiliations, and policy stands of the candidates. One might picture the voter abstractly as evaluating or "scoring" each candidate on these criteria, weighting each score in accordance with its perceived importance, and then simply adding the weighted scores to arrive at an overall evaluation. This model doubtless overstates the degree to which real voters explicitly considered and measured the various qualities of candidates, but the abstraction is useful in explaining the basic cause of non-partisan voting. When an elector cast a non-partisan vote, he was distinguishing between two members of the same party: voting for one but not the other. That such a distinction was possible implies, first, that the candidates were perceived to differ on some relevant criterion and, second, that this criterion was weighted non-negligibly in the voter's overall calculus. Turning these statements around, two propositions can be made about the probability that an independent voter would cast a non-partisan vote. First, the fewer the perceived differences between candidates of the same party, the lower should the chance have been of voting for one but not the other (i.e., of casting a split vote or non-partisan plumper). This suggests the importance both of the *actual* differences between candidates and of the level of information of the voter. Second, the more heavily the voter weighted the partisan affiliations of the various candidates in his overall evaluation (the more party-oriented he was), the lower should the probability have been that he would cast a non-partisan vote. In terms of our simple model, a voter would be totally party-oriented if the only criterion with any weight was partisan affiliation; two candidates of the same party would be identical as far as the voter was concerned, and hence no voting distinction would be made between them. In general, the greater the relative weight given to party, the less likely it was that the voter would perceive a sufficient overall difference between candidates of the same party to vote for one but not the other.

Now that we have an idea of why independent voters might have cast splits and plumpers, we can clarify the local and national factors that affected non-partisan voting rates, either cross-sectionally or longitudinally. Consider first the relationship between parliamentary dissent and split voting noted at the outset of Chapter 9. Although the figures on dissent are not as complete as one might wish, the year-to-year covariation between aggregate party cohesion and party voting in the electorate is nonetheless striking. The question is whether this covariation is due to the impact of discipline on party voting, the impact of party voting on discipline, or some other factors pushing both these developments. Although there is some evidence of a mutual causal relationship between

split voting and parliamentary dissidence – evidence which will be discussed more fully in Chapter 12 – we do not think that an explanation of the longitudinal trends lies primarily in these linkages. Rather, we suggest that other factors affected both legislators and electors, who then mutually reinforced each other's impetus toward party voting.

Consider, for example, the state of extra-parliamentary party organization. If one looks at a few admittedly crude indices of the health and vigor of the Conservative party as an electoral machine, one finds a pattern that is by now familiar. Before 1832, while there were Tory clubs in many constituencies, very few had actual Conservative associations. During Peel's first ministry (1834–35), a spate of new associations were started, and "well before the general election of 1841 the party possessed a widespread if loose connexion of local organizations throughout England" (Gash 1983: 143–45). However, many of these organizations disappeared, became ineffective, or were converted into Protectionist societies in the 1840s. R. W. Davis (1976: 142) writes of Buckinghamshire that "the 1840s saw the end of any enduring political organizations in either the boroughs or the county for at least twenty years." Gash (1983: 144) notes more generally that "the Conservative disruption of 1846, the competition of Protectionist societies, and the somnolence that overcame British party politics between 1856 and 1865 were all powerful dissolvents of conventional local party organizations." In the later 1850s and 1860s, however, a resurgence of Conservative organization began, and by 1864 the Conservative principal agent could boast that "there never was a time in the history of the Conservative party when it was so thoroughly organized as at present. The effect of the continuous communication kept up during the last few years with our local representatives . . . is now being realized" (Stewart 1978: 332). After 1867, and again after 1884, the stimulus of an expanded electorate spurred the further growth of local associations. The broad outlines of local party organization and party voting – both in Parliament and in the electorate – are thus quite similar.

A similar story can be told on the Conservative side at the *central* organizational level. In 1835, F. R. Bonham became the first full-time electoral agent of the Conservative party, and the widespread development of local associations was due in part to his exertions. Bonham also had a hand in finding candidates for constituencies and constituencies for candidates. His exertions were sometimes directly relevant to the question of non-partisan voting:

> In 1832 he asked Peel to suggest to Lord Villiers, the Conservative candidate at Honiton, that he might do more to assist the return of the second Conservative candidate at the election. Villiers's return was certain, and Bonham had learned that he looked solely to his own position. Conservative electors might therefore

plump for him or cast their second vote for the Whig candidate. A gentle nudge might rouse Villiers to the danger. (Stewart 1978: 138–39)

When the Conservative party split over repeal of the Corn Laws, Bonham and most of the agents he had recruited remained loyal to Peel. Consequently, the electoral organization of the Conservative party was set back. From 1846 to 1852 the Conservatives had no equivalent to Bonham. There was, at least from 1851, an election committee at the Carlton Club, but it appears sometimes to have lacked sufficient information from the localities. Fifteen of its agents, paid by the central party, were discovered to be "notoriously strong Liberals," and its attempts to match candidates and constituencies sometimes backfired miserably (Stewart 1978: 268–69). In 1852, Disraeli secured the services of his solicitor, Philip Rose, as principal agent. Rose, and his assistant Markham Spofforth, rebuilt the necessary informational network in the 1850s and 1860s. In 1866 a national registration association was founded, and 1870 saw the formal establishment of the Conservative Central Office. John Gorst was appointed as principal agent, and the Conservative victory in 1874 has often been partially credited to his vigor and organizational skill. In 1885, the long and legendary reign of R. W. Middleton began.

It is not hard to think of plausible connections between partisan organizational activity and the behavior of the electorate that might explain the rough correlation that seems so clearly to exist between them.[3] Bonham's activities in encouraging candidates to help their colleagues, the distribution of partisan propaganda, and the direct effects of organized canvassing come readily to mind.

Also of obvious importance was the partisanship of the political press. The importance of newspapers in the dissemination of political information was recognized by all politicians, and both parties subsidized sympathetic editors. Vincent has emphasized the importance of the penny press – which arose after the removal of the Stamp Tax on newspapers in 1855 – in contributing to the "formation of national parties as communities of sentiment" (Vincent 1966: xx). Often less independent than the older papers, and more interested in politics as a method of increasing circulation, the new press tended to be consistently partisan. Verbatim reports of parliamentary debates allowed readers to follow the battle in Parliament each day, the editorials providing partisan cues. The sugges-

[3]Statistical evidence of the effect of party activity on party voting is hard to come by. One resource which might be used is the census of Conservative associations in 1874 utilized in Chapter 5. Using this document, the SV and NPP rates in the 42 constituencies which had both Conservative associations and vote counts in 1874 can be compared to the corresponding rates in the 11 constituencies which had vote counts but no associations. On the one hand, split voting was lower in organized (5.2%) than in unorganized (6.7%) constituencies. On the other hand, non-partisan plumping was higher (5.1% versus 2.8%). Neither of the differences is statistically significant.

tion is that voters in the 1860s may have cast fewer non-partisan votes in part because they were exposed for the first time to a cheap and mass circulation partisan press. Of course, the emergence of the penny press cannot explain the ups and downs in party voting before 1855. Nonetheless, partisanship even in the older press seems to have gone hand in hand with party voting in the electorate. Close notes the conversion of several major newspapers from an independent to a partisan editorial policy between 1834 and 1837, and opines that "A symptom, and possibly a cause, of increasing party feeling in the electorate was the firm alignment of the great majority of newspapers ... with one or other of the two main parties" (Close 1969: 268–69; see also Stewart 1978: 129).

Another factor of obvious importance, but one that is difficult to examine systematically, was the practice of cutting deals with the opposition (Nossiter 1975: 179; Hanham 1978: 74). Many of the contests with exceptionally high split voting rates turn out to be those in which electoral alliances were forged between Conservatives and moderate Liberals, to the detriment of the radical wing of the Liberal party. Clearly, when the local party leadership was itself actively promoting split voting, high split voting rates were to be expected.

Somewhat less obviously, registration, and variations in the vigor with which the parties pursued their battle in the revision courts, may have affected non-partisan voting rates (especially in the boroughs) by altering the composition of the electorate. The parties often paid the registration fees of those poorer citizens whose claims to be registered they promoted. To the extent that there was a marginal class of citizens who would not take the trouble to register (perhaps for fear of expense or challenge), and to the extent that the parties chose to aid those who would cast straight party votes, increased attention to the register should have decreased non-partisan voting rates.

It is less easy to see any direct connection between the extra-parliamentary organization and dissent. One might adopt a generalized version of Ostrogorski's ideas – which would have local associations pressuring their MPs to be party loyalists – but this does not seem attractive in light of the analysis in Chapter 5. One might hypothesize that when the extra-parliamentary organization was active and effective, so was the intra-parliamentary organization. Indeed, were there a detailed study of the size and efficiency of the Conservative whip organization in the Commons, it would probably show a pattern of development parallel to that of the electoral organization. But this suggests that both internal and external organization and internal and external rates of party voting were driven by other factors. The questions which this chapter set out to answer can usefully be asked more broadly.

THE PARTY SYSTEM

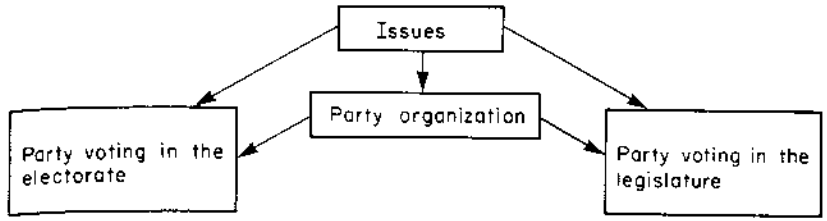
Political scientists traditionally recognize various segments of political parties as meriting separate analysis. Thus, the party as a group of adherents in the voting population ("party-in-the-electorate") is considered separately from the party as a group of office-holders ("party-in-government") and the party as an electoral machine ("party organization").[4] Sometimes it can seem that these various segments of the party have relatively little to do with one another. But if the status of the party-in-the-electorate can be tapped by the figures on non-partisan voting, the party-in-government by the figures on intra-party unity, and the party organization by the number of local associations and the efficacy of the central organization, then it is clear that in nineteenth century England the various segments of the political parties were intimately linked. Before 1832, when party organization at all levels was impermanent, the mean non-partisan voting rate was very high (33%), and party discipline in Parliament was relatively low and variable. After the first Reform Act, permanent organizations at the national and local levels were established for the first time, the non-partisan voting rate fell to 22.7%, and parliamentary discipline probably improved on average. In the second reform period (1867–85), party organization developed further and maintained a more continuous and consistent life, non-partisan voting fell to 8.2%, and dissent in Parliament fell to historically low levels. Finally, after 1885, party organization was recognizably modern, non-partisan voting had fallen below 5%, and intra-party unity in the Commons was generally quite high.

If the term "party system" is used to refer to the status of the parties at all three levels of analysis, then one can see that the entire party system developed as a more or less coherent whole. The questions posed at the beginning of the chapter become a bit more general. Why was there any long-term development of the party system at all? Why was there the periodization by Reform Acts? And why were there fluctuations within reform periods (and in particular, the rather large fluctuations within the first reform period)? We shall answer these questions in reverse order.

The year-to-year fluctuations of the party system are perhaps the most difficult aspect of party development to explain. There are many factors that potentially affected at least one feature of the party system and might have varied from one year to the next: factors such as the level of contributions to the central party coffers, the amount of cross-pressuring influence and bribery, the extent to which candidates of the same party chose to campaign together, the partisanship of the press, and the nature

[4]The use of these terms was popularized by Key (1964).

Figure 10.1. The effect of issues on the party system.



of political issues. However, only the last of these seems to have the properties required to explain the short-term trends in the party system. First, issues potentially affected all three segments of the party system directly: they provided the motivation to construct or refurbish political organizations; and if they cut along party lines, they reinforced party voting, while if they cut athwart party lines, they promoted cross voting – both in the legislature and in the electorate. Second, issues were national in effect. Thus, they can possibly explain why the pattern of development in non-partisan voting was roughly the same in every major region of the country and category of constituency. Third, issues were more likely to cause the developments we are interested in than to be caused by them. It seems clear, for example, that the Conservative party was built up in the 1830s in reaction to the issues of reform pushed onto the agenda by the Liberals; organization, discipline, and party voting all evolved together, fueled by the desire to prevent or pass certain legislation.

We argue, then, that the short-term fluctuations of the party system were due chiefly to the impact of vital issues that cut along or across party lines. The abstract view is illustrated in Figure 10.1. Issues are seen largely as predetermined short-term forces that affect the decisions of voters and MPs both directly and via the stimulus given to party organization. The plausibility of this view can be suggested by a brief review of some of the major issues that divided or failed to divide the parties, according to the standard historiography.

We can begin with the election of 1831, which was extraordinary in the degree to which it revolved around a single issue: the reform of parliamentary representation. This issue divided the *pays politique* into reformers ("the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill") and anti-reformers, a cleavage which cut to a considerable extent – but not entirely – along pre-existing party lines. The Reform Bill, which portended a fundamental reallocation of political representation and power, dominated the decisions of the independent electorate – probably to a degree unique in English history – and stimulated organizational effort. The Charles Street Committee, formed in 1831, constituted the first movement

toward a permanent national organization for the Conservatives, and the war chest gathered by them seems to have been well filled by contemporary standards (Stewart 1978: 78). Liberal organization was similarly stimulated, and the election of 1831 registered the lowest non-partisan voting rate of all observed elections before 1837. The reform issue is taken to be "exogenous" or "predetermined" in this discussion in the sense that it caused organizational effort and increased party voting, rather than vice versa. More complete understanding of the political process might allow us to specify why those men who pushed reform onto the agenda did so when they did; but it seems unlikely that they were motivated by a desire to improve party organization per se, or were reacting to the current levels of party voting.[5]

Badly beaten in 1831, the Conservatives suffered their worst defeat in history in 1832, the first election held under the new electoral system. The issue of parliamentary reform dominated in 1832 as it had in 1831, but now as a retrospective rather than a prospective consideration. The enormous reformist majority in the 1832–35 Parliament, while agreed on the issue of parliamentary reform, was potentially divided on other issues. By May 1834, when Sir James Graham and Lord Stanley resigned from the Cabinet over the issue of appropriating surplus Irish church revenues to non-church purposes, the beginnings of a new cleavage on religious issues were visible. At the election of 1835, Graham and Stanley refused to commit themselves in advance to a course of support or opposition for a Conservative (or a Liberal) government, and in this they were probably followed by a number of moderate politicians: early in the next session, Stanley's short-lived party, the "Derby Dilly," consisted of fifty to sixty members. The higher non-partisan voting rates in 1835 may reflect the uncertainty over party alignments at this time.

After the election of 1835, a number of major issues of reform fueled the party battle, including relief of the civil disabilities of Dissenters, reform of municipal corporations, and reform of the English and Irish established churches. Most of these issues tapped the underlying sectarian division between Anglicans and Dissenters, which now formed the basis of a fairly sharp and sustained two-party cleavage. As noted above, Bonham assumed full-time duties as electoral agent for the Conservatives after the election of 1835, and in the next six years aided in the establishment of local associations throughout the country. The party's central fund, which had been quite small in 1832 and 1835, increased in 1837

[5]Certainly Victorian political leaders attempted to control the issue agenda in order to preserve or expand their coalitions, so that sometimes the direction of causality was reversed. But in general I think it is valid to view issues as bulls in a china shop – endogenous to the shop as a whole but somewhat exogenous to the china shop owner.

and was quite large by 1841 (Pinto-Duschinsky 1981: 21).[6] Non-partisan voting rates declined in 1837 and by 1841 were lower than in any election down to 1868. The work of Close (1969) and Aydelotte (1962–63) shows that a similar tightening of party lines took place in Parliament. The Conservatives in 1841 were the first party in British history to force their leaders into office against the wishes of the Crown by winning a majority in a general election.

This growing two-party system was broken by the issue of protection in the 1841–47 Parliament. Support for repeal of the Corn Laws cut squarely athwart the Conservative party, and a period of multi-party confusion and low discipline in Parliament followed, coinciding with a recurrence of non-partisan voting in the constituencies. Political historians all speak of the hiatus in party politics in the 1846–67 period and remark upon the lack of any sharp policy differences between the parties. The agenda in the 20 years after the repeal of the Corn Laws was largely negative, aimed at preventing the schemes of the Radicals in the House from coming to fruition. As noted in Chapter 8, there was an explicit agreement between Derby and Palmerston to this effect, and the effort was perhaps aided by the prosperity of the nation in the 1850s and 1860s. Despite the absence of obvious policy differences, the Conservative organization seems to have recovered in the late 1850s and 1860s. The Conservative central fund, which fell off greatly in the elections of 1847 and 1852, was modest in 1857 and exceptionally large in 1859. Organization in the constituencies probably also recovered at this time, if Rose's boast quoted earlier had a basis in fact. In any case, party voting in the constituencies clearly recovered in 1859 and 1865. Palmerston died soon after the 1865 election, and the agitation that had begun in 1859 finally culminated two years later in the second Reform Act. Issues of reform, pushed onto the agenda chiefly by the Radical wing of the Liberal party, served to define or redefine party boundaries. The growing Radical contingent, made possible by the expansion of the electorate, moved toward radical reform; their proposals, now with the authority of substantial numbers in the House of Commons – and no longer safely bottled up by a conspiracy between the leadership of the two parties – demarcated the real political cleavages, making the position of the Whigs in the Liberal party anomalous. A prophetic article in 1880 on "The Unstable Equilibrium of Parties" highlighted this anomaly, decrying the "unnatural" division of moderate conservative politicians between the two great parties. The author noted that whereas "nine out of ten Liberals were until a quite recent period at one with their Conservative opponents in professing

[6]References to party funds in the following paragraph are also based on Pinto-Duschinsky (1981).

a desire to maintain the general framework of English institutions," the fact that the recent election had for the first time given the "new radicalism" a predominant position in the Liberal party meant that the Whigs were actually closer in feeling to the Conservatives than to the ruling faction of their own party. The author hopefully predicted that this could not last and that the Whigs as a body would break off and join the Conservatives (Wilson 1880). As soon as an appropriate excuse – or last straw – appeared in the form of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill in 1886, this in fact happened.

Except for the period 1857–65, where there is no obvious set of issues dominating political discussion, the short-term fluctuations of the party system are intelligible as responses to the stimulus of a relatively few issues of fundamental importance. There is still the question, however, of why each reform period seems to have had a characteristic level and variability of party organization and party voting.

THE EXTENSION OF THE SUFFRAGE

The most likely contributors to the periodization of the party system are of course the Reform Acts. The introduction after 1832 of permanent registration in the counties and annual registration in the boroughs, for example, clearly sparked the creation of an entirely new species of organization – the registration societies (Thomas 1950). In this section, we shall concentrate on the extension of the suffrage. Each Reform Act opened the way for a sizable expansion of the electorate – by 50–80% after 1832, 88% after 1867, 76% after 1884 – and each increase in the electorate had important effects on party organization, on parliamentary discipline, and on party voting in the electorate.

Party organization

The impact on party organization is perhaps the most widely appreciated. Weber (1946), Duverger (1955), LaPalombara and Weiner (1966), and others stress that party organization has typically followed the expansion of the suffrage in western democracies.

It should be noted, however, that size alone does not determine the usefulness of organization. This point is brought home most forcefully by contrasting the state of party organization in the counties and in the boroughs. Although county constituencies were far larger on average than boroughs, organization there was less developed. As late as 1874, for example, only 46% of the English county districts had Conservative associations, whereas 67% of the boroughs did.[7]

[7]On page 20 of his *Elections and Party Management*, H. J. Hanham states that in 1874 there were "Conservative associations in only forty-four of the eighty-two English county divisions," indicating that thirty-eight had no associations. Using the same document upon which Hanham bases himself, however – indeed, using a copy of the document provided by Hanham – I have counted thirty-eight county divisions *with* associations, and forty-four *without*. Professor Hanham has suggested in a personal communication that the figures were transposed when *Elections and Party Management* was first put through the press.

The explanation for this contrast lies chiefly in the greater frequency of political battles in the towns. Only in the towns was registration annual. Thus, only there could organization pay dividends every year at the revision courts. Only in the towns were there local elections. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, which replaced self-perpetuating corporations by elected councils in 184 English boroughs, meant that political organization could be useful also at the annual municipal elections. Finally, only in the towns were parliamentary elections fairly often contested. At general elections between 1852 and 1865, for example, 63% of the boroughs were contested on average, as opposed to only 29% of the counties (Lloyd 1965). In the counties, much political effort was spent in avoiding the great cost of actually going to the poll.

Interestingly, all three extensions of the suffrage in the nineteenth century coincided with considerable increases in the number and proportion of contested parliamentary elections. Whereas only 27% of English constituencies were contested on average at the five general elections held between 1812 and 1830 (Mitchell 1967: 116), this figure jumped to 59% for the nine elections held after 1832, to 80% after 1867, and to 86% after 1885.

In part, this increasing tendency to contest parliamentary elections was due to the replacement of small with large boroughs. In the three elections before 1832, for example, only 14% of the boroughs disfranchised by the first Reform Act were contested on average. In contrast, over 90% of the newly enfranchised double-member boroughs were contested in the three elections immediately after 1832.

More generally, the increasing proportion of contested elections may have been due to the extension of the suffrage and the greater uncertainty about election outcomes that this produced. In nineteenth century England, the candidates paid all official election expenses, in addition to such costs as transporting, treating, and bribing voters. Consequently, it was not uncommon for candidates to withdraw and avoid the expense of polling day if, after a few weeks of campaigning, they were convinced that their chances of securing a seat were not good. When results could be forecast accurately, candidates knew – at least with a high degree of certainty – who would win if the contest were pushed to a poll. Thus, the candidate who expected to lose could cut his losses by withdrawing.

When the electorate expanded and elections could not be forecast as accurately, however, the subjective estimates that candidates formed as to the probability that they would win were probably higher for "challengers" and lower for "front-runners." On this ground, one might expect more contests in larger constituencies. One might expect this as well on the ground that larger constituencies were more heterogeneous. On the other hand, more electors also meant a greater election expense, and on this ground one might expect fewer contests in larger constituencies.

Cross-sectionally, the evidence is that larger constituencies were more frequently contested – at least among boroughs. Between 1859 and 1880, for example, the average number of general election contests among boroughs with fewer than 1,000 electors was 3.52, while the figure stood at 3.60, 3.87, and 4.05 for boroughs with 1,000–2,000, 2,000–3,000, and more than 3,000 electors, respectively. There is at least some reason, then, to attribute the increasing frequency of contests to the growth of the electorate.[8]

Evidence of the impact on organization of frequency of contest and size of constituency can be garnered from the census of party associations conducted by the Conservative Central Office in 1874. According to this census, only 22% of English boroughs with fewer than 1,000 registered electors had Conservative associations, whereas 46% of boroughs with 1,000–1,999 electors, and 87% of boroughs with 2,000 or more electors, had associations. The effect of size and electoral competition jointly on party organization is suggested by the figures in Table 10.1. This table divides the 183 English boroughs into several classes, based on size of registered electorate and number of general election contests between 1859 and 1880, and gives for each class the percentage which had Conservative associations. Among the smaller boroughs (fewer than 3,000 electors), those which were frequently contested were from 10% to 30% more likely to have a Conservative association than those which were infrequently contested. The impact of size was even greater, both for frequently and infrequently contested places.

Parliamentary discipline

The effect of the extension of the suffrage on the second of the three sectors of the party system – the parliamentary parties – was indirect. A

[8]Lloyd attributes the increase in contested elections over the second half of the nineteenth century to "an altered attitude to elections. An eighteenth-century candidate would not have run in a constituency where he had no hope; he could do himself no good, and he might do harm to his social position by pushing in where he was not wanted. By 1910 contesting a hopeless seat was accepted as a way for a politician to earn the gratitude of his party" (Lloyd 1965: 265).

Table 10.1. *Percentage of English boroughs having local Conservative organizations in 1874, by size and competitiveness*

Number of registered electors	Number of contests 1859–80	
	3 or less	4 or 5
<1,000	15.4 (13)[a]	28.6 (14)
1,000–1,999	26.3 (19)	58.6 (29)
2,000–2,999	80.0 (5)	100.0 (10)
>3,000	87.1 (31)	85.5 (62)

[a]The figures in parentheses are the number of boroughs in each cell. Thus, for example, there were 13 boroughs which had fewer than 1,000 registered electors in 1874 and experienced three or fewer contests in the period 1859–80. Of these, two, or 15.4%, had local Conservative associations in 1874.

larger electorate prompted greater reliance on party labels as a method of communicating with voters, as will be discussed later. As a consequence, the party label and what it stood for acquired greater importance. But the electoral payoff to candidates from stressing their partisan ties depended on their party's reputation with voters, which in turn depended both on what the party stood for and on its ability to deliver those policy benefits it had promised. Hence, the party's reputation for being disciplined enough to enact its programme began to affect the electoral fortunes of all its members. Voting against one's party was no longer a completely private matter, and discipline became more and more what economists refer to as a collective or public good. The consequences of this are discussed in Chapter 11.

Party voting in the electorate

The growing size of constituencies affected more than the party organization and the party-in-government: the whole manner of conducting elections, and hence the behavior of the party-in-the-electorate, was also affected. As the electorate grew, the amount of information that candidates could convey about themselves to ordinary voters dwindled, unless they were prepared to make much greater efforts than had formerly been necessary. While candidates in the smaller boroughs were wont personally to canvass all of their constituents – at least until the Ballot Act in 1872 – candidates in the larger constituencies, while perhaps aiming in principle for equally extensive coverage, fell more or less short; such candidates had to rely more on newspapers and, increasingly, the party label in order to communicate something about themselves. Significantly, the terms "Conservative" and "Liberal" first came into common usage in the 1830s,

Table 10.2. *Correlation between split voting and number of voters*

Type of constituency	Number of candidates	Correlation between SV and NV	
		1832–65	1868–80
Borough	3	−.22* (376)	−.28* (55)
Borough	4	−.13 (124)	−.29* (58)
County	3	.02 (83)	−.23 (48)
County	4	−.31 (15)	−.31 (27)

Note: There were 376 three-candidate contests in boroughs in the period 1832–65. The correlation between the split voting rate and the number of voters for these contests was −.22. The asterisk indicates that this correlation is significant at the .05 level.

and their open use and avowal by candidates increased with time. Whereas politicians in the age of Peel "did not as a rule talk of being members of a party," instead striving to give the "appearance of being independent and unfettered in their parliamentary conduct" (Gash 1982: 156), by the elections of 1868–80 a majority of politicians openly avowed their partisan affiliations.[9]

The consequences for party voting are fairly clear. As the electorate expanded, a larger proportion of those voting found themselves with little information about the candidates beyond their names and party labels. For these voters, voting a straight party ticket was quite natural, if they were going to vote at all, since they had no real basis on which to distinguish between members of the same party.

Lacking any direct evidence on the quality of information possessed by Victorian electors, it is difficult to assess the importance of the foregoing argument. The potential informational differences between 300 and 30,000 electors seem large, but what of the differences between 300 and 3,000? Some indirect evidence on this question is afforded by the rates of split voting observed in different-sized constituencies between 1832 and 1880.

Two points should be made. First, there is definitely some, albeit modest, evidence that larger constituencies had lower split voting rates. The simple correlation between the total number of voters participating in an election and the split voting rate is −.33 (significant at the .001 level) for contests held between 1832 and 1880. Even if type of constituency (borough or county), type of contest (two-against-one or two-against-two), and time period (before or after 1867) are controlled for, the correlation remains negative (with one exception; see Table 10.2).

[9]I base this statement upon my own reading of a hundred or so election addresses in the 1868–80 period.

Table 10.3. *Split voting in borough contests with three candidates*

Number of voters	Split voting rate	
	1832–65	1868–80
<1,000	23.6 (221)	No data
1,999–2,000	21.2 (85)	11.0 (15)
2,999–3,000	19.8 (36)	11.4 (6)
>3,000	12.0 (34)	6.2 (34)

Note: There were 221 three-candidate contests in boroughs with fewer than 1,000 voters in the period 1832–65. The average split voting rate in these contests was 23.6.

Looked at in terms of averages, a similar story is told: for example, the average split voting rate before 1867 in three-candidate borough contests with fewer than 1,000 electors was 23.6%, whereas it was only 12.0% in otherwise similar contests with more than 3,000 electors (see Table 10.3).[10]

Second, although size did affect split voting rates as the informational hypothesis would predict, size alone falls far short of explaining the trends in split voting. One indication of this is the decline of split voting rates within classes of equally sized boroughs. For example, the split voting rate in boroughs with between 1,000 and 2,000 voters fell from 21.2% before 1867 to 11.0% after (Table 10.3). Obviously, something other than size must be invoked to explain this decline. Indeed, if the enlargement of constituencies is the only factor considered, one would expect a decline in the average level of split voting in three-candidate borough contests from 21.6% to 15.4%. The actual decline was considerably greater, to 8.1%.[11] Another indication of the inadequacy of size as an explanation of split voting is the lack of any measurable tendency for increases in size and decreases in split voting to covary at the constituency level. Only 36 boroughs in the sample had data for three-candidate contests both before and after 1867. For each of these boroughs, the average number of voters and average split voting rates were calculated for each of the periods 1832–65 and 1868–80. The correlation between (1) how much the borough's electorate had increased from the period 1832–65 to 1868–80 and (2) how much the split voting rate had decreased was insignificant and of the wrong sign. The same is true of the boroughs in the sample which had four-candidate contests before and after 1867. The

[10]The correlation between non-partisan plumping and number of voters was not as consistently negative – especially before 1867.

[11]Similar statements hold regarding four-candidate borough contests and county contests.

bottom line is that the measured impact of size was moderate at best.[12] A complete explanation of the decline and periodization of split voting rates must include other factors. The next section will attempt to do this.

THE CABINET AND THE ELECTORATE

> If the predominance of the House of Commons has been lessened by a delegation of authority to the Cabinet, it has been weakened also by the transfer of power directly to the electorate. The two tendencies are not, indeed, unconnected. The transfer of power to the electorate is due in part to the growing influence of the Ministers, to the recognition that policy is mainly directed, not by Parliament, but by them. The Cabinet now rules the nation by and with the advice and consent of Parliament; and for that very reason the nation wishes to decide what Cabinet it shall be that rules. (Lowell 1912, vol. i: 437)

Sheer numbers of voters and the organizational and informational problems posed by a mass electorate do help to explain the periodization of English voting behavior in the nineteenth century. But the expansion of the electorate and its effects must be understood within the context of nineteenth century parliamentary government. The current United States electorate is, after all, many times larger than the Victorian English electorate, yet the frequency of split returns to the United States Senate since 1950 – to take but one indicator – shows that United States Senators benefit from a sizable personal vote. The fundamental reason why the personal vote for MPs is so much smaller than that for members of the United States Congress is that MPs have so much less impact on the determination of policy – both distributive and general. The key element in understanding the decline in non-partisan voting across the nineteenth century is an appreciation of the loss of policy initiative by the backbench MP.

In the early 1800s, one finds a relatively small active membership in the House of Commons operating essentially by unanimous consent (in this respect, reminiscent of the U.S. Senate). As described in Chapter 6, backbench MPs took a prominent part in the initiation and debate of major pieces of legislation, and an array of parliamentary rights ensured that their policy concerns would find a place on the agenda. Beginning in the 1830s, however, the role of the private member in public legislation began seriously to erode. By the 1860s, if not sooner, the centralization of legislative power in the Cabinet was an accomplished and recognized fact.

Moreover, the decline of the private member's status was by no means

[12]Even had the relationship between size and split voting been stronger, there would still be some question as to whether the informational hypothesis was the correct one. Smaller boroughs tended to be more corrupt, after all, so that the covariation might be explained on that basis.

confined to matters of national policy. In general, the kinds of legislation one most readily associates with individual legislators fall in the area of what Lowi has called distributive policy, concerned with the allocation of geographically divisible benefits, such as capital projects and grants for the establishment or support of local services (Lowi 1964). Indeed, one of the most widely observed behavioral regularities of geographically based legislators is the provision of "particularistic" or divisible benefits to their constituents. It is natural to suppose that Victorian MPs also performed such services, and that they were valued for their ability to do so.

Yet, here also Victorian backbenchers suffered a decline. This is especially evident when contrasted with the American experience. The mainstays of the U.S. Congressman's particularistic usefulness to his constituents have been, at various times, tariff bills, Civil Service patronage, and local improvement bills. Each of these areas was largely shut off from the influence of the private member of Parliament by the mid-nineteenth century.

First, tariff bills, which with their many separate rates for different industries proved ideal vehicles for log-rolling in the U.S. Congress until the 1930s, simply did not exist in Britain after the definitive triumph of free trade in the 1840s. Second, the local Civil Service patronage of which the member of Parliament disposed declined throughout the nineteenth century. Positions in the revenue, postal, and other geographically dispersed branches of the Civil Service were regularly referred to the recommendation of the local member in the early part of the century. However, patronage in the revenue departments began to decline with Lord Liverpool's renunciation in 1820 of the direct appointment of superior offices in the Customs Service; and the reforms initiated by the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1853), and furthered by Gladstone's Order in Council establishing open competition (1870), cut back the patronage throughout the Civil Service. The last bits of local patronage – the provincial postmasterships – were turned over to the surveyors of the postal districts in 1896 (Lowell 1912, vol. i: 170).

A third area of distributive politics largely closed to the private member was the pork barrel. Whereas local improvement bills have long been a feature of American politics, the use of national resources for the benefit of particular places was largely avoided in Victorian England. Expenditure on the traditional bulwarks of the American pork barrel – rivers and harbors, railways, roads, dams and canals – was almost nonexistent. Except for expenditures on "harbours of refuge" and in the half dozen boroughs where the state's ship-building works were maintained, and where the solicitude of the local members for such expenditures was proverbial, the government spent no money upon harbors. Neither canals

nor roads nor railroads were constructed by the crown (Lowell 1912, vol. ii: 514–19; vol. i: 367–93).

All told, it would seem that public legislation offered increasingly little for the backbench MP in the electoral arena. He could not claim to initiate or even significantly affect either general or distributive policy. Increasingly, one suspects, voters and MPs recognized this, and the policy role that constituents expected their MPs to fulfill became essentially that of an internal lobbyist, seeking to change the party line from within rather than to oppose it from without. This, at any rate, was the strategy adopted by a number of Liberal pressure groups in the 1860s and 1870s (Vincent 1966; Wootton 1975).

Roughly concomitant with the decline of the individual MP in the arena of public legislation came a striking change in procedure on private legislation. As discussed in Chapter 2, the role of the locally interested MP underwent a complete transformation. Whereas in the eighteenth century private bills were handled entirely by MPs who had either a personal or a constituency-based interest in the matter, by 1844 railway bills and by 1855 all private bills were controlled by small committees of disinterested members. These changes greatly altered the character of private bill procedure and limited the services which an MP could render to local interests. Earlier in the nineteenth century, and throughout the eighteenth century, a significant part of the job of many MPs was to steer through Parliament private bills in their constituents' or patron's (or indeed, their own) interest. The MP generally prepared and introduced the bill, and often reported it from committee (Beer 1966: 25–28; Beckett 1982). After the removal of interested members from the crucial committee stage, however, and the previous introduction of paid agents to prepare the bills, there was not nearly so much that the member could do to defeat or promote such bills. In committee, the proceeding was judicial; out of committee, it was handled mostly by a registered agent retained for the purpose by the party promoting the bill (and MPs could not be agents); only at stages occurring in the House could the member be useful, and then he was but one voice in a large assembly.

The general picture that emerges is quite clear. By the 1860s the individual MP was a relatively unimportant cog in the legislative machinery. Elections earlier in the century may well have turned on the ability of candidates to affect general policy and to provide distributive benefits (and of course on the question of to whom in the constituency these benefits were allocated). With the important changes in private and public bill procedure, however, the policy foundation of the individual candidate's electoral importance was eroding, and the consequences of this were far-reaching. Newspapers, whether in pursuit of increased circulation or of "newsworthy" events, naturally focused on what was in-

creasingly the sole hub of action: the front benches and the party leaders who sat there. Contributors gave increasingly to the parties – or so one might infer from the increasing size of central party funds (Pinto-Duschinsky 1981: 21). MPs themselves saw the necessity to openly affiliate with a party – for if one was not a member of a party, in what sense could one deliver any policy benefits at all to constituency elites or voters generally? Consequently, constituency elites and voters generally began to view the franchise more as a means to affect the partisan control of the executive than as a means to choose between individual representatives. As the overall value of a seat in Parliament came to be dominated by its particular value in contributing to the "election" of a Prime Minister, the striking of deals in the constituencies across party lines became less appealing.[13] More and more, the individual MP, "like a delegate to the electoral college for the election of an American President," was "returned primarily as a tied voter for a potential Prime Minister" (Campion 1952: 65).

SUMMARY

It has long been the accepted textbook view that twentieth century British voters tend to regard their vote more as a means to control or express an opinion of the executive than as a means to select a particular individual to represent them. Thus, voters make their choices not on the basis of the personal or policy characteristics of the individual candidates, but rather with an eye to the candidates' party affiliation and the record of the party leaders who will form the government. It is not hard to understand why voters should behave in this fashion in the twentieth century: MPs have little or no influence over the policy process independent of their party leaders; they generally have no electoral organization of their own with which to woo voters, and have little control over campaign finances; and they can deliver little in the way of particularized benefits to their constituents.

If one reverts to the English polity of, say, the 1810s, the situation is completely altered. The prevailing view at that time was that the government's duty was not legislative but, rather, administrative. The individual member of Parliament still enjoyed a number of formidable procedural rights, and was still looked to for the introduction of major

[13] It would seem that the politics of multi-member seats before control of the Cabinet became the key to control of public legislation was rather similar to the politics of portfolio distribution in European governments. Coalitions of a sufficient size to win all the seats were forged, the seats being distributed to the members of the winning coalition. When a seat in Parliament came to have value chiefly as a vote for a Prime Minister or Cabinet, it was more difficult to forge cross-party coalitions in the constituencies.

legislation. Individual candidates fashioned their own electoral organizations and were responsible for financing their own campaigns in an era when no limits on expenditure were enforced by the state. Finally, the private bill procedure then in use allowed individual MPs considerable influence in the disposition of such local improvements as canals, enclosures, and turnpike roads. Given these differences, did voters weigh the personal characteristics and policy commitments of the candidates more heavily in their voting decisions?

The previous chapter has provided the statistical wherewithal to answer that question, and the more general question of when English voters began to vote for parties rather than men. Based on an analysis of over a thousand election contests held between 1818 and 1918, it demonstrates that English voting behavior changed markedly during the course of the nineteenth century. In particular, it shows that the frequency with which English voters in double-member districts split their votes between the major parties declined considerably and permanently in the period 1857–68. Whereas nearly a quarter of all electors in double-member districts split their votes in 1847, and nearly a fifth in 1857, by 1868 only 5.5% did so, and the figure never exceeded 5% thereafter. Voting for the party rather than for the man appears to be the dominant feature of English electoral behavior from 1868 onwards.

The development of a party-oriented electorate in the mid-Victorian period was based chiefly on the prior erosion of the powers of individual MPs in the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s. The private MP had become insignificant in the determination of policy – whether of a general or a local nature – by the 1860s, and voters responded to this by using their votes to determine what did matter: party control of the executive. It is important to note that the changes in electoral organization after the second Reform Act, the limitation and centralization of campaign finance after the Corrupt Practices Act of 1883, and the development of highly disciplined parliamentary parties in the 1870s all came well after the procedural decline of the private member and after the bulk of the change in electoral behavior. These events, it is suggested, should be viewed as postscripts, logical consequences and reinforcements of the fundamental changes in parliamentary procedure and electoral behavior. In the next two chapters this suggestion, at least as it pertains to the development of party discipline in the House of Commons, is pursued.

II

The legislative consequences of a party-oriented electorate

Chapter 9 provided clear statistical evidence of the increasing electoral importance of party. We turn now to an investigation of the legislative consequences of this change. Since the analysis focuses on the responses of individual MPs to altered electoral conditions, a necessary preliminary question is whether MPs noticed any change.

THE PERCEPTION OF THE ELECTORATE

> Very few of them had seen the three last elections without feelings of anxiety and concern. He did not like to see these big turn-over majorities: they were unpleasant: they showed great instability in the public mind.
>
> (Leonard Courtney speaking in the House of Commons, 1880)[1]

The perception by nineteenth century MPs of why their constituents voted the way they did is clearly not a subject on which definitive statements can be made. Yet it is necessary, if we are to argue that the change in electoral orientation had any direct effect on legislative behavior, to say something about how MPs perceived the electoral parameters within which they acted. Did Victorian politicians know when electors were voting for parties and when they were voting for men? In particular, did contemporaries in the late 1860s and 1870s know or believe that voters were becoming more party-oriented and less candidate-oriented?[2]

One approach to answering these questions is to look at the trends over time in the number of election contests with only three candidates. In its simplest form, the decision on the part of a prospective candidate

[1] *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, cclii, 271.

[2] Certainly one can find assertions to this effect in the historical literature. Feuchtwanger, for example, writes that after passage of the second Reform Act, "public opinion at large was more and more focused on the activites of the national leaders," and that "MPs were watching this process and reporting it to their leaders" (Feuchtwanger 1968: 219).

Table 11.1. *Number of candidates at contested elections in double-member English provincial boroughs, 1835–1900*

Year	Number of candidates				Ratio of column 3 to column 2
	3	4	5	6	
1835	73	25	2	0	.34
1837	62	39	2	0	.63
1841	51	37	0	0	.73
1847	54	26	3	0	.48
1852	60	33	5	0	.55
1857	62	19	2	0	.31
1859	51	30	0	0	.59
1865	63	29	2	0	.46
1868	38	30	3	1	.79
1874	24	47	2	3	1.96
1880	31	45	1	0	1.45
1885	7	13	0	0	1.86
1886	5	14	0	0	2.80
1892	6	13	0	0	2.17
1895	5	12	2	1	2.40
1900	4	13	0	0	3.25

Source: Compiled by the author from the data of Craig (1974; 1977).

to contest a given constituency presumably depended on the value of a seat, the cost of an election campaign, and the probability of victory. If contemporaries believed that voters were becoming more party-oriented, then the estimated chances of a candidate should have depended more on his party label and less on his personal characteristics. If one candidate of a given party stood a good chance of winning, in other words, so should others have stood good chances. Thus, increasingly, whenever one member of a party thought a particular (double-member) constituency was worth fighting, there ought to have been another candidate of the same party who thought so too.[3] The proportion of two-against-one contests should have declined, and the proportion of two-against-two contests should have increased.

This did in fact happen. As can be seen in Table 11.1, the number of four-candidate contests increased considerably relative to the number of three-candidate contests after the second Reform Act. Moreover, looked at more carefully, the figures in the last column fall into a familiar pattern: the ratio of four- to three-candidate contests increased from 1835 to

[3]This presumes that other things were constant – in particular, that differences in the valuation of seats and in the expectation of costs between candidates of the same party did not also change with time.

1841, fell in 1847–57, recovered in 1859 (although falling back in 1865), and reached all-time highs in 1868, 1874, and 1886. This is the pattern one would expect if contemporaries accurately forecast the levels of non-partisan voting in each year, and made the appropriate decision as to whether to run one or two candidates: running one when there was a significant chance of garnering split vote support, running two when it looked like electors would be casting party votes.

In addition to the campaigning evidence, there were several striking innovations in political argumentation in the late 1860s and 1870s which implicitly recognized the growing electoral importance of party and party government. In modern Britain, by-elections are routinely viewed as judgments of the government's policy and administration, and general elections are interpreted chiefly as selections of which party shall govern next. Implicitly, such views presume that voters are party-oriented rather than candidate-oriented, and in this regard the increasing acceptance of similar interpretations in the late 1860s and 1870s is an important clue to the attitude of contemporaries about electoral behavior.

Gladstone's justification of his dissolution of Parliament in 1874 is an instructive example. Responding in the House of Commons to charges that the dissolution had been "an elaborate surprise," Gladstone vindicated his conduct by pointing out that by-elections had been going against the government in the month before his decision, that on this ground he had been justified in inferring that popular opinion was against the government, and that, since no government could legitimately govern in that day without popular support, he was thereby obliged to afford "the people of this country an opportunity of pronouncing their opinion upon the conduct of affairs."[4] Gladstone was the first Premier to justify a dissolution on the basis of trends in by-elections. Implicit in his interpretation of by-elections (and, indeed, of general elections) was the assumption that they turned chiefly on the conduct of the government – and not on local jealousies or the particular actions of individual MPs. This assumption appeared again, in a peculiarly strong form, in W. S. Saunders's book-length attempt to explain the Liberal victory in 1880. The central premise of Saunders's argument was that the by-elections held just before the general election had revealed the Beaconsfield ministry to be popular, and that as it then lost the election, its defeat could only be attributed to events that took place between the by-elections and the general appeal to the country (Saunders 1880).

A similar assumption concerning general elections – viz., that they represented national choices of a government, and were not just a number of unconnected contests determined by local issues – appeared clearly in

[4]*Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, ccxviii, 79–85.

two important precedents: one in parliamentary practice, one in the theory of the constitution. When Disraeli saw the election results in 1868, he resigned office before meeting Parliament. Although this upset some members, who would have preferred that he follow the established procedure of seeking his fortune at the hands of the Commons, Disraeli felt that meeting Parliament and being immediately defeated on a matter of confidence (as was surely his fate) would be a simple waste of time; the election results having made a Liberal government inevitable, he resigned forthwith. Gladstone, in 1874, and Disraeli (now Lord Beaconsfield), in 1880, followed this precedent, and an article in the June 1880 *Contemporary Review* noted that these actions had established that "when a Ministry appeals to the country by a dissolution of Parliament, and when the elections show that the new House of Commons will certainly be unfavourable to the Ministry, that Ministry must resign, just as much as if the House of Commons itself had spoken" (Freeman 1880: 957).

The new power or function accorded to elections by the precedents in 1868, 1874, and 1880 was extended even further by the doctrine of mandate. Although most political leaders denounced as too democratic the idea that election results bound ministries to take particular actions, the increasing specificity of proposals for reform in Liberal election addresses after 1867 allowed Gladstone's government to claim that the decisive electoral verdict in 1868 had given it a mandate for certain reforms, notably the disestablishment of the Irish church (Hanham 1969: 201). These claims were supported by the Conservatives, albeit not without a strategic calculation. Lord Salisbury, who played the leading role in securing the acquiescence of the House of Lords to the disestablishment of the Irish church, was concerned at the time to find a viable position for the Lords in the constitution. He explained his motivation for accepting the Liberal pretensions to a mandate in a letter to Lord Carnarvon:

> The plan which I prefer is frankly to acknowledge that the nation is our Master, though the House of Commons is not, and to yield our own opinion only when the judgment of the nation has been challenged at the polls and decidedly expressed. This doctrine, it seems to me, has the advantage of being: (1) Theoretically sound. (2) Popular. (3) Safe against agitation, and (4) so rarely applicable as practically to place little fetter upon our independence.
>
> (Cecil 1922, vol. ii: 26)

Although the attraction for Salisbury of a doctrine of mandate rested on a calculation that the voice of the people would rarely speak clearly, the recognition and use for Conservative purposes of the assumption that elections could express, not just a choice of government, but also a choice

of policy, is clear. This assumption has since had a long and checkered career in British politics.

The other side of the interpretive coin that pictured elections as choices of a government, and even of a policy, was the increasing importance which evidently attached to the government's popularity. This is illustrated by contemporary estimations of the likely electoral impact of Lord Beaconsfield's diplomatic success at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Beaconsfield, proclaiming that he had secured "peace with honour," was given an enthusiastic popular welcome on returning from Berlin, and in the Commons secured an extraordinarily large majority of 143 in favor of the treaties. Morley wrote that "it was the common talk at the moment that if Lord Beaconsfield had only chosen to dissolve, his majority would have been safe" (Lloyd 1968: 11). The Cabinet sat for three hours on August 10 discussing the possibility, this being the first time that a government had contemplated an early election (the Parliament had over two years remaining) purely as a means of securing a party majority, and without having suffered any legislative or administrative setback in Parliament (Mackintosh 1962: 178–79). Presumably, the ministers reckoned that Beaconsfield's foreign policy success would have a strong positive effect in most constituencies; this anticipated effect was large enough to make them sanguine about their chances, and willing seriously to consider trading the more than two years of tenure which remained to them for a probability of a seven-year renewal.

Along with the belief that a government's popularity might carry its followers to victory went the complementary belief that a government's unpopularity might drag its adherents down to defeat. These beliefs were given added zest by the magnitude of the Conservative victory in 1874, and by the even larger Liberal victory in 1880. The change in the party composition of the House of Commons due to the 1874 election was significantly larger than that due to any election since 1835, and the change in 1880 set a new record: for the first time, a shift of well over a hundred seats was registered. Both these elections startled contemporaries, and there was much comment on the new volatility of the electoral system (Freeman 1880; Kebbel 1880).

The second Reform Act had generated tremendous uncertainty as to how the electoral system would react to an infusion of working class electors; it was Disraeli's "leap in the dark," what Carlyle styled "shooting niagra" (Carlyle 1867). The results of 1874 and 1880, coming after another basic structural change, the Ballot Act in 1872, did nothing to reassure members. The dire predictions of the Adullamites about the unhappy consequences of a democratic electorate were brought home, although perhaps not quite as advertised, to many MPs: In 1874 and

1880, more borough incumbents went down to defeat than in any other election from 1835 through 1900, with almost a third of those facing a contest failing to secure election.[5] The swing from one party to the other, which became more uniform after 1867,[6] also became considerably larger in average value. In English two-member boroughs, the mean swing to the Conservatives from 1865 to 1868 was larger (in absolute value) than that for any pair of elections since 1832–35, and the figure advanced to a new high in 1868–74.[7]

What was the position of MPs in 1880, then? They had seen three sharp party battles in 1868, 1874, and 1880, with the lines drawn more clearly than they had been since the 1840s. After each of these elections, the defeated Prime Minister had resigned without meeting Parliament, and these precedents had established as constitutional a practice which tacitly recognized that the function of elections was not so much to choose individual members as to choose a government. Members had seen electoral tides higher than they had ever been before, pushing more uniformly in one direction than they every had before, and beaching more craft than they ever had before. A Premier, in the course of justifying a dissolution to the House, had clearly interpreted by-elections as referenda on the conduct of the government, rather than individual choices of members. If they cared to look, they found that proportionately fewer electors in the two-member districts were casting split votes and nonpartisan plumpers, and that support for MPs in these districts now came increasingly from electors who cast straight party ballots. Had they searched, they would have found fewer colleagues from double-member districts of different party; and, in general, they would have found fewer MPs from these districts whose electoral experience had been anything other than what one would expect on the assumption that voters were becoming more party-oriented.

[5] See Table 7.1.

[6] T. J. Nossiter (1975) and D. Fraser (1976) computed the standard deviation of the swings to the Conservatives in English two-member boroughs for each adjacent pair of elections from 1832 to 1880. The standard deviation is a measure of the uniformity of swing across districts and can be interpreted as tapping the importance of national events in local electoral politics. Both found a decrease in the standard deviation of swings for election pairs after 1867.

[7] The electoral system had not seen such excitement since the agitation over the first Reform Act. Then, however, the excitement had died down; in the 1870s and 1880s, it did not. The average change in the number of seats held by the Conservatives at elections from 1835 through 1865 was 43.6, or 35.9 if we do not count 1835, which reflected the temporary reform agitation. In contrast, the corresponding figure for elections from 1868 through 1910 was 83.2, or 91.5 if we do not count the exceptional election of December 1910, which, coming less than a year after the previous election, registered no change in Conservative strength.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF A POWERFUL CABINET AND A PARTY-ORIENTED ELECTORATE

The consequences of a powerful Cabinet and a more party-oriented electorate for party cohesion in Parliament were profound. In laying bare these consequences, the analogy with the American electoral college is helpful. The framers of the American Constitution evidently envisaged the electoral college as a body of experienced and sagacious men exercising their independent judgment in the selection of the executive. Very soon, however, it became customary for (1) candidates for the electoral college to pledge themselves to the support of a particular presidential nominee; (2) voters to vote a straight ticket; and (3) members of the electoral college to vote as they had pledged to, so that once the popular vote was in, the electoral vote was a foregone conclusion (Bryce 1913, vol. i: 41–44). The mistake the founding fathers made was to believe that voters would entrust a decision to others which they could make themselves. Since the electoral college did nothing but elect a president and vice-president, presidential electors had nothing to offer voters other than their vote intention. Thus, voters largely ignored all characteristics of electors beyond their stated presidential preferences. An unpledged candidate for the electoral college had little chance when there were sufficient quantities of pledged candidates, for every voter with a clear preference preferred an appropriately committed delegate to an uncommitted delegate. Once the college was assembled, delegates voted as they had promised in part because they had given a public pledge that would be costly to break and in part because each party had an incentive to ensure that those placed on the party's slate were in fact personally committed to the party's nominee. Thus "party cohesion" in the electoral college was and is virtually perfect.

Much in this sketch of the electoral college applies to the House of Commons as well. Although MPs did and still do more than merely select an executive team, nonetheless as the power of the executive grew relative to that of private members, the electoral function of the Commons began to overshadow its other functions. Bagehot recognized this clearly in 1865 when he stressed that "the main function of the House of Commons is [as] an electoral chamber; it is the assembly which chooses our President" (Bagehot 1914: 198). Candidates unaffiliated with one of the major parties were unpledged on the single most important issue – the control of the Cabinet – and increasingly had little chance against candidates who were pledged on this issue: for, just as in elections to the electoral college, every voter with a clear preference as to control of the executive preferred an appropriately committed candidate to an uncom-

mitted candidate. As Bagehot noted, again in 1865: "Members are mostly, perhaps, elected because they will vote for a particular Ministry, rather than for purely legislative reasons" (Bagehot 1914: 92). As a consequence of this – as a consequence of the fact that voters were increasingly executive-oriented – candidates began to affiliate themselves more and more openly with one of the major parties: with one of those collective entities which might credibly secure control of the Cabinet. The increasing willingness of MPs to use party labels, then, stemmed not just from the increasing size of the electorate, as suggested in the last chapter, but also from the aggrandizement of the Cabinet.

As voters became more party-oriented and the use of party labels by candidates came into more general and more frank use, several important consequences followed within Parliament. A party-oriented electorate, which evaluated parties partly on the ability of the leadership to enact a legislative program and to marshal united forces to the task, made a party's cohesion a collective good for its members: they all benefitted when the leadership looked competent and forceful, and they all suffered when it looked hapless. Consequently, both potential dissidents and party leaders had an incentive to reconcile their differences privately, and to avoid public disagreement. Interestingly, it is soon after the third Reform Act, according to Berrington (1967–68), that the English parties first began serious and regular efforts to negotiate intra-party differences, rather than carrying them into the division lobbies. Berrington attributes this to the homogenization of the parties after the Home Rule controversy: leaders simply could no longer find crossbench support, and thus had to make sure that their own troops were in line and satisfied. Such a development of intra-party negotiation was also to be expected, however, because of the collective importance which discipline had acquired.

More generally, as the use of party labels increased, the labels themselves became increasingly important as collective symbols embodying the reputation and stock of the parties. Since the party labels were growing in electoral value, and since their value could be depreciated by indiscipline or incompetence, the parties had a clear incentive to take a larger role in screening candidates who sought to campaign under their banners. And it is precisely in the later 1870s and 1880s that specifically partisan control of nominations began:

> As late as the general elections of 1868 and 1874, nearly all candidates offered themselves to the constituency, though some professed to do so in pursuance of requisitions emanating from the electors. In 1880 many – I think most – Liberal candidates in boroughs, and some in counties, were chosen by the local party associations, and appealed to the Liberal electors on the ground of having been so chosen.
>
> (Bryce 1913, vol. ii: 81)

The development of nomination by local party associations may have been facilitated by the desire of existing party members both to certify to the voters that they were members in good standing and to restrict competition from men arrogating to themselves the party label. In the absence of a method of officially designating party candidates, the danger existed that more than two candidates would campaign under a single party's label. There is some indication that this was a problem in 1868 and 1874: whereas an average of only 2.1% of contests in English provincial boroughs had five or more candidates before 1867, in 1868 fully 5.6% had five or more, and in 1874 6.6% had five or more. The desire to regulate the use of the label may thus have contributed to the movement toward formal nomination by local associations.

As to the consequences of nomination, a couple of points should be made. First, since the practice of local party nominations did not begin until the later 1870s and 1880s, it is largely outside of our purview. Second, however, even before local nomination was a recognized rite of campaigning, MPs had to worry about losing the party label. Even before nomination formalized the power, local associations or local leaders, or indeed the national leadership, might impugn the right of a particular MP to campaign as, say, a Conservative. *If the electorate was party-oriented*, this was a possibility to be taken seriously.

The possibility of losing the party imprimatur was probably not the most significant impetus toward discipline imparted to MPs in the 1860s and 1870s, however. What seems far more important, and has the added advantage of being testable, is the alteration in the relationship between MPs and their constituents that was brought about by the centralization of legislative authority in the Cabinet and the consequent focusing of electoral attention on the executive. The discussion will be facilitated if we imagine a hypothetical constituency with (at least) two kinds of electors: elite supporters, possibly financial backers, lenders of influence, and so on; and ordinary (but, in the sense of the previous chapter, independent) electors. The question is what level and kind of pressure MPs felt from their constituents when they voted in divisions.

Consider first the elite level, and suppose that on some particular issue(s) the local elite disagreed with the party leadership. As the Cabinet became more important, such disagreement between local elites and party leaders should have led to less dissidence, for three reasons. First, the local elites, just like MPs, had to recognize that certain issues might entail a dissolution or resignation. They, too, therefore, had to balance the merits of particular issues against the overall merits of the two major parties. Second, MPs who erred on the side of too little dissent for their elite supporters' tastes faced a lesser penalty as voters nation-wide became

more party-oriented. Even if the local elite was essential to an MP's success in a particular constituency (having, in effect, a power of nomination), and used this power to ruin the MP's chances in his original constituency, he might look forward with increasing confidence to a good chance somewhere else. Both parties had since the 1830s placed prospective candidates on lists kept in the great London clubs, and the whips or party electoral agents were active throughout the post-reform period in finding constituencies for worthy party members. As the electorate became more party-oriented, this task became easier. Prospective candidates were increasingly fungible – they could be sent to a wider array of constituencies with less risk of being disqualified on purely local or personal grounds. Hence, any MP unfortunate enough actually to lose his seat because of his loyalty to the party leadership might expect not just effort but success in finding another suitable constituency. Third, MPs who erred on the side of too much dissent for their party leaders' tastes faced a larger penalty. Beyond the possibilities of dissolution and non-advancement there was the likelihood that the party would not help the MP find another constituency should he for any reason lose his current seat. Facing less pressure from local elites, a lesser penalty for displeasing local elites, and a greater penalty for displeasing the party leadership, MPs ought to have had less incentive to dissent when local elites and party leaders disagreed.

They should also have faced less pressure to dissent from the bulk of their constituents. First, even ordinary voters may have recognized the possibility of dissolution and resignation, and tempered their opinions on specific issues accordingly. Second, even if they did not, the sheer fact that they were party-oriented should have meant less pressure to dissent. In a nutshell, the argument is this: voters who based their votes chiefly on partisan preference necessarily based them less on the voting record of their own MP; thus, MPs generally felt less local pressure to vote against their party when party and constituency disagreed. An MP may still have derived some electoral benefit from dissenting when his constituents disagreed with his party, but if his constituents were intent on punishing the party, this did him little good since the only way in which punishment could be inflicted was by voting against the party's candidates. On the other hand, if the MP voted with his party on an issue opposed by his constituents, he may still have incurred some local wrath by that act, but if the overall record of his party pleased his constituents and that overall party record was what they voted for, he could afford to side with his party. What the MP did simply had less electoral impact relative to what the party as a whole did. When electoral pressures from constituents lessened, however, partisan pressures bulked relatively larger

in the typical MP's calculations, and unless other things changed, he tended to support his party more frequently.

The upshot of these theoretical arguments is clear. We expect that dissidence due to local pressures should have declined in the 1860s and 1870s, as the primacy of the Cabinet was recognized, and voters became increasingly party-oriented. The next chapter tests this theoretical expectation. Of course, even if locally inspired dissidence did decline, this furnishes an adequate explanation of the overall rise in cohesion only to the extent that such dissidence was important. Accordingly, the next chapter also assesses the degree to which local pressures caused dissidence.

12

The influence of constituents in Victorian England

As the polypus takes its colour from the rock to which it affixes itself, so do the Members of this House take their character from the constituencies.

(Robert Lowe)[1]

Historians differ widely on the importance of national issues in parliamentary elections during the nineteenth century. At least two strands of opinion tend to discount their importance. First, there is the view that elections were largely controlled by the influence of local elites, so that the meaningful expression of electoral opinion was confined to differences among the upper crust. Second, there is the view that parliamentary elections "were much more a drama enacted about the life of the town ... than a means of expressing individual opinions about the matters of the day ... the real issue was not the parliamentary representation of the borough, but the relative positions of the electors within the town" (Vincent 1966: xv). Clearly, to the extent that elections did turn chiefly on rivalries of the purely local kind suggested, their use in communicating the policy preferences of voters – even elite voters – was lessened.

In contrast both to the emphasis on influence and to that on localism, there is a strand of opinion which affirms the importance of national issues in elections. R. W. Davis has said of the counties, for example, that "the importance of landed influence has been vastly over-rated" and that "county politics rested on more than the decisions of cosy little caucuses of country gentlemen" (Davis 1972: 37, 98). In Davis's view, the leaders of county politics gave a lead to opinion but did not dictate the outcome. Accordingly, MPs could not disregard the opinion of the middling class of electors in their constituencies with impunity, as might be supposed on a view of politics emphasizing influence.

Related to the controversy over the role of national issues in parliamentary elections is the question of whether the opinions of constituents

[1] *Parliamentary Debates*, 3rd series, clxxxii, 156.

affected the votes of MPs in the Commons. If elections could be won or lost by taking the wrong stand on issues, then one ought to see a systematic relationship between the voting behavior of MPs and the kinds of constituencies they sat for. If elections were controlled by local elites, one ought presumably to find MPs supporting the opinion of these elites, if not of the broader constituency. Only if elections were thoroughly "local" should there be no systematic relation between the votes of MPs and of their constituents.

Surprisingly, there have been only a few quantitative efforts to assess the influence of constituents over their MPs, the best known and most extensive of which is W. O. Aydelotte's study (1977) of the 1841–47 Parliament.[2] Aydelotte measured the correlation between the interests of constituencies and the voting positions taken by the MPs representing them. Local interests were determined by a rough demographic classification intended to catch the degree of urbanization. In England, for example, counties and small boroughs were presumed to have been predominantly rural, medium-sized boroughs less so, and large boroughs predominantly urban. Aydelotte found that the more rural constituencies generally were represented by MPs whose voting records (as summarized on a five-point scale) were conservative, and that this held both between and within the two major parties.

Aydelotte's demonstration of a correlation between the interests of constituencies and the political positions of their MPs is consistent with the supposition that Victorian elections did serve to ensure agreement on policy between representatives and represented. But Aydelotte also found that MPs who faced contests in 1841 appeared no more likely to "vote their constituencies" than those returned unopposed, and that all shades of political opinion enjoyed about the same reelection success in the various categories of constituency. He concluded that however the correlation between local interests and the policy positions of MPs arose, it was not obviously via the electoral process.

This conclusion has been questioned on the grounds that Aydelotte's methods of analysis did not allow him to capture the importance of certain key issues which attracted the bulk of electoral attention (Davis 1976). One might argue further that even if Aydelotte had been able to refine his analysis and focus on salient issues, the particular tests he offered to ascertain whether or not specifically electoral pressure was being exerted were defective. His results can and should be interpreted as evidence of the importance of local electoral pressures.

It is best first to define what is meant by "electoral pressure," since this term refers to more than overt electoral threats. As used here, electoral

[2] See also Bylsma (1968) and Stephens and Brady (1976).

pressure on the voting decisions of MPs existed when three conditions were met: (1) MPs valued reelection; (2) constituents based their votes to some extent on the previous and anticipated voting behavior of the candidates; and (3) MPs were aware that their constituents voted in this way. When these three conditions were met for a given issue, an MP faced electoral pressure: that is, he recognized that his vote in a division might affect his chances for reelection (which he by assumption valued). Electoral pressure might thus have influenced his decision. It is important to note that MPs need not have been subjected to overt forms of electoral brow-beating in order to feel pressure. An MP from a homogeneous constituency, even without any communication whatsoever from his district, undoubtedly knew what its central interests were and recognized without anyone pointing it out to him that if he voted against those interests he risked electoral defeat. Similarly, even on less salient issues, the MP might well have recognized without being specifically notified that certain groups in his constituency had preferences on an issue which would affect their voting decisions.[3]

If the three conditions listed above were met with sufficient frequency and force, a significant correlation between local interests and the votes of local representatives can be expected. It is important to note, though, that this correlation will not come about simply because local pressures continually *overbore* the conscience of the MP (or other, competing pressures put upon him). Rather, to a large degree, the correlation will arise because (1) candidates chose to contest constituencies in which they thought they had a chance; (2) this entailed *anticipation* of the kinds of policy demands the constituency was likely to make; and hence (3) successful candidates agreed with their constituents' consensual preferences fairly often. In other words, electoral pressure did not just operate at the time of an important division, with watchful constituents making clear the dire consequences of an incorrect vote. It also affected the decisions of candidates whether to contest a given constituency in the first place. Furthermore, electoral pressure should have operated in this way regardless of whether an actual contest occurred. It was the possibility of a contest that counted. Thus, candidates like Charles Bradlaugh did not even approach Oxford University, because they had not a skeptic's chance in paradise of succeeding. Aydelotte's finding that MPs who faced contests were no more likely to toe the constituency line than those who did not is largely irrelevant to the question of how potent local pressures were.[4]

[3] This discussion of constituency influence is influenced by Fiorina (1974).

[4] Aydelotte's view of those not facing contests is (implicitly) that they were individually powerful and hence could vote as they pleased, whether or not their votes supported local interests. This may have been true of some, perhaps those who bought their seats. But others did not face a contest precisely because they were good politicians and had satisfied their constituents. Indeed, one might well imagine Aydelotte's procedure being applied to the United States with similar results. At every election, certain Congressmen are returned (virtually) unopposed, but it is highly unlikely that they are *less* in tune with their constituents than those who face a contest. If anything, the opposite expectation would seem more tenable.

Given this conception of electoral pressure, Aydelotte's work can be interpreted as follows. He identified (albeit crudely) the interests of constituencies along a rural/urban dimension and found a consistent correlation with the behavior of MPs. This correlation arises partly because candidates selected constituencies in which they could win (with or without a contest), while constituencies selected candidates (with or without a contest) in part on the basis on their policy stands. The correlation also arises because, once in office, the MP was reinforced in his own opinions when his constituents happened to agree, and may have deferred to his constituents' opinions on matters over which they disagreed.

Aydelotte's statistical analysis complements the more detailed narrative analyses of Davis, Olney, and other historians who emphasize that national issues did play a major role in elections and that, accordingly, how MPs voted could affect their electoral fortunes. The quantitative work of Bylsma (1968) on the 1852–57 Parliament, and to a lesser extent that of Stephens and Brady (1976) on the 1880–85 Parliament, also comports with such a view. In this chapter, we provide alternative statistics which show the importance of the policy nexus between MPs and their constituents. Moreover, we argue that the role of policy in elections and the influence of constituents over their MPs underwent a fundamental change by the 1870s.

THE POLICY-ORIENTED SPLIT VOTER

Preliminary to seeking direct evidence of effective local influence it is natural to examine the conditions postulated to underlie such influence. As defined above, electoral pressure first of all depended on the MP valuing reelection. This condition seems quite reasonable given the evidence in Chapter 7; when over 75% of incumbent MPs did in fact seek reelection – even when faced with a contest – it is safe to infer that most of them valued reelection.

What of the second condition? Did Victorian electors base their votes to some extent on the specific policy stands taken by the candidates? Certainly this is an important theme in much of recent political history, including the work of Olney (1973), Fraser (1976), Davis (1972), Stewart (1978), Hamer (1977), and Nossiter (1975). And, as argued in Chapter 10, the short-term fluctuations in extra-parliamentary party organization, party discipline, and split voting are explicable largely in terms of the

ebb and flow of opinion. In this section, we offer a further bit of evidence by demonstrating that cross-sectional variation in split voting can be explained in terms of political issues and the way in which MPs handled those issues.

Specifically, we look at the percentage of an incumbent candidate's total votes which came in the form of split votes, and relate this to his previous voting behavior in Parliament. To take the example of Aylesbury in 1857, one finds that R. Bethell, one of two Liberal incumbents, received a total of 501 votes, of which 130 or 26% came in the form of splits with the lone Conservative, T. T. Bernard. In contrast, A. H. Layard, the other Liberal, received only 9% of his support from splits with Bernard. This difference in split vote support seems to have stemmed from a difference in policy between the two Liberals. Layard had been a consistent supporter of Radical measures in the previous Parliament, voting for the secret ballot and parliamentary, military, and administrative reform. He had also voted against Palmerston's government on the coercion of China after the *Arrow* incident, the question on which Parliament was dissolved. Bethell, in constrast, had been Attorney General in the late government and was "extremely critical of those who had turned it out" (Davis 1972: 159–69). Interestingly, although Bethell had been a member of the Palmerston government (which did not form until 1855), he had dissented in order to support the Conservative position more often than had Layard over the full course of the Parliament. In a sample of 145 divisions from the 1852–57 Parliament, collected by Bylsma (1968), 11.7% of Bethell's votes were "crossbench dissents" – that is, votes which were in agreement with the position adopted by a majority of Conservatives and in opposition to the position adopted by a majority of Liberals. In contrast, only 6.6% of Layard's votes were crossbench dissents. It is plausible that Conservative voters – those who most preferred Bernard – were tempted to use their second votes in order to aid the preferred Liberal; on the hypothesis that this preference between Liberals was determined by their willingness on occasion to support Conservative principles, one would expect Bethell to get the lion's share of split votes. This is indeed what happened. Thus, in this case, the split vote support that incumbent candidates received is intelligible in terms of their previous voting behavior, as captured in the rate of crossbench dissent. The question is whether there was a consistent relationship of this kind, or whether Aylesbury in 1857 was exceptional.

In order to answer this question, the general elections of 1847, 1857, and 1880 have been examined. These elections were chosen because each comes after a Parliament which has been studied by Aydelotte or his students, and data are thus available on the voting behavior of MPs. Aydelotte has coded 186 divisions for the 1841–47 Parliament, Bylsma

145 for the 1852–57 Parliament, and Hamilton 50 for the 1874–80 Parliament. All used roughly the same criteria in selecting the divisions to be coded, seeking important votes which were well attended. With such data, one can compute a variety of party support and dissidence scores including, what will be relevant here, the rates of crossbench dissent (CB).

The plan of action is simply to see whether those MPs with high rates of crossbench dissent in each of the three Parliaments tended to receive a high proportion of their support at the next election in the form of split votes. Since it would make little sense, given what is already known from Chapter 10, to compare MPs who ran in four-candidate contests to those who ran in three candidate contests, the analysis is confined to MPs who sought reelection in two-against-one races. Further, since MPs who ran as the only candidate of their party were almost guaranteed to receive more split votes than did MPs who ran with a colleague, the former must be separated from the latter. The actual procedure has been to identify, in each year, two subsets of MPs: first, Liberal MPs seeking reelection in a contest with one other Liberal and one Conservative; second, Conservative MPs seeking reelection in a contest with one other Conservative and one Liberal. For each subset separately, the correlation between an MP's rate of crossbench dissent and the percentage of his total vote coming in the form of split votes (S) can be computed.

Before doing either of these things, it is best first to note some very real shortcomings of the proposed analysis – shortcomings which tend to reduce the chances of finding significant correlations. First, simple rates of crossbench dissent are extremely crude indices of the relevant political behavior. Ideally, one would measure the behavior of each MP only on those issues salient to his constituents. As it is, no effort has been made to separate the wheat from the chaff. In 1841–47, for example, all 186 divisions coded by Aydelotte have been used, regardless of potential importance. The possibility clearly exists that dissents cast on some votes were largely irrelevant and hence simply add noise to the analysis.

A second and more important shortcoming of the analysis, which would remain even if electorally important issues were singled out, is that it does not control for the characteristics of the other candidates. In Aylesbury, there was a contrast in the voting behavior of Bethell and Layard, and Bethell's relatively high level of crossbench dissent was matched with a fairly high level of split vote support. But what if Layard's politics had been identical with Bethell's? Then, supposing voters to have been issue-oriented, Bethell and Layard both would likely have received fewer split votes, since there would have been little to choose between them politically. The problem with simply correlating CB and S is that S depends not just on the political behavior of the MP under scrutiny –

as captured in CB – but also on the political behavior of both other candidates, and on how large the contrasts were between candidates. To take the example of two Liberals running against a single Conservative, split voting should have been high not just when one of the Liberals cast many crossbench dissents, but when one of them did so and the other did not, or, more fundamentally, when there was a political contrast between them (whether that contrast could be accurately measured by the difference in their crossbench dissension or not). Thus, the bivariate correlation between CB and S may be rather weak, because the characteristics of other candidates are not controlled for. The only hope of (partially) overcoming this problem is to concentrate on those constituencies where two incumbents sought reelection. Unfortunately, the number of such constituencies for which vote counts exist is too small to be of much use, and one would still be unable to control for the characteristics of the challenger, except in those even rarer instances where the challenger also had sat in the previous Parliament.

With the foregoing caveats in mind, we can turn to the results. The bivariate correlation between S and CB is always of the expected (positive) sign: the more crossbench dissents an MP had cast in Parliament, the more splits he tended to receive at the next election. The relationship is weak for the Conservatives, however, with correlations of .25, .45, and .002 in 1847, 1857, and 1880, respectively. For Liberal MPs the correlation is .17 in 1847, .53 in 1857, and .50 in 1880, the latter two being significant at the .01 level. If bivariate regression is used to calculate the behavorial relationship between CB and S, the results are as in Table 12.1, where panel I refers to the Liberal subset of MPs and panel II to the Conservative subset. The results for the Liberals in 1857 can be interpreted as follows (with other regressions interpreted similarly): A Liberal MP who had never cast a crossbench dissent received on average 11.84% of his total votes in the form of split votes. For every 1 percentage point increase in the rate of crossbench dissent, Liberal MPs tended to receive .78 percentage point more in split support. Thus, a member who, like Bethell, had dissented crossbench 11.7% of the time was expected to receive 20.97% of his support from split votes (Bethell actually received 25.95%). The explanatory power of the model, which was estimated on the basis of data for 33 Liberal MPs seeking reelection in 1857, can be judged from the R^2 statistic reported in the fourth row. This statistic is simply the square of the correlation coefficient and can be interpreted as saying that 28% of the total variance in the dependent variable (S) is explained by the regression. More elaborate specifications of the regression model, which include other variables deemed to bear some relationship to split voting, do not much affect the size or

Table 12.1. *Split voting as a function of crossbench dissent*

Independent variables	1847 estimated coefficients (*t*)	1857 estimated coefficients (*t*)	1880 estimated coefficients (*t*)
Panel I: Liberals			
Constant	23.34 (2.6)	11.84 (2.5)	4.01 (2.7)
CB	.58 (.8)	.78 (3.5)	.36 (2.7)
R^2	.03	.28	.25
Observations	22	33	24
Panel II: Conservatives			
Constant	14.45 (2.6)	3.04 (.6)	5.49 (5.8)
CB	.52 (1.0)	.64 (1.0)	.002 (.01)
R^2	.06	.20	.00
Observations	20	6	23

Note: The unit of observation is an incumbent MP seeking reelection. The dependent variable is the percentage of the MP's total votes coming in the form of split votes. The independent variable CB equals the percentage of times the MP had voted against a majority of his own party and with a majority of the opposite party in the previous Parliament. The divisions used to calculate CB were as follows: (1) in 1841–47, 186 divisions coded by W. O. Aydelotte and available through the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research; (2) in 1852–57, 145 divisions coded by Bylsma (1968); (3) in 1874–80, 50 divisions coded by Hamilton (1968), plus a random sample of 26 divisions drawn from the same Parliament by the author. We have for this analysis merged the two sources, yielding a sample of 74 divisions (there were two duplicates).

significance of the coefficient of CB (although they do improve the statistical fit).[5]

The political meaning of the regressions for the Liberals can be explained in terms of the clash between Whigs and Radicals, on the one

[5]Several alternative specifications of the regression have been examined. For example, the variables CTYPE, LOSER, and W have been included as regressors, where CTYPE = 1 if the MP sat for a borough, and CTYPE = 0 if he sat for a county; LOSER = 1 if the MP lost his reelection bid, and LOSER = 0 if he won; W = 1 if the MP won his reelection bid but his "running mate" lost, and W = 0 otherwise. The intent is to allow the intercept of the regression to adjust in plausible ways. Thus, we already know that split voting was higher in boroughs, so the coefficient of CTYPE is expected to be positive. If the MP lost, or if he won but his colleague lost, then his constituents made a split-party return to Parliament. We know from previous analysis that there was usually a lot of split voting when the return was split. Moreover, it is mathematically required in a split return that the loser receive fewer split votes than his winning colleague. Hence, the coefficient of LOSER should be negative, and the coefficient of W should be positive. As it turned out, these expectations are generally borne out. The new coefficients were almost always of the expected sign and sometimes significant. The R^2 values of the respecified equations were uniformly higher, with the sole exception of the 1880 equation for the Conservatives. More important for our

hand, and the nature of dissidence in the Liberal party, on the other. The Liberals were a fractious and divided party, extending from Reformers, Radicals, and Radical Reformers, on the left, to Whigs and Palmerstonians, on the right. The conflict between Whigs and Radicals often flared up in the constituencies, and deals with the enemy were cut by one side or the other (Nossiter 1975). A "Candid Conservative," writing in 1884 of the Redistribution Act of that year, which abolished most of the double-member constituencies, anticipated vigorous resistance from the Whigs, "whose political importance has for years been mainly due to that system of two-membered constituencies which has enabled a small faction, holding in most country towns the balance between Conservatives and Radicals, to make terms with either party, and so secure for itself a moiety of the representation" (Hanham 1978: 74). The size of the electorate in many of the country towns was not so different from that of a large legislature, and the politics of dividing two seats seems to have been in some respects similar to the distribution of portfolios in European legislatures. Even if no explicit cross-party coalition was forged, split voting was likely to be high when a Whig and a Radical ran together, since Conservative voters might use their second votes to choose between Liberals – and there was a choice. Generally, the Whig was the greater beneficiary of Conservative splits. Since Whigs also tended to cast more crossbench dissents, a positive correlation between CB and S for the Liberal party resulted.[6]

The same line of reasoning suggests why the results for the Conservatives (in panel II) are so weak. The Conservatives contested most elections in the century as a fairly compact and cohesive unit. Crossbench dissent did to some extent distinguish Peelites from Protectionists, but the Peelite

purposes than the overall goodness of fit was that the coefficient of CB remained relatively unaffected by the respecification. There was no strong a priori reason to believe that it would be affected – since none of the newly included dummy variables obviously covaried with crossbench dissent – but the stability of the coefficient is nonetheless gratifying. Technically, of course, it can hardly be claimed that the respecification was complete – that it was the true model – and hence the possibility remains that the coefficient of CB might be reduced in significance or even reversed in sign by further multivariate analysis. This would occur, however, only if some of the variables presently excluded from analysis – e.g., variables tapping the characteristics of other candidates in the contest – were correlated with CB. At present we can think of no excluded variable which plausibly covaries with CB in such a fashion as to reverse its sign. Hence, we are satisfied that the bivariate analysis in the text does not mislead as far as the sign of CB's coefficient is concerned.

[6] In the 1841–47 Parliament, Whigs cast on average 10.3% of their votes crossbench, as opposed to 8.9% for Reformers; in 1852–57 the figures were 16.4% and 13.6%, respectively. The characteristic form of dissent for Reformers was to oppose both a majority of the Liberal party and a majority of the Conservative party: in 1841–47, Reformers dissented in this fashion 8.7% of the time, Whigs 5.9% of the time. In 1852–57, the story is similar: 5.4% and 2.4%, respectively.

section was quite small by 1857 and of course nonexistent by 1880, and even in 1847 the distinction is crude. As a consequence, the coefficient of crossbench dissent is never significant.

This is not to say that no policy differences were ever perceived between Conservatives. A consideration of the Corn Laws is sufficient to dispel this notion. Aydelotte has constructed a scale measuring support for agricultural protection in the 1841–47 Parliament which can be considered an alternative and somewhat finer tool for distinguishing between Peelites and Protectionists. The higher a Conservative MP placed on this scale (i.e., the more protectionist he was), the fewer split votes he tended to receive in 1847 – the correlation being −.65 (significant at the .01 level).

THE INFLUENCE OF CONSTITUENTS – PART 1

If MPs wished to be reelected and votes were cast on the basis of policy differences, as the last section has argued, then the conditions for local electoral pressure were met. In the remainder of this chapter, two approaches to demonstrating the importance of local electoral pressures, both in their own right and as a cause of dissidence, are taken. The first approach simply reverses the temporal sequence of the analysis in the last section, predicting the crossbench dissidence of MPs on the basis of the number of split votes they had received at their last election. The second approach looks at the average percentage of times MPs from the same constituency agreed, when both voted, and contrasts this with the average percentage of times MPs from different constituencies agreed, when both voted.

The basic intuition behind the first of these approaches can be explained by considering an election between two Liberals and a Conservative at which both Liberals were returned. Presumably one of the Liberals – Mr. X, let us say – benefitted to a greater degree than the other from the support of Conservative partisans who, rather than plumping for their party's candidate, split their votes instead. If these voters split their votes because they perceived a similarity in the issue stands taken by Mr. X and the Conservative party, then Mr. X might have felt electoral pressure on certain issues once in Parliament. Of course, it may have been in anticipation of receiving some Conservative splits that Mr. X entered the contest to begin with. In any event, if the policy cleavages dividing Liberals and Conservatives in Parliament were congruent with those in the constituencies, one ought to find Liberal beneficiaries of split votes voting with the Conservative party more often than Liberals receiving few split votes. That is, split votes in the constituencies should have induced crossbench dissidence in Parliament. Did they?

Table 12.2. *Crossbench dissent as a function of split voting*

Independent variables	1841 estimated coefficient (*t*)	1852 estimated coefficient (*t*)	1874 estimated coefficient (*t*)	1880 estimated coefficient (*t*)
Panel I: Liberals				
Constant	19.08 (5.73)	12.32 (.85)	14.35 (3.54)	8.05 (3.24)
S	.51 (2.89)	.39 (3.07)	−.06 (.16)	.72 (3.76)
CTYPE	−13.05 (4.14)	−4.09 (.28)	−9.13 (2.36)	−8.79 (3.29)
R^2	.50	.20	.24	.41
Observations	34	41	21	36
Panel II: Conservatives				
Constant	7.54 (3.84)	3.55 (.43)	2.76 (1.28)	−.12 (.12)
S	.04 (.76)	.16 (.59)	.27 (.98)	.37 (2.44)
CTYPE	−1.00 (.47)	14.60 (1.75)	−3.35 (.93)	−1.51 (.95)
R^2	.01	.13	.06	.20
Observations	50	26	24	32

Note: The unit of observation is an MP who won election in a contest involving another candidate of the same party and one of the opposite party. The dependent variable is the rate of crossbench dissent in the ensuing Parliament. The independent variables are the percentage of the MP's total votes coming in the form of splits (S) and the type of constituency for which the MP sat (CTYPE = 0 if a county, 1 if a borough). Divisions for each Parliament are as described in Table 12.1 for 1841–47, 1852–57, and 1874–80. For 1880–85, 36 divisions coded by Lance E. Davis and Robert A. Huttenback were used. The selection principles used by Davis and Huttenback were roughly comparable to those used by Aydelotte, Bylsma, and Hamilton.

One indication that they did is that the bivariate correlation between splits and crossbench dissents is always of the expected (positive) sign. MPs from four general elections – 1841, 1852, 1874, and 1880 – were examined; those who received a high percentage of their total support from splits tended to cast more crossbench dissents in the ensuing Parliament. As in the previous analysis, the relationship is weak for the Conservatives – with correlations (in chronological order) of .10, .14, .14, and .41, only the last being significant. The correlations for the Liberals are (in the same order) .48, .45, .02, and .46, all but one significant.

In Table 12.2, multiple regressions which corroborate the bivariate analysis are estimated for the same four years. The 1841 regression for Liberals can be taken as an example. In that year, our sample of vote counts included data on 34 Liberal candidates who (1) ran in a contest pitting two Liberals against a single Conservative and (2) were elected to Parliament. For each of these MPs, the percentage of his total votes coming in the form of splits (S) and the type of constituency he sat for

(CTYPE) were coded as independent variables, with the rate of crossbench dissent in the 1841–47 Parliament (CB) as the dependent variable. The type of constituency was included since Aydelotte's work suggests that Liberals from the counties were more likely to dissent than Liberals from the boroughs, with just the reverse true for Conservatives. Both independent variables, in other words, can be viewed as tapping the influence of constituents.

The results in 1841 show that, as expected, Liberal MPs from boroughs cast fewer crossbench dissents than did their colleagues from counties: on average their crossbench dissent rate was 13.05 percentage points lower, this difference being significant. Also as expected, there was a tendency for Liberal MPs – from either boroughs or counties – to cast more crossbench dissents if they had received more split vote support: the coefficient of .51 means that, for every 1 percentage point increase in split vote support, the crossbench dissent rate increased on average by .51 percentage point.[7]

The Conservatives in 1841 are another matter. The regression analysis fails almost completely to explain the variation in Conservative dissidence. Although the coefficient of S is at least of the right sign, it is insignificant, and the coefficient of CTYPE is of the wrong sign. Indeed, borough Conservatives do not seem to have dissented more frequently in any Parliament except that of 1852–57. Probably this is because most Conservatives sat for small boroughs whose interests were largely rural, and our analysis does not, as Aydelotte's did, separate large and small boroughs.

The most straightforward interpretation of the results in Table 12.2, especially in conjunction with those in Table 12.1, is that a significant number of split votes were cast for political reasons and that MPs responded to this in a predictable fashion.[8] The analysis does not shed much light on the controversy over the extent of influence, for the results are consistent with either much or little influence. But it does indicate

[7]Some alternative specifications of the regression have been tried. For example, a dummy variable equal to unity when the contest resulted in a split return has been included. No significant changes of the sign, size, or significance of the coefficient of S were produced.

[8]Nonetheless, from a purely econometric standpoint, the evidence here allows only the conclusion that *at least* one of these linkages was operating. The findings are consistent with a scenario under which voters responded to the behavior of MPs whose own behavior was consistent over time, but unresponsive to that of voters. The findings are also consistent with voters being unresponsive but consistent, and MPs responding to voters. Neither of these possibilities seems to make much sense, however. In the latter case, why are MPs responsive if voters are immutable? In the former case, if voters are responsive to policy differences, and MPs value reelection, why are they not responsive?

that a purely local interpretation of parliamentary elections such as that advanced by Vincent is not tenable.[9]

Can we conclude anything more? Not on the basis of the analysis so far, standing alone. The scarcity of vote counts, together with the necessity of controlling for contest type and party, have reduced too far the number of observations on which the analysis rests. In the next section, further evidence that local electoral pressures were significant, based on a vastly larger data set, is adduced. Moreover, evidence that such pressures declined, as predicted in the previous chapter, is given.

THE INFLUENCE OF CONSTITUENTS – PART 2

The existence of double- and other multi-member constituencies opens the door to a different perspective on local influence: the percentage of times two MPs agreed when both voted (their agreement score) can be looked at as a function of whether they did or did not serve the same constituency. There are several reasons to believe that MPs from the same constituency ought to have gone into the same division lobby more often than MPs from different constituencies. Perhaps the most obvious is that MPs from the same constituency were more likely also to be of the same party; since MPs agreed more often with their partisan colleagues than with their partisan opponents, a greater agreement among MPs from the same districts is expected. In the analysis presented below, we do not allow for this indirect kind of local influence, since we control for party. That is, pairs of MPs of the same party are considered separately from those of different parties, and the question is asked whether being from the same constituency made any further contribution to agreement scores.[10]

Of course, contrasting pairs of MPs who did share constituency to pairs who did not is not analogous to, say, contrasting pairs who did and did not share party. In the latter comparison, there are two expectations which render the procedure meaningful: first, that members of

[9]Another indication of the relationship between cross voting in Parliament and the constituencies comes from scrutinizing pairs of MPs from the same party and constituency. If the MP receiving a higher percentage of his total support from cross votes is indexed by 1, and his colleague by 2, then we can designate the respective split vote shares and rates of crossbench dissidence by S_1, S_2, CB_1, and CB_2. If splits caused dissidence, then MPs who received considerably more split votes than their colleague should have cast considerably more crossbench dissents. There should be a positive correlation, in other words, between $DS = S_1 - S_2$ and $DCB = CB_1 - CB_2$. In fact this is the case. For the Conservatives, the correlations are .00, .50, .23, and .23; for the Liberals, .50, .59, .38, and .61.

[10]Analyses somewhat similar to that performed here have recently been done for the U.S. Senate. See Markus (1974), Bullock and Brady (1983), Poole and Rosenthal (1984), and Peltzman (1984).

the same party were generally all pushed in the same direction (to vote aye, or to vote no) by party pressures; and second, that members of opposite parties were generally pushed in opposite directions.

Neither of these assumptions holds as strongly when we are comparing members of the same constituency with members of different constituencies. That two MPs hailed from the same constituency did not necessarily mean that they experienced similar pressures on most divisions. If the MPs were of different party – and we shall confine attention to such pairs until further notice – one might well suppose that they catered to different groups within the constituency. If this was so, the overall effect of constituent pressures might have been to push the MPs apart.[11]

Similarly, that two MPs were from different constituencies did not necessarily mean that they were consistently pushed in opposite directions. If the chosen pair of MPs happened to come from similar agricultural districts, for example, then on issues touching agricultural interests, both probably faced the same pressures from their constituents.

Why, then, should the rate of agreement between pairs from the same constituency have been greater than that between pairs from different constituencies (both pairs not sharing party)? It is not, as just seen, because we are comparing a set of situations in which constituent pressures always pushed the MPs in the same direction to one in which they always pushed them in contrary directions. Nonetheless, there is still a presumption that, on average, MPs who sat for the same district may more often have received the same message from their constituency than did MPs of different districts. If MPs served the local economic interests of their constituencies, then two MPs from the same district should have agreed on matters touching those interests, even if they were of different parties. If MPs supported the opinions of their constituents, then whenever there was a local consensus on a particular issue, both sitting MPs should have voted in the same way. Even when there was not a constituency-wide consensus, MPs *of the same party* may have faced a fairly solid body of opinion among their supporters – and responded to this.

In Table 12.3 an analysis of the agreement between pairs of English MPs from the same and different constituencies is conducted for the Parliaments of 1841–47, 1852–57, 1874–80, and 1880–85. The results are quite interesting and bear directly on the questions posed at the end of the last chapter: Did local electoral pressures cause dissidence? And did they decline with time?

Consider first the relationship between constituency influence and indiscipline. We saw in the last section that, at least for the Liberals, MPs

[11]For a discussion of similar ideas in a more general theoretical context, see Fiorina (1974: 20–23).

Table 12.3. *Agreement of pairs of English MPs who did and did not share constituency*

Constituency	1841–47 (*N*)	1852–57 (*N*)	1874–80 (*N*)	1880–85 (*N*)
Panel I: MPs of different parties				
Same constituency	38.1 (68)	43.5 (81)	23.0 (65)	36.0 (40)
Different constituencies	30.8 (175)	33.1 (301)	22.6 (304)	33.1 (235)
	7.3	10.4	.4	2.9
	$t = 2.93$	$t = 3.88$	$t = .23$	$t = .93$
Panel II: MPs of same party				
Same constituency	84.9 (200)	82.4 (182)	95.3 (110)	95.6 (96)
Different constituencies	80.0 (215)	76.5 (304)	91.9 (365)	91.0 (234)
	4.9	5.9	3.4	4.6
	$t = 3.33$	$t = 3.36$	$t = 3.37$	$t = 3.04$

Note: The total number of pairs of MPs is astronomical. The procedure here has been to include all pairs from the same constituency who had voted together sufficiently often to yield a meaningful agreement score, and a random sample of pairs from different constituencies (also subject to having voted together "often"). The operational definition of having voted together "often" was established before the analysis by choosing a random number between five and ten; this number turned out to be eight, and accordingly only pairs who had participated in the same division eight or more times were included. This procedure was departed from in 1880–85 because the number of pairs passing the participation test was unacceptably low; all pairs who had participated in the same division six or more times were included in the 1880–85 analysis.

receiving more split votes and MPs from constituencies atypical of the kind of constituency generally represented by their party both cast more crossbench dissents; we now see, based on a vastly larger and more reliable data set, that MPs from the same geographical constituency agreed more often than MPs from different constituencies, even when party is controlled for. This last finding is entirely consonant with the previous results. Consider, for example, the 1852–57 Parliament. MPs from different parties and constituencies agreed on average in 33.1% of the divisions in which both participated. MPs from different parties but the same constituency, on the other hand, agreed 43.5% of the time. Necessarily, when two MPs of different parties agreed, at least one of them had to be dissenting, and, typically, one of them was dissenting

crossbench. Thus, the 10.4% different-party "constituency effect" translated directly into dissidence.

While an equally straightforward argument cannot be fashioned for MPs from the same party, nonetheless the same-party constituency effect of 5.9% in 1852–57 does suggest the importance of local pressures, and hence a local basis to indiscipline. The specific interests and demands of constituents, in other words, did cause dissidence.

Moreover, the measured effect of local pressures on voting behavior declined with time. This is most obvious among MPs from different parties, where the constituency effect declined from 7.3% and 10.4% before 1867 to 0.4% and 2.9% after. But it also appears among MPs from the same party, where the average constituency effect was 5.4% before 1867 and 4.0% after.

There are several possible objections to accepting these figures as evidence of a decline in the impact of local pressures. First, the size of the statistic tapping the constituency effect obviously depends on the specific divisions used in the analysis. To take an extreme example, if the divisions used in a particular Parliament were all unanimous "hurrah votes," then no constituency effect at all would be registered. Thus, in comparing two Parliaments, comparable sets of divisions should be used. Ideally, one would have the full complement of divisions from each Parliament, and have the luxury of selecting specific issues or sets of issues. Unfortunately, the machine-readable data archives on divisions for the House of Commons are scant indeed. Most of what has been done is due to W. O. Aydelotte and his students, and this is the primary source upon which we rely in the analysis in Table 12.3. This necessity has the important virtue that the divisions used in each of the various Parliaments were selected according to a roughly similar criterion, as noted in the first section. There is thus no a priori reason to believe that the analysis has been biased one way or another by the selection of divisions.

Of course, the divisions used in 1874–80 and 1880–85 did differ in one way from those used in the two earlier Parliaments: discipline was higher on average. The average Rice coefficients of cohesion for the divisions used in the various Parliaments were, in chronological order, .683, .610, .778, and .861. Moreover, there is a logical relationship between aggregate party cohesion and the statistics given in Table 12.3. In the extreme – perfect cohesion – no constituency effect would be visible when party was controlled, since no two members of the same party would ever disagree, and members of opposite parties would agree only on unanimous divisions. Since it is known that party cohesion was higher in 1874–80 and 1880–85, one might suspect that *any* examination of roll-call behavior which controls for party will find less to explain. To a certain extent this may be. But it should be noted that the levels of

cohesion in 1874–80 and 1880–85 are perfectly compatible with constituency effects as large as those in 1852–57. No mathematical upper bound has been encountered. Indeed, although cohesion was considerably higher in 1880–85 than in 1874–80, the constituency effect was nonetheless larger.

Another possible objection to the analysis is that considerably fewer divisions were available for analysis in the later than in the earlier Parliaments. The number of divisions available declined monotonically with time: 186, 145, 74, 36. Perhaps the declining constituency effect is only an artifact. MPs who voted often are more likely to be included in the analysis (since an agreement score can be computed for them with many other MPs), but those who voted often were probably the most likely to vote with their parties; hence, the constituency effect may be a decreasing function of the number of divisions available for analysis. Whatever the merits of this objection on logical grounds, it does not appear to be important in practice. If the analysis in 1841–47 and 1852–57 is performed with fewer divisions, the constituency effect registered in those Parliaments does not generally decline. For example, in 1841–47 the figures were recomputed using only the first fifty of Aydelotte's divisions, and the constituency effect rose to 7.4 among MPs of different party, and to 7.1 among MPs of the same party. Moreover, regardless of the number of divisions used, the constituency effect does not clearly decline as a function of the participation cutoff used. In 1852–57, for example, if only pairs who had voted together 15 or more times are included, the different-party constituency effect falls to 9.7; if the cutoff is increased to 20 or more, the figure increases to 10.2. The measurement of the constituency effect is apparently not invalidated by the declining number of divisions available for investigation.

There is still the question, however, of how the analysis in the last section relates to the present investigation. Is not the continued tendency of MPs who received more split votes to cast more crossbench dissents in conflict with the assertion that constituent pressures were declining? Not really. What the correlation between splits and cross votes shows is that, when there *was* significant split voting, which is prima facie evidence that voters were *not* party-oriented, then crossbench dissidence was likely to be higher. The continuation of such a relationship is perfectly compatible with an overall decline in the amount of locally inspired dissent, since split voting itself declined. MPs probably remained as responsive as ever when their constituents placed specific demands upon them, but as time went by voters made fewer and fewer such individual and nonparty demands, for the reasons indicated in Chapter 11.

More problematical is the continued tendency of Liberal MPs from county districts to cast more crossbench dissents than their urban col-

leagues – as indicated by the negative and significant coefficients of the variable CTYPE (panel I of Table 12.2). This pattern of dissent implies, or at least suggests, that different-party pairs from the same *county* agreed more often; yet, as seen in this section, different-party pairs from the same *constituency* did not agree more often in 1874. Of course, one might equally well infer from the generally negative coefficients of CTYPE for the Conservatives (panel II of Table 12.2), which indicate that borough Conservatives were not more likely to dissent, that different-party pairs from boroughs may have been little more likely to agree than pairs from different constituencies. Some color is lent this inference since the largest constituency effect is registered in the only Parliament in which the coefficient of CTYPE was positive and borough Conservatives did dissent more frequently. And this line of reasoning does seem to explain most of the discrepancy: different-party pairs from the same borough were in every Parliament much less likely to agree than different-party pairs from the same county. This presumably reflects the tradition in counties of arranging an amicable compromise division of the representation without a contest, in contrast to the more competitive tradition in the boroughs.

In drawing an overall conclusion from the analysis in this section, there is much to argue for modesty, especially as regards the trend over time in the impact of local pressures. Beyond the aforementioned question of whether the divisions used in each Parliament are comparable, there is the question of what other variables beyond the strength of local influence might affect the analysis (discussed in the Appendix). Yet, as of now, this is the only statistical evidence which directly addresses the strength of local pressures over time, and its most straightforward interpretation is that such pressures caused less dissidence in mid-Victorian than in early Victorian Parliaments.

PART IV

Conclusion

13

The history of party voting

Over the course of the nineteenth century, virtually every major institution of the English polity was fundamentally altered: the electoral system by the expansion of the electorate, the adoption of secret voting, and the introduction of equally sized single-member districts; the House of Commons by a complete rewriting of the rules of public and private legislation; the House of Lords by the Parliament Act (1911); the Monarchy by a continuing atrophy of power; the Civil Service by the eradication of sinecures and patronage entailed in the transition to competitive examination; the press by the lessening and ultimate removal of the advertising, stamp, and paper duties, coupled with technological innovation. This study has focused on the development of two of the most important English political institutions: the Cabinet and the political parties. Our approach has not been to sift through the precedents and conventions of Cabinet government; this has been done extensively elsewhere (e.g., Jennings 1951; Mackintosh 1962). Rather, we have focused on two specific and quantifiable behaviors that reflected party development – viz., voting in Parliament and voting in the constituencies. The history of party government is told through the history of party voting.

In broad outline, the story runs as follows. England in the opening decades of the nineteenth century had in many respects an American-style system. MPs were individually powerful in Parliament, introducing and steering through the House legislation both private and public. They were also individually powerful in their constituencies, largely controlling electoral organization and finance, and acting as a conduit for patronage and private bills. The behavioral concomitants of this individual power were, first, a sizable personal vote in the constituencies and, second, a sizable independent vote in Parliament. Moreover, the two were directly connected: parliamentary indiscipline often stemmed from local pressures, which sometimes took the form of non-partisan votes.

Every feature of this picture had changed by the 1870s. The extension

of the suffrage prompted a decisive shift in the nature of electoral politics. Before the first Reform Act, only about a quarter of the constituencies were contested at the typical general election. The politics of avoiding or of winning a contest often involved reliance on influence, patronage, and bribery. After the first Reform Act, the frequency of contests more than doubled, and the politics of opinion – as symbolized by Peel's Tamworth Manifesto (1834), in which he outlined the policy a Conservative government would follow – began to play a larger role. The role that policy played was also larger because more of the constituencies were larger and incapable of being managed by the old techniques. By promising to provide general measures of public policy, politicians could appeal to broad sectors of the electorate and also to those political middlemen who sprang up in the early and mid-Victorian period – the pressure groups. More and more MPs thus stressed policy in their campaigns.

This in turn had important consequences for the functioning of Parliament. The new focus on policy together with the crush of business stimulated by an expanding economy led MPs to much greater participation in the affairs of Parliament and, somewhat ironically, to the centralization of legislative initiative in the Cabinet. As the Cabinet grew in importance, electors became more interested in the control of the Cabinet. Since the only means available to them to affect the executive was to vote for an MP affiliated with one of the major parties, voters became increasingly party-oriented, casting their votes not for individual candidates so much as for the parties to which they belonged. The party label became the most important contributor to an MP's vote total.

The system that thus developed of essentially electing the Prime Minister indirectly, through the House of Commons, ensured that the popularity of the party leadership had direct electoral consequences for all the party's members; the "coattails" of the Prime Minister, to borrow an American term, were institutionalized. The consequence of this was that as the Cabinet became more powerful, and as voters accordingly began using their votes to affect control of the Cabinet, electoral pressure was put directly on the decisions of the party leaders, who were thus not only "responsible" in the technical sense for the course of public affairs, but electorally accountable as well. By the same token, the electoral pressure on individual MPs from their constituents was lessened, and this was the key factor in reducing dissidence in Parliament. Only when electors ceased to turn their individual representatives out of office for failure to support local opinion, in favor of turning parties out, could high levels of discipline be sustained over any considerable length of time.

Appendix

This appendix examines in greater detail the logic of the agreement analysis presented in Table 12.3. We shall first introduce some notation.

Consider a randomly chosen pair j of MPs who are of different parties but may or may not be of different constituencies. Denote the set of all divisions at which both MPs in this pair voted by N_j. Presumably, at some of these divisions, both MPs were pushed in the same direction by constituent pressures. Call this subset of divisions U_j (the choice of U serving to indicate that constituent pressures in this case "unify" the pair of MPs). At all other divisions in N_j, then, either the MPs were pushed in opposite directions or one or both were not pressured at all. We designate the set of all divisions in N_j but not in U_j by $\overline{U}_j$.

In principle, one can think of the agreement of the jth pair based only on divisions in U_j – call this x_{ju} – and of the corresponding figure based only on divisions in $\overline{U}_j$ – call this $x_{j\bar{u}}$. The comparison we would like to make is between these two figures, between x_{ju} (how frequently the MPs agreed when constituent pressures were "unifying": pushing both in the same direction) and $x_{j\bar{u}}$ (how frequently they agreed when constituent pressures divided them). In the extreme, if local pressures always determined the votes of both MPs, then $x_{ju} = 1$ (when pressures are unifying, continual agreement) and $x_{j\bar{u}} = 0$ (when pressures are dividing, continual disagreement). Unfortunately, the figures x_{ju} and $x_{j\bar{u}}$ are not calculable since there is no way of identifying the sets U_j and $\overline{U}_j$. There is, however, a simple relationship between the observable agreement score x_j and the unobservable values x_{ju} and $x_{j\bar{u}}$, viz.,

$$x_j = f_j x_{ju} + \overline{f}_j x_{j\bar{u}} \tag{1}$$

where $f_j = |U_j|/|N_j|$ is the proportion of roll calls in U_j, and $\overline{f}_j = 1 - f_j$ is the proportion in $\overline{U}_j$. With some assumptions, it can be seen that the process of taking the difference of averages (as performed in Table 12.3) recovers an underestimate of the average value of $x_{ju} - x_{j\bar{u}}$.

To show this, we need first to examine what happens when we take an average of the values x_j within either the set J_O of pairs not sharing constituency or the set J_I of pairs sharing constituency. Consider first the average agreement score x° for pairs in J_O. This average is related to the unobservable averages f°, x_u°, $\bar{f}^\circ$, and $x_{\bar{u}}^\circ$ as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} x^\circ &= \frac{1}{|J_O|}\sum_{j\in J_O}(f_j x_{ju} + \bar{f}_j x_{j\bar{u}}) \\ &= f^\circ x_u^\circ + \bar{f}^\circ x_{\bar{u}}^\circ + \mathrm{cov}(f_j, x_{ju}) + \mathrm{cov}(\bar{f}_j, x_{j\bar{u}}) \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

where

$$f^\circ = \frac{1}{|J_O|}\sum_{j\in J_O} f_j$$

is the average proportion of divisions at which local pressures were unifying for pairs in J_O;

$$x_u^\circ = \frac{1}{|J_O|}\sum_{j\in J_O} x_{ju}$$

is the average agreement score for pairs in J_O when constituent pressures were unifying; f° and $x_{\bar{u}}^\circ$ are similarly defined;

$$\mathrm{cov}(f_j, x_{ju}) = \frac{1}{|J_O|}\sum_{j\in J_O}(f_j - f^\circ)(x_{ju} - x_u^\circ)$$

and

$$\mathrm{cov}(\bar{f}_j, x_{j\bar{u}}) = \frac{1}{|J_O|}\sum_{j\in J_O}(\bar{f}_j - \bar{f}^\circ)(x_{j\bar{u}} - x_{\bar{u}}^\circ)$$

are the covariances between the f and x terms; and the result follows with a little algebra or simply by recalling the rule that the expectation of the product of two random variables is equal to the product of their expectations plus their covariance. Our first basic assumption deals with the covariance terms:

Assumption 1: $\mathrm{cov}(f_j, x_{ju}) = 0$ and $\mathrm{cov}(\bar{f}_j, x_{j\bar{u}}) = 0$.

What this assumption says is that there is no relationship between how frequently both MPs in a pair (sharing neither party nor constituency) were pushed in the same direction by local pressures and the frequency with which they agreed on these divisions. The idea is that once we have isolated a pair j and a division in U_j, there is no reason to suppose that the probability of the pair agreeing on that division depends on how many divisions there are in U_j (relative to N_j). We cannot, of course, offer any direct empirical evidence for this, since it deals with unobserv-

able quantities; it is a basic assumption of the analysis. We shall understand a similar assumption concerning the covariances which appear when we look at the relationship of the observable average x^I for pairs in J_I and the unobservable averages f^I, x_u^I, $\bar{f}^\text{I}$, and $x_{\bar{u}}^\text{I}$. Hence, we may write

$$x^\text{I} = f^\text{I} x_u^\text{I} + \bar{f}^\text{I} x_{\bar{u}}^\text{I} \tag{3}$$

considering the covariance terms to be negligible. What equation (3) says is that the overall average rate of agreement between pairs who share constituency (which we can calculate) is just a weighted average of the average rate of agreement when constituent pressures are unifying (x_u^I) and the average rate when constituent pressures are dividing ($x_{\bar{u}}^\text{I}$) – where the weights themselves are averages.

We turn now to the relationship between the unobservable term x_u^I and the corresponding term x_u° in equation (2). Both these figures measure the following probability: that a randomly selected pair, in which both MPs are pressured to cast the same vote by their constituents, will agree. The only difference is that in one case, both MPs face the same geographical constituency, in the other, they face different constituencies. But this, we would argue, is irrelevant to the probability that they agree. The essential property of "sharing constituency" which prompted a belief in the first place that pairs from the same constituency would disagree less frequently than pairs from different constituencies was simply that of being "pushed in the same direction by constituent pressures." But we have explicitly controlled for that characteristic in this comparison, and sharing or not sharing the same geographical constituency is no longer of consequence.

A similar argument can be made to motivate an assumption that $x_u^\text{I} = x_{\bar{u}}^\circ$. The chief reason to expect x^I to exceed x° is, then, as we noted above, that local pressures are more often unifying for pairs of MPs from the same constituency, or, in terms of the equations, that $f^\text{I} > f^\circ$. If we use the assumptions that $x_u^\circ = x_u^\text{I}$ ($= x_u$, say) and $x_{\bar{u}}^\circ = x_{\bar{u}}^\text{I}$ ($= x_{\bar{u}}$, say), then an interesting thing happens when we take the difference of the overall observable averages x° and x^I; we get, after simplifying:

$$K_\circ = x^\text{I} - x^\circ = (f^\text{I} - f^\circ)(x_u - x_{\bar{u}}). \tag{4}$$

Thus, the difference in averages $K_\circ$ is a discounted version of the "ideal measure" $x_u - x_{\bar{u}}$. Obviously, the assumptions needed in order to cast things in this form are strong and will not be met precisely, but if they are met approximately, the stated relationship will not be much perturbed.

Equation (4) provides an interpretable perspective on how and why the difference $K_\circ$ understates what we should like to measure in any given

year. Only if $f^{t} = 1$ (pairs from the same constituency always face unifying pressures) and $f^{o} = 0$ (pairs from diffferent constituencies always face disunifying pressures) will K_o accurately reflect the full effect of local influence.

Equation (4) also shows that any trend in the values of K_o across Parliaments may be accepted as an indicator of trends in $x_u - x_{\bar{u}}$, under appropriate conditions: when the term $f^{t} - f^{o}$ is held constant, K_o increases (decreases) if and only if $x_u - x_{\bar{u}}$ increases (decreases). It is from this perspective that we wish to interpret the yearly values of K_o presented in panel I of Table 12.3.

It remains to justify, as best we can, the assumption that $f^{t} - f^{o}$ was roughly constant. What is the substantive meaning of this term? The term f^{t} can be thought of as a measure of the average homogeneity of those multi-member districts which returned members of different parties to Parliament. If such districts were often consensual, so that the MPs from them usually faced similar pressures, then f^{t} should be "large" – close to one. If, on the other hand, the multi-member districts whose representation in Parliament was split between the parties tended to be internecinely divided, f^{t} might be quite "small" – close to zero. The term f^{o} is more difficult to interpret, but it can be construed as a measure of the similarity of districts which returned Conservative MPs and districts which returned Liberal MPs. Pairs of MPs not sharing constituencies come from all kinds of districts – single- and multi-member, county and borough. A good many of these pairs are from "opposed" districts; e.g., a pair may comprise a Conservative from a county returning only Conservatives and a Liberal from a borough returning only Liberals. To the extent that these "opposed" pairs make up the bulk of the set of pairs from different constituencies, f^{o} is a measure of the political similarity of the constituency bases of the two parties. If the kinds of districts which returned only Liberals were different from the kinds represented only by Conservatives, then we would expect f^{o} to be smaller; if the constituency bases of the two parties were similar, we would expect f^{o} to be larger.

Thus, two overall features of the electoral system that will affect the yearly values of K_o, in addition to the strength of constituency influence, as captured by $x_u - x_{\bar{u}}$, are the degree of homogeneity of the multi-member districts that were represented by members of opposite parties, as measured by f^{t}, and the similarity of the constituent bases of the parties, as measured by f^{o}. Were there any trends in these latter variables?

The polarization of parties would seem to be relevant. If polarization occurred within most constituencies, then, in particular, it might have occurred within those districts returning members of opposite parties, ensuring that these members (presumed more sensitive to their own than to opposite partisans) would less often be prodded by similar messages

from the constituency. This would drive f^{t}, and hence K_o, down. This argument must be hedged in two ways, however. First, those districts returning members of opposite parties cannot have been too polarized, else they would not have returned the members they did. Indeed it would seem that these districts must generally have been those most insulated from any process of polarization. Hence the decline in f^{t} should be limited. Second, to the extent that there was polarization, the sets of constituencies entirely in one camp or the other must have polarized. We can make the same assumption as above, that members pay more attention to their own than to opposite partisans, and make the case stronger; and it should be noted that this argument does not have the same problem as that above since we are comparing MPs from different constituencies – thus we may pick up the extremes of polarization. These considerations would indicate a decrease in f^{o}, hence an increase in K_o. It is not clear what trend in K_o to expect on the assumption of polarization. On the whole, therefore, we think that the decline in K_o can be accepted as evidence that constituent pressures declined.

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