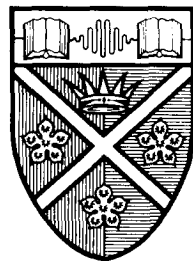


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THE NEW RIGHT AND THE PARTICULARISATION OF BRITISH VOTING CHOICE SINCE 1974

Mark N. Franklin

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OF BRITISH VOTING CHOICE SINCE 1974

by

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Introduction

At the general election of 1979 the British Conservative party won what was widely regarded as a landslide victory, with a swing in terms of votes that was greater than at any election since 1945. And in 1983 the landslide was repeated, with Mrs Thatcher winning a majority of over 160 seats. So in terms of simple party political indicators, it is tempting to talk of a resurgence of conservatism in Britain over the past decade. Much the same is true if we look at public opinion. On the basis of casual observation of the modes of discourse in the press and on television, it seems clear that there has been a swing to the right in terms of attitudes to political issues. This can be confirmed by indicators derived from post-election studies conducted in 1974 and 1979.¹

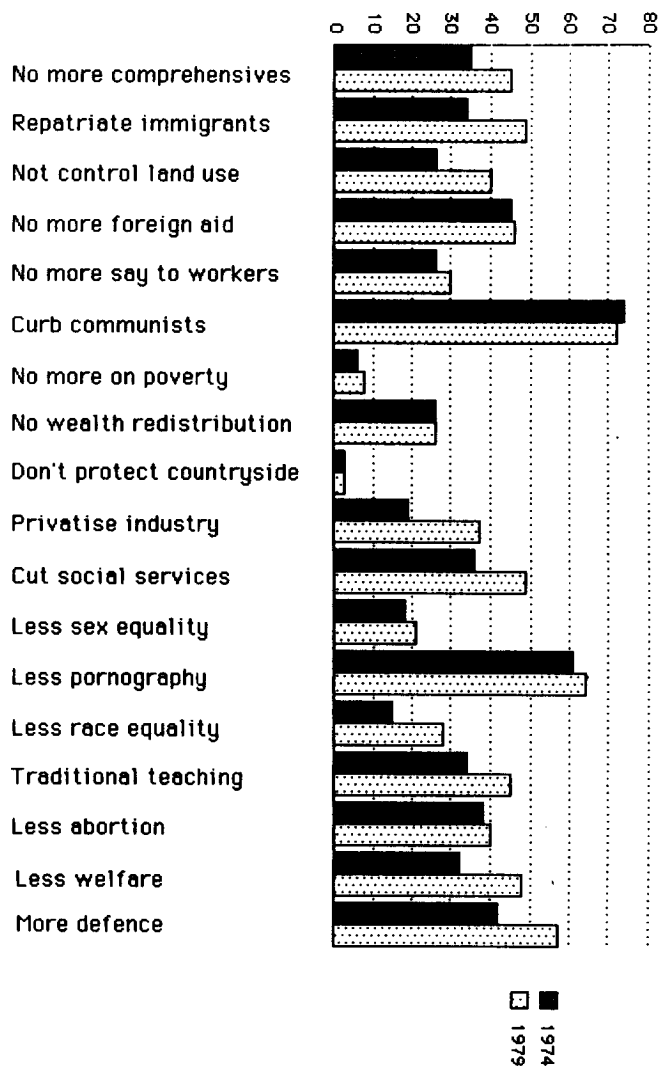
In those studies, eighteen attitude questions were asked in virtually identical form, and if we compare the percentage of respondents who felt the more conservative position on these issues to be fairly or very important in 1974 with the same percentages in 1979 we see consistent increases in conservatism in seventeen out of the eighteen issues (Figure 1). Curbing communists was the only issue to register less conservatism in 1979, although this was the most conservative of all the issues to begin with.

But first impressions can be misleading. The landslide swing of 1979 resulted in an electoral majority of only 43 seats, and the landslide majority of 1983 was won despite a decline in the number of Conservative voters (the anti-Conservative vote was of course split two ways, between Labour and Alliance candidates). Moreover, the undoubted increase in the extent to which conservative sentiments are expressed in the media and by individuals could as easily be the consequence of a conservative regime in Whitehall as its cause, since the government of the day commands immense

1. Studies of the British General Elections of October 1974 and of 1979 were conducted at the University of Essex by Ivor Crewe, Bo Sarlvik, James Alt and David Robertson, and made available by the ESRC Data Archive at that university.

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FIGURE 1 Percent of respondents feeling certain positions to be very or fairly important, 1974 and 1979.



power to shape the terms in which political discourse is carried on.

Even the propensity of voters to record pro-Conservative stances on political issues may not be quite what it seems. Issue preferences can as

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easily result from a voting decision as cause it, and if voters supported Mrs Thatcher because in their eyes "there was no alternative" (Miller, 1984), such a decision would certainly be reflected in subsequent expressions of issue preference, as the well-known "coloured spectacles" inseparable from identification with party (Cambell et al, 1960) did their work on new Conservative supporters.

At least three hypotheses can be advanced to account for the changes in party support and issue preference that have occurred during the past ten years:

1. There has been a resurgence of conservatism in Britain, bringing with it increasing numbers of Conservative supporters, and increasing support for conservative policies.
2. There has been a decline of socialism in Britain, bringing disillusion with the Labour party so that the Conservative party has benefitted by default.²
3. There has been a rise in the importance of issues not traditionally associated with either the Conservative or the Labour parties, and the Conservatives have proved themselves better able to adapt to the new climate of political opinion; gaining support from voters who are voting for Mrs Thatcher despite her conservatism rather than because of it.

These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, and more than one of them might of course be confirmed at the same time. The first is the conventional explanation given by Conservative supporters to account for their party's success. The second is the conventional explanation given by Labour

2. The effects of this decline can be viewed either in terms of a failure of the Labour Party to stick to socialist principles, or in terms of a failure of the Labour party to realise how far the electorate has moved away from such principles.

supporters to account for their party's failure. The third is an explanation that deserves careful consideration as an alternative to the first two, because it arises from an analysis of the nature of the fundamental changes that have occurred in the basis of British voting choice over the past twenty years.

The purpose of this paper is to show how changes in British electoral politics are compatible with the hypothesis that the British electorate has not so much moved to the right on the traditional left-right spectrum, but rather moved in a quite different direction that does not register on that spectrum at all ("up", perhaps, as distinct from "down", rather than "right" as distinct from "left"). This suggestion derives from an analysis of the manner in which issues have begun to play a part in the process of electoral choice in Britain, at the expense of group loyalties that used to be far more important.

The decline in the social group basis of British electoral choice

It is now a commonplace of political analysis that class does not dominate British electoral choice to the extent that it once did (Crewe, Sarlvik and Alt 1977; Franklin 1984). Franklin (1982, 1985b) has shown that, when various contaminating features are taken into account, the decline turns out not to have been a gradual process, but one that largely occurred in a single step between 1966 and 1970. Heath, Jowell and Curtice (1985) identify the same step, but deny that there has been a decline of class voting partly because they view the word "decline" as implying a sustained progression.³ Whatever we call it, the drop has had the effect of changing the basis upon which electoral choice in Britain is made. Franklin (1985a, 1985b) has shown how changes in class voting have been mirrored by changes in issue voting over a twenty-year period, with the dominance of class loyalties at the start of the period giving way to a situation in which issues were roughly twice as

3. These authors also raise the question as to whether what we observe is a decline from a previous high level of class voting, or whether the 1964 and 1966 elections were high points in a trendless fluctuation. Since we have no election studies prior to 1964, it is impossible to answer this question with certainty. However, the expectation we have from prior research is not of decline from a plateau of class voting in the years before 1966, but rather a decline that

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important as class by the end of the period.

The move was from what Huckfeld (1983) describes as a *social group* basis for electoral choice to what he calls a *behavioural contagion* basis. An electorate whose choices are based largely on issue preferences is one with no long-run equilibrium party balance. Any party can gain votes in such a system, and no party is safe from large scale losses in electoral support. The consequences have been most evident in British elections since 1974, with dramatic gains for the Liberal and Social Democratic parties, dramatic losses for the Labour party, and dramatic gains followed by equally dramatic losses for the Scottish Nationalist party.

The end of the "Collectivist Age"?

But what are the issues that now drive the electoral choices of British voters? How have they changed from the issues that dominated when British electoral choice was characterised by class voting? The best description of the issues that dominated during the period before class voting declined is given by Samuel Beer in his *Modern British Politics* (1965). Beer contrasts the issue basis of post-war Britain with that of an earlier era by showing how both major parties had been agreed since 1950 on a collectivist approach to political problems. Political debate was couched in terms of what the state should do in order to increase material wellbeing. In this context there was no room for issues which had been an important part of British political discourse in earlier years, such as those dealing with civil liberties and the quality of life (Cf. Greenleaf, 1973: 182). This restrictive political debate was a tribute to the success of the Labour party in placing the issue of material wellbeing squarely at the top of the political agenda, and in forcing the Conservative party to compete for power on this basis. Because of the

followed a gradual rise that peaked in 1966. Butler and Stokes' (1974) analysis of the evolution of electoral support during the previous fifty years makes it clear that in the years before 1964 the Labour Party was slowly but surely reaping the benefit of demographic movements in its favour.

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redistributive features of Labour's programme, the political debate led to a polarisation of issue positions along class lines, and it is clear in retrospect that the resulting group basis for voting choice in turn reinforced the dominance of collectivist issues on the political agenda of the 1950s and early 1960s.

By the late 1960s, the dominance of collectivist issues was already under challenge. The question of whether Britain should join the European Economic Community cut across party and class lines, as did some of the major legislative proposals of the 1966 Parliament: divorce reform and abortion reform among others (Richards, 1970). Moreover, the growing problem of coloured immigrant communities in British cities, though kept out of Parliament by tacit agreement of the parties, became a "hidden" issue of major importance. Finally, nationalist sentiment in Scotland and Wales, and religious conflict in Northern Ireland, came to seem more important to many inhabitants of those British peripheries than the increasingly sterile political debate within the collectivist mould.

In the election of 1970, these new issue concerns played little overt role. The election was dominated by conventional appeals by the two major parties,⁴ and these two parties gained the bulk of votes as in earlier years. But careful analysis can show that the basis of electoral choice was nevertheless quite different in 1970 from that which had been evident in earlier elections.

Members of social groupings that had previously shown great loyalty to the party of their class abandoned that loyalty in unprecedented numbers to vote for the other major party (Franklin 1982, 1985b); and Miller (1980) has suggested that the Tories may well have won the 1970 election on the basis of working class votes cast on the "hidden" issue of race.

4. Although Heath did propose to take Britain into the Common Market, Labour could not convincingly take issue with this proposal, since Wilson had tried to do the same thing a few years earlier.

The particularisation of voter concerns

By 1974, the old collectivist mould of British politics could no longer contain the diversity of issue concerns of importance to British voters. For the first time since the war, Labour and Conservatives gained the allegiance of less than half of those eligible to vote. Some of their losses were attributable to lower electoral turnout, but far more important were gains by the Liberal party and by nationalists in Scotland and Wales. Indeed, after the October 1974 election Scotland emerged with a three party system, when the Scottish National party took a third of Scottish votes.

But the 1974 election did not constitute a realignment. In part this only became evident in retrospect, when the nationalist and Liberal successes of 1974 were not repeated in 1979; but in part it was evident even in 1974. The challenge to collectivism was too diverse to serve as a basis for realignment. Scottish nationalists had little in common with Welsh nationalists (apart from a desire to be rid of the English) and nothing in common with Northern Irish bigots. Liberal supporters had little in common with any of the other minor parties. Moreover, there were other issues of importance in 1974 that did not fall within purview of existing political parties, but these issues did not provide a basis for new political parties either: race and the common market remained issues of this kind; and women's issues had by then begun to be important too. What happened in Britain between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies was very similar to what happened in the United States in the same period. Turkel and Tejera (1983) have described American developments in terms of the "particularisation" of voting choice in that country, with different voters reacting to different particular concerns; and British developments can be characterised in similar terms. Sometimes (as in 1970 and 1979) the particular concerns of greatest salience may have benefitted the Conservatives, but at other times (as in 1974 and 1983) minor parties may have gained from the salience of particular concerns that the traditional parties did not cater to.

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These various concerns define groups of voters who hold similar views on certain sets of issues. In Table 1 we illustrate this point by showing the interrelationships (Pearson's r) between twelve issues chosen as representative of all of those measured in the post-election survey of 1983.⁵ The

TABLE 1 Clusters of "conservative" attitudes based on intercorrelations (Pearson's R) between selected attitude variables, 1983.

[illegible]

relationships are not in general very strong ones, emphasising the particularistic nature of these concerns, but the correlations such as they are do fall into three clear clusters. Within each cluster, all variables are connected by correlations of at least 0.1 in contrast to generally lower correlations with variables in other clusters.⁶ These clusters have been characterised in the Table as "new right", "old right" and "non-permissive right". The last of these appears to represent issues that constitute a reaction to the permissive society: abortion, pornography and the limitations on police powers associated with contemporary concerns for human rights. We will see below that traditional prison sentencing procedures also fall within this group, so that

5. The data are taken from the 1983 election study conducted at Oxford by Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell and John Curtice; and made available by the ESCR Data Archive at the University of Essex. The questions were recoded where necessary to ensure that responses would constitute ordinal scales, and inverted where appropriate to ensure that positive values corresponded to a conservative orientation.

6. With four thousand cases in this survey, correlations well below 0.1 are highly significant, but not of much substantive interest.

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it might well have been termed an "authoritarian" cluster. The central group consists of variables that are traditional components of conservative orthodoxy: a stress on law and order, dislike of state handouts, and suspicion of sexual or racial equality. This was labeled the "old right" cluster in Table 1, but it might as well have been termed a "paternalistic" cluster. Finally, the left-most group of concerns has been labeled "new right" and contains issues concerned with privatising industry, promoting private medicine, cutting taxes, and supporting the European Economic Community.

The particular clusters distinguished in the table are somewhat arbitrary. Not only do they appear to shade into one-another (anti - welfare belongs in two clusters as already mentioned, and police powers could almost as readily have been placed in the "old right" cluster); but they could also be further sub-divided (a line could easily be drawn between order and sex equality, for example, if a correlation of 0.12 rather than 0.1 were to be required as a minimum prerequisite for inclusion in a cluster).

Cleavages and dimensionality of the issue space

Each of the clusters illustrated in Table 1 contains an implicit cleavage separating those who take a conservative viewpoint from those who take the alternative view. Thus each variable could have been coded in the negative to pick out those respondents who were against the common market, in favour of welfare, against arbitrary policy powers, and so on. But there is also a second cleavage inherent in Table 1. This separates variables at the top of the table from those at the bottom. Careful inspection of the correlations shows that the different clusters are not equally distinct, but fall into a clear hierarchy, with the first and second clusters being generally positively related, as are the second and third; but relationships between the first and third clusters are generally close to zero and sometimes negative. The gradient involved in this ordering of clusters is not a steep one, and it is an open question whether it would turn out to be sufficient in practice to distinguish supporters of "new" political concerns from others.

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The question can be put to the test by placing the policies in relation to each other within a two-dimensional space defined by factor analysis.⁷ Figure 2 illustrates the possible outcomes of such a test. In the absence of a genuine second dimension, the cleavage structure inherent in the clusters identified in Table 1 will dominate, and leave new issues at opposite poles, old issues at

FIGURE 2 Possible arrangements of three attitude cleavages within a two-dimensional issue space.

(a) in the absence of a new-old dimension

PERMISSIVE LEFT	NEW RIGHT
OLD LEFT	OLD RIGHT
NEW LEFT	NON-PERMISSIVE RIGHT

(b) in the presence of a new-old dimension

NEW LEFT	NEW RIGHT
OLD LEFT	OLD RIGHT
(NON-PERMISSIVE LEFT)	(NON-PERMISSIVE RIGHT)

opposite poles and issues relating to the permissive society at opposite poles, as illustrated in Figure 2(a). Only if there really is a true attitude dimension underlying the ordering of clusters noted in Table 1 will the attitudes be placed in the manner illustrated in Figure 2(b), with new issues of both left and right located on the same side of old issues of both left and right.

7. Other analyses might have been thought more suitable. Smallest space analysis and multi-dimensional scaling both impose less structure on the space that they identify. However, the structuring properties of factor analysis are precisely such as to make it more difficult for the outcome associated with our hypothesis to manifest itself. So, if successful, the test will be particularly definitive. Moreover, factor analysis provides us with useful tools for subsequent analysis, in the shape of factor scores, for which alternative techniques have no analogues.

The placement of non-permissive views at the bottom of Figure 2(b) has been parenthesised to indicate that their location in the presence of a new-old dimension is not (strictly speaking) defined. Permissiveness might very well constitute a third attitude dimension, and the manner in which differences within such a third dimension turn out to project themselves within a two-dimensional space is not critical to our argument.

A two-dimensional view of the British Issue space

Factor analysis has been employed before to study the issue structure of the British electorate, and four or five clusters of variables have generally been identified as corresponding to different factors (Whiteley 1983, Chapman 1985); but if there really are two cleavages underlying the clusters picked out in Table 1 it will be possible to represent these clusters in terms of only two underlying dimensions: a traditional left - right dimension that corresponds to the political conflict of the collectivist era, and a second dimension that distinguishes collectivist concerns from those of more recent vintage. Figure 3 displays such a view of the issue space⁸ that existed at the time of the 1983 election, and the placement of issues clearly has more in common with Figure 2(b) than with Figure 2(a). Leaving aside two issues that fall close to the

8. The variables in Table 1, together with all other available issue variables treated in a similar manner, were subjected to factor analysis employing the SCSS Conversational Statistical System (Nie, Hull, Franklin et al, 1980). In such an analysis, the orientation of the axes and location of variables at one end or other of each axis are quite arbitrary. Factor analysis will rotate its axes until the dominant factor is aligned as closely as possible with the largest number of variables. A different mix of variables will produce a different orientation even though the same variables are placed in the same positions relative to each other. In the present instance, the factor solution with varimax rotation was subjected to further manipulation in which the axes were re-oriented manually in such a way as to ensure that the first (left-right) dimension distinguished traditional collectivist concerns on an axis that ran horizontally across the page (the precise considerations that determined the extent of re-orientation will be described below), and on this dimension variables were placed on the side corresponding to the weight of opinion expressed in the survey. Thus "Cut welfare" is represented as a right wing concern, rather than being represented in opposite terms as "Increase welfare" on the left, because more respondents sought cuts than increases. Issues that correspond to post - collectivist concerns are represented at the upper end of the second factor no matter what was the weight of opinion in their regard (many particularistic concerns gain little support, but are no less "new" for that). Anti-permissive concerns were coded so as to appear in the lower quadrants. Clearly, the placement of issues is still somewhat arbitrary; and it is important to bear in mind that any issue can be represented in the negative at the same coordinates in the opposite quadrant of Figure 3.

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centre - point of the left-right dimension ("Fight wage rises" and "Keep troops in Northern Ireland"), the issues of the right fall clearly into the same three clusters that were picked out in Table 1. On the left, only two clusters are evident, with no clearly delineated group of anti-permissive concerns,⁹ but it has already been pointed out that no particular significance attaches to the placement of anti-permissive issues. What is important is that issues of the new left are placed at some vertical distance above collectivist concerns, as are issues of the new right.

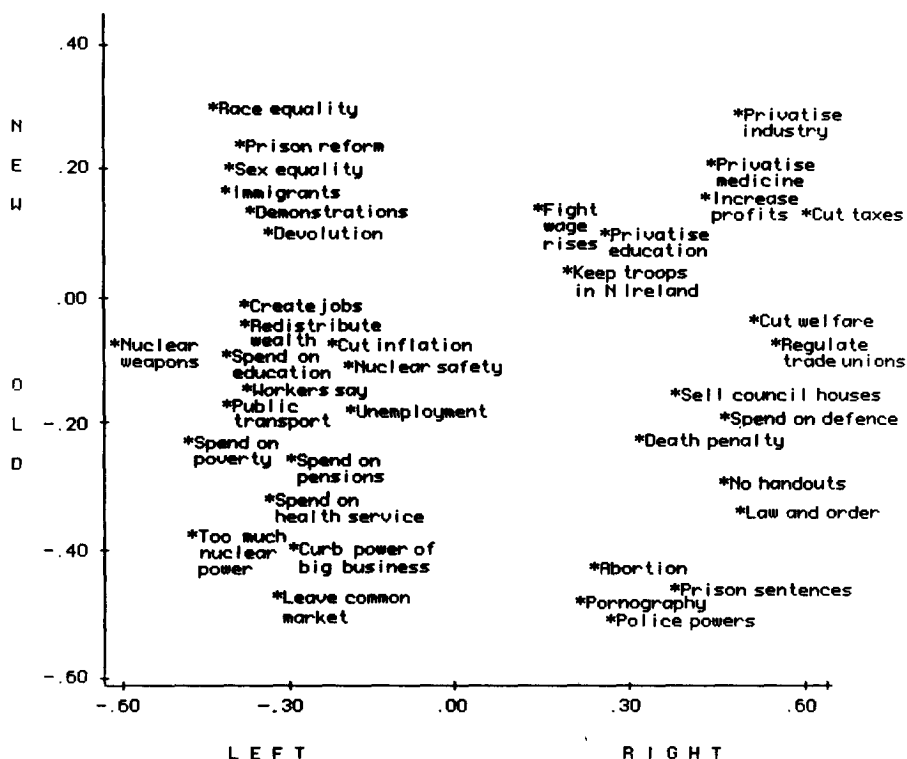
The manner in which the cleavages inherent in Table 1 have been distorted through the presence of the vertical dimension is worthy of close attention. The desire to spend public money on poverty, pensions and the health service correspond to three issues that fall well down into the old left quadrant, but an issue that might have been seen as a polar opposite to these three ("Cut welfare") does not appear in the opposite quadrant, but is displaced downwards as a consequence of its lack of connection with new right concerns. "No handouts" (a more intemperate version of the same issue position) falls even further down towards the foot of the old right quadrant -- ironically even closer to public spending than is "Cut welfare". This is not because those who oppose handouts are more likely to spend on poverty than those who would cut welfare payments, but because those who oppose handouts are so much more at odds with those who would privatise industry. What we see in Figure 3 are differences within the left and right that rival in intensity differences between the left and right.

Precisely how the vertical dimension should be characterized is not of fundamental importance to this study. By labelling it a "new-old" dimension I hope to be able to focus on its properties rather than its identification. Nevertheless, it is worth pointing out that on the left, at least, the dimension appears to correspond to a cleavage between those who are concerned about civil

9. This may be due to the fact that few such issues have yet been defined. "Curb power of big business" is arguably the only such issue represented in Figure 3, and it is noteworthy that it is placed well down on the left.

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FIGURE 3 The issue space of the British electorate in 1983, represented in two dimensions defined by factor loadings.



liberties and those who are not. Although the distinction between old right and new right is not generally thought of in such terms, it is noteworthy that when Mrs Thatcher lost her bill to remove present restrictions on Sunday trading, as a consequence of a rebellion by no fewer than 68 Tory backbenchers who voted against their government, Mr Ivor Stanbrook MP commented that "Conservatives are not libertarians" (*Economist*, April 19th 1986: p. 25). On the other hand, issues at the top of the page also appear to have much in common with the "new populism" mentioned by Samuel Beer in

Britain Against Itself (1983). In many ways it may be preferable to think of these "new" issues in terms of particularistic concerns, since this characterization covers both the above interpretations, and others as well.

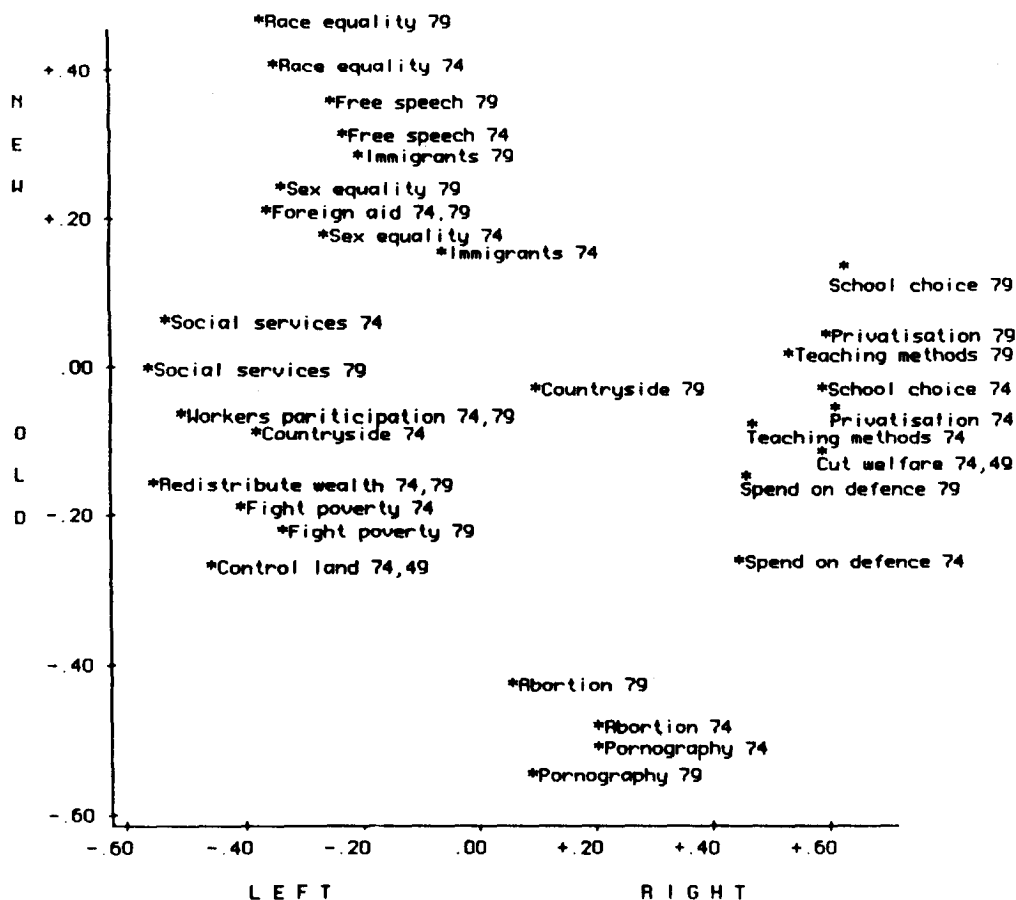
The issue space before 1983

That a new-old dimension should be evident in the 1983 issue space lends support to our hypothesis without confirming it. The structure of the 1983 issue space could as well be a consequence as a cause of Mrs Thatcher's regime. In order to discover whether Mrs Thatcher's victory in 1979 was due to new issues rather than old it is necessary to establish first that the issue space in 1979 was analagous to that in 1983, and second that within that issue space the increased appeal of the Conservative Party was due to policies of the New Right rather than of the Old. Implicit within this requirement is the need to establish that the same issue space also existed in 1974, so that changes in party support between then and 1979 can be related to policy concerns.

Luckily the British post - election studies of 1974 and 1979 were conducted by the same group of investigators at the University of Essex, and contain many questions that are identical in both wording and response coding. In particular (as already indicated), eighteen questions about respondents' stance on specific issues were asked in identical terms in both surveys. These were subjected to the same form of analysis already reported for 1983, and the results are presented in Figure 4. There we see an issue space recognizably similar to the one seen in Figure 3 for 1983 and, more importantly, one that shows only minor changes between the two election years. The number of variables defining the issue space is much reduced, and certain issues that appear high on the right and low on the left of Figure 3 are notable by their absence. However, enough variables are similar in both illustrations to suggest that the issue space had changed substantively by 1983 in minor respects. In particular, privatisation of schools and industry were not "new right" policies in 1974, although both variables register quite

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FIGURE 4 The issue space of the British electorate, 1974 and 1979, represented in two dimensions.



large movements between then and 1979 in the direction of the locations they are seen to occupy in 1983. Clearly, the new right was in the process of distinguishing itself from the old right during the decade in question, whereas the new left was already well - established.

A critical test of the sources of support for Mrs Thatcher

Despite minor evolutions, the issue space seems stable enough for us to proceed to the critical question of where in that space did Conservative votes come from in 1979. To recapitulate, our hypothesis requires that the Tory party received increasing support from new right and new left voters compared to their support in 1974, rather than increasing support from the older wings of both parties. In order to provide a direct (if somewhat crude) test of this hypothesis, voters were placed in one of four categories depending on their factor scores on the left-right and new-old dimensions.¹⁰ The proportion of new left, new right, old left and old right voters giving their support to each party at each election was then determined by cross-tabulation, and changes in these proportions between 1974 and 1979 are presented in Table 2. There it can be seen that Conservative gains were on

TABLE 2 Changes in percent of voters in each quadrant giving support to major parties and the Liberals between 1974 and 1979.

	LEFT		RIGHT		AVERAGE
NEW	CON	+7.7	CON	+15.5	CON +11.6
	LIB	+2.0	LIB	-8.1	LIB -8.7
	LAB	-10.7	LAB	-5.0	LAB -7.8
OLD	CON	+8.4	CON	-0.4	CON +4.0
	LIB	-3.5	LIB	-3.0	LIB -3.3
	LAB	-4.6	LAB	+5.2	LAB +1.0

average almost three times as great among voters of the new left and new right quadrants as among voters of the old left and old right quadrants. Moreover, the Conservative party actually lost support among voters of the old right: abundant proof that Mrs Thatcher's victory was not a victory of the right as conventionally conceived.

10. Before conducting this computation, the factors were re-oriented to match the re-orientation of Figures 3 and 4 by adding 0.3(New) to the left-right factor and 0.3(Right) to the old-new factor: quantities calculated to displace the factors anti-clockwise by approximately 30 degrees (in 1983 the constant employed was 0.4, designed to yield a re-orientation of approximately 40 degrees for reasons that will be described below). The resulting measures were not again normalized, so that the number of respondents in each quadrant varies slightly from election to election; but this does not appear to affect the findings.

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The nature of Conservative ideological support in 1979 is further clarified if we consider the changes that occurred in 1983. Table 3 is arranged in the same manner as Table 2, and again the changes in support that affected the Conservatives can be seen to be concentrated in the new left and new right quadrants. Indeed, on average Conservative voting saw no change among old left and old right supporters. The major battlefield appears to have been the new left quadrant, which is where the Alliance of Liberals and Social Democrats made its greatest gains (in comparison with Liberal votes in 1979)

TABLE 3 Changes in percent of voters in each quadrant giving support to major parties and the Alliance* between 1979 and 1983.

	LEFT		RIGHT		AVERAGE
NEW	CON	-6.6	CON	-3.5	CON -10.1
	ALL	+17.2	ALL	+8.7	ALL +25.9
	LAB	-11.2	LAB	-3.8	LAB -16.0
OLD	CON	-0.9	CON	+0.9	CON +0.0
	ALL	+14.8	ALL	+4.2	ALL +18.8
	LAB	-14.0	LAB	-5.7	LAB -19.7

* Liberals in 1979. See note 14.

and which is where Conservative support saw its greatest losses. The implication is that Mrs Thatcher was in competition with the leaders of the Alliance for voters of the New Left. In 1979 this was the only quadrant that saw Liberal gains, but Mrs Thatcher had more appeal to these voters in 1979 (see Table 2). This reinforces our suggestion that her victory in that election was due rather to a resurgence of particularistic concerns than to a resurgence of conservatism.

All this will become much clearer if we place the parties and their leaders within the issue space defined in previous sections.

Movement of parties and leaders within the issue space

The calculations presented in Tables 2 and 3 are somewhat crude. By dichotomising respondents into those who are members of a particular quadrant and those who are not, one loses all sense of distinctions between locations within each quadrant. Thus a respondent barely over the borderline between left and right counts for as much in those tables as one in the 95th percentile on the left - right factor. One way of placing the parties within the issue space in a more sensitive fashion is to correlate party support with each of the two issue factors and to employ the resulting coefficients as coordinates defining the points in issue space at which supporters for those parties fall.¹¹ Figure 5 illustrates the results of such an analysis both for groups of respondents defined by their support for particular parties and also for groups defined by their preference for particular leaders.¹² Supporters of parties and leaders are located in 1974, 1979 and 1983, with arrows showing the direction of movement of these groups from one election to the next.

Two caveats need to be made about Figure 5 before we turn to its interpretation. In the first place it should be noted that while changes in the locations of groups between 1974 and 1979 are strictly interpretable, since the issue space in each year is based on the analysis of identical issue variables, changes between 1979 and 1983 should be regarded as no more than indicative, since the 1983 issue space, while it appears rather similar to that of earlier years, is derived from the analysis of quite different variables. In

11. In order to place groups of respondents in this fashion, members of some group (Conservative voters, for example) are coded 1 on a variable representing that group and all others 0. Employing correlations between such variables and the factors defining the issue space then constitutes an identical procedure to the one employed in Figures 3 and 4, since correlations between issue position and each factor provide precisely the loadings that were employed to place the issues within each space. By analysing the relationships after the factors have been established, however, we avoid contaminating the issue space with cleavages between the groups that interest us. Had group variables been included in the factor analyses along with issue variables, relationships among the groups would have contributed to the structuring of the space. A factor space based both on group cleavages and issues would not have constituted an issue space properly so-called.

12. Note that the status of the leadership support groups is not quite the same as that of the party support groups, since it is possible to favour a leader without voting for him or her (and, indeed, to favour more than one leader at a time).

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the second place it should be noted that two sorts of change are being registered from election to election: both change in the composition of groups supporting parties and leaders, and change in the opinions of continuing members of each group. To the extent that the attitudes of individuals remain constant, the movements we see in Figure 5 represent changes in the size and composition of electoral support groups. To the extent that the same individuals continue to populate the same support groups, movements represent changes in the issue preferences of those individuals. For our present purpose it is not necessary to distinguish between these two sources of movement.

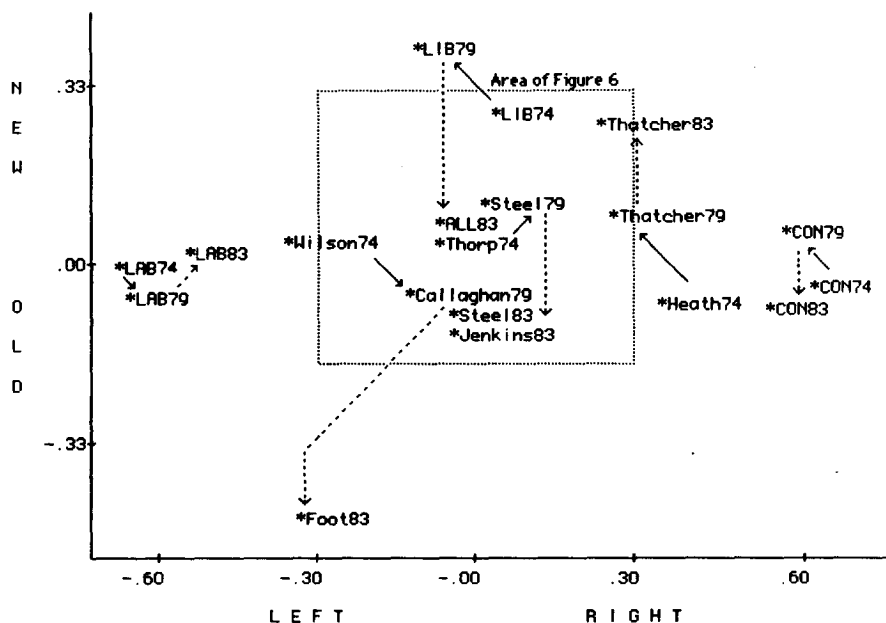
The first thing to notice about the findings displayed in Figure 5 is that changes in the attitudes of the supporters of various leaders are much greater than changes in the attitudes of party supporters.¹³ Such a contrast is possible because not all supporters of a party necessarily give high ratings to that party's leader. Among party supporters, Labour and Conservative voters show relatively little change in attitude from election to election as compared to Liberal supporters, for whom the greatest movement occurred when they joined with Social Democrats in 1983 to form the Alliance.¹⁴

But the most interesting feature of Figure 5 from the viewpoint of the present study is the manner in which the supporters of Mrs Thatcher, alone among the groups represented there, appear to move progressively in the same direction from election to election; and that direction is upwards. It is Mrs Thatcher, rather than the Conservative party, whose supporters are identifiably members of the new right quadrant of our issue space; and, indeed, while Conservative supporters followed her lead a short distance in 1979, this movement appears to have gone into reverse in the following election when the distance between supporters of Mrs Thatcher and voters for the Conservative party seems to have increased considerably.

13. Indeed, changes in the locations of Labour and Conservative party supporters are so slight as to fall virtually within the bounds of sampling error. The placement of Conservative and Labour supporters at the far right and left of the issue space should be regarded as confirmation that the correct degree of re-orientation was applied to the axes of the issue space, although the extent of re-orientation was in fact determined by other considerations (see below).

14. It is not possible to meaningfully distinguish Liberal voters as a separate group in 1983, since Liberal identifiers were asked to support Social Democratic candidates where no Liberal candidate was standing. Moreover, many Alliance supporters were unable to recall whether the candidate they voted for was in fact a Liberal.

FIGURE 5 Movement of the supporters of various parties (upper case) and leaders (lower case) within the issue space between 1974 and 1979, with relative movements to 1983 (broken lines).



These findings serve to flesh out the bones of the electoral developments that were sketched by means of Tables 2 and 3. The swing to the Conservatives in 1979 did not occur in the old right quadrant. On the contrary, the position of Callaghan's supporters, just across the centre line in the old left quadrant, appears to represent a movement by some of the old right away from support for the Conservatives. By contrast, the location of Mrs Thatcher's supporters of the new right and new left appears to correspond to the major increase in Conservative votes in 1979, which came at the expense of the Liberals in the new right and of Labour in the new left. The increasing distance between Thatcher's supporters and supporters of the Conservative

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party strongly suggests that many of the voters she attracted to that party did indeed vote for her despite her Conservatism rather than because of it.

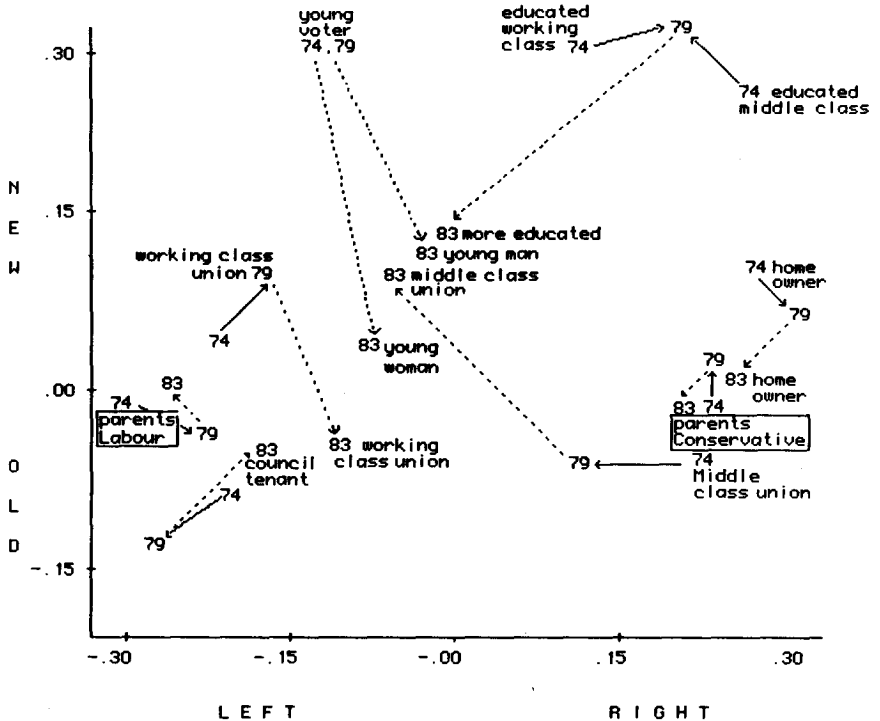
The change in the ideological complexion of Thatcher's supporters in 1983, by contrast, is not linked to any corresponding increase in Conservative votes. On the contrary, Thatcher lost votes in the new quadrants precisely at the same time as her supporters appear to have become more concentrated there. Of course, changes in support for major parties in 1983 were due mainly to the intervention of the new political alliance between Liberals and Social Democrats; but Alliance gains were mainly at the expense of Conservatives in the new quadrants, in contrast to their inroads into Labour support in the old quadrants (see Table 3). The essential ambiguity of the Alliance position is seen in the central location of their supporters in Figure 5.

These developments have contradictory implications for the future of Conservative support. On the one hand, Mrs Thatcher's supporters are shown to have become increasingly distant from the main body of Conservative voters, who were as close in ideological space to Steel and Jenkins in 1983 as they were to Thatcher. If "Conservatives are not libertarians" to the extent of finding attractions in an alternative platform, traditional conservatives could easily be lost to a more middle-of-the-road appeal (although the libertarian tradition in the Liberal component of the Alliance makes such a development less likely than if the Social Democrats had occupied the central ground alone). On the other hand, the developments of 1983 have left Mrs. Thatcher in virtually sole command of the upper quadrants of the issue space. If she can defend her back (as it were), avoiding deposition and containing defection by adherents to old right values, then she would be in an excellent position to attract back voters of the new right and new left, while Labour and Alliance slug it out for control of the remaining quadrant.

Such speculations can be made more concrete by examining the positions of various social groups within the issue space.

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FIGURE 6 Movement of various groups of respondents within the issue space between 1974 and 1979, with relative movements to 1983 (broken lines).



Movement of social groups within the issue space

Figure 6 is subject to the same caveats as Figure 5: changes in position between 1979 and 1983 should be regarded as indicative rather than as definitive, and movements involve both changes in the opinions of individuals and changes in the composition of groups. However, in this case, the small amount of change in group composition possible when groups are defined by

social characteristics rather than by political preferences implies that most movements have to represent changes in opinion. One new caveat has been made before the findings displayed in Figure 6 can be discussed. The scale of the illustration is twice as great as that of previous illustrations. This enlargement was made necessary by the need to include descriptive titles of each group on the chart, and was made possible by the fact that the groups were much less widely dispersed within the issue space than were groups of party supporters. This is clear from the fact that the whole of Figure 6 fits within the outline box that is superimposed upon Figure 5. In practice, what this means is that movements illustrated in Figure 6 are only half as great as shown, in relation to movements illustrated in Figure 5. So no change in the position of any social group was as great as the movement from Liberal support in 1979 to Alliance support in 1983 (see Figure 5); and the distance within the issue space moved by young men between 1979 and 1983 is roughly equivalent to the distance moved by Thatcher supporters in the same period.

This illustration is the one upon which orientation of the issue space was based. As mentioned in an earlier footnote, the location of the axes in factor space is quite arbitrary; and, rather than simply accepting the solution that came from the analysis, it was decided to orient our issue space in a more intuitively satisfactory fashion. As a starting point, it was felt that a Conservative or Labour political orientation inherited from parents should provide a baseline running from left to right, from which deviations effected by more recent events could be expected to be random within each group. In fact, when the axes of measurement were orientated so that the group of those whose parents were Labour was located as far to the left as possible in 1974, the group with Conservative parents were found to take up a corresponding position on the right of the issue space. Moreover, this orientation turned out to give appropriate positions for groups currently supporting major parties, as shown in Figure 5.¹⁵

15. The additional re-orientation given to the 1983 issue space in order to place groups

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Figure 6 adds considerable detail to our understanding of the nature of support for Thatcher and conservatism. At the top right of the illustration we see clearly the convergence in 1979 of those with more than a minimum education, whether middle class or working class, to a position of maximum support for new right values. On the left of the illustration we find an almost equivalent position occupied both in 1974 and in 1979 by voters who entered the electorate in 1964 or later.¹⁶ The position of young voters in the upper left of the issue space strongly suggests the presence of Inglehart's "post bourgeois" values, which were supposed to be held primarily by those brought up during the affluent post-war era (Inglehart, 1971, 1977). If this is the interpretation we make of the new left quadrant, however, it is clear that Inglehart's "silent revolution" was only part of a more general redefinition of the issue space in Britain: post-bourgeois values constitute only one theme in the particularisation of British voting concerns. At all events, it appears to have been the young (and especially the better educated among the young) who provided the bulk of the converts to Thatcherism in 1979. Equally, the large change in the location of these groups within the issue space by 1983 suggests that Thatcher made her greatest losses in that year within precisely the same groups.

All this is very much as might have been expected, given what we already know about changes in the basis of British voting choice since 1964. It was mainly among young voters that class characteristics first declined as basic determinants of voting choice, and so it was the young voters who provided

defined by parental party support in positions comparable to those occupied by the same groups in earlier years turned out also to minimize the sum of movements between 1979 and 1983. So the placement of 1983 group (and party) positions relative to those of 1979 is optimal in two respects. The minimizing of movement between 1979 and 1983 serves to provide some confidence that movements registered by broken lines in Figure 6 are real.

16. The choice of cutting point to differentiate young voters from others is based upon analysis conducted in Franklin (1975b: Chapter 7). There it was found that three cohorts could be clearly distinguished within the British electorate after 1970: those who came of age before Labour's rise to major party status, those who came of age during the years of Labour's ascendancy, and those who came of age after the election of 1959. By 1983 very few of the first group (born before 1906) will have remained in the electorate, and to simplify our discussions they have been ignored in this analysis.

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the bulk of those who abandoned class loyalties in 1970 (Franklin, 1985b: 168 - 170). These were the voters least immunized against change, and these are still the voters showing most flexibility in their political attitudes. The founding of the Social Democratic Party and its alliance with the Liberals provided a new focus for political choice in Britain, and it is hardly surprising that those least immunized against change should have been those most attracted by new programmes.

So the convergence of the young and the better educated (who will in any case tend to be the same individuals, given the vast expansion of the British higher educational system since World War II) to the vicinity of Alliance support (compare Figure 6 with Figure 5) was only to be expected. What is much less expected is the extensive migration (over a longer period) of middle class union members to the same general position. We saw in Table 3 that the Alliance did make gains from among voters in the old right quadrant, and it seems clear from Figure 6 that the greatest proportion of these converts will have come from members of middle class unions. Since this is the group on the right of the issue space most distant from support for Thatcher, their migration towards the position of Alliance voters would tend to support our earlier suggestion that Mrs Thatcher was vulnerable to defection by members of the old right who no longer felt close to her particularistic concerns. On the other hand, union members may well be the middle class group most immediately threatened by Mrs Thatcher's economic policies, and the migration of middle class union members may thus reflect a concern for pocket book rather than ideology. On either interpretation, right wing union members must have had the most collectivist of right wing concerns, and their estrangement from their original position at the heart of the old right quadrant is the clearest indication we have yet seen of the change in the nature of Tory appeals under Mrs Thatcher.

Social groups and support for parties in 1983 and beyond

Viewed in more general terms, the change in the placement of social groups within the issue space between 1974 and 1983 is worthy of careful attention. In 1974 and 1979, social groups were well differentiated, with some groups finding themselves at each of the four corners of the issue space. In 1983, by contrast, groups had become much more concentrated and had moved away from the extremes of new left and new right. In the old left quadrant, council tenants and working class union members formed a cluster so tight that the groups concerned were placed virtually within sampling error of each other on the basis of their policy preferences. Voters with Labour parents constituted another group whose attitudes were quite close by. On the right of the issue space, a corresponding cluster linked home owners with those whose parents had been Conservative. In the new left, but very close to the centre of the issue space, a third cluster of social groups consisted of the young, the better educated, and the middle class union members already discussed. Essentially, the location of social groups had taken on a triangular configuration much closer to the mid-point of the issue space.

We cannot tell whether this triangular configuration will still characterise the locations of groups within the issue space at the time of the next election. The decline of class voting in Britain has freed the members of social groups to change their concerns rapidly in response to new events and new political stimuli. Past experience would lead us to expect the central cluster of groups, at the apex of the triangle, to prove the most fickle.¹⁷ From this point of view, the apparent strategy of Alliance leaders in contesting the Labour party for the allegiance of old left voters may well be a sound one. On the other hand, as already mentioned, such a strategy leaves Mrs Thatcher in virtually sole control of the remaining three quadrants within the issue space. Unless her exposed position loses her further support within the old right, this could give her a decisive advantage in a future election.

17. Not only do these consist largely of the young, but also we know that those who have recently changed their opinions are those most liable to future change.

Unfortunately, the insights that we gain by viewing the British attitude space in two dimensions bring us no closer than we ever were to an ability to predict the future. These insights may, however, help us to make sense of that future when it arrives.

British politics in the post-collectivist era

Our investigations make it clear that the revival of Conservative fortunes in 1979, and the continuation of Conservative ascendancy in 1983, owe little to the traditional position of the Conservative party at the right of a spectrum of collectivist values. Indeed, the "swing to the right" was no such thing, but a swing upwards to a new position on a different dimension. What we call this swing is a matter of no great substantive concern. We can call it a "resurgence of conservatism" if we like, re-defining conservatism to encompass the concerns of the new right as we do so. However, such a sleight of hand appears more than somewhat misleading, since resurgence implies the restoration of something that previously existed, whereas Conservative gains in 1979 came primarily from individuals whose concerns were quite different from those of conservatives in what Samuel Beer called the "collectivist age". Of course it can be argued that these new values are not new at all, but constitute modern forms of values that conservatives have held in centuries gone by (Norton and Aughey, 1981:30); however, while it is always useful to see contemporary developments in historical perspective, there is little to be gained from knowing that "plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose".

The new dimension in British politics can be characterised in at least three different ways. In the first place it bears a strong resemblance to the "libertarian - collectivist" dimension stressed by Greenleaf in his description of the evolution of Tory ideology in this century (Greenleaf, 1973). In the second place it is clearly linked to the distinction drawn by Ronald Inglehart between bourgeois and post-bourgeois values. In the third place the collectivism of

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earlier years can be contrasted with a new individualism both of left and right, whose left-wing adherents espouse post-bourgeois values, but whose right-wing adherents are more concerned with economic freedom and business style than personal freedom and self-actualisation.¹⁸

In this paper we have ducked the question of what to call the new dimension by characterising it as having to do with particularistic concerns, thus bringing within its purview nationalists and feminists, free-marketeers and libertarians, without having to specify what these groups might have in common. That they have something in common is clear from the fact that members of the new left are attracted by new right policies, and *vice versa*. So to simply label these concerns as particularistic is to understate their coherence. Even if that coherence rests only in a common opposition to collectivist values, this deserves to be brought out more specifically than is implied by the word "particularist" (which is a horrid word anyway). "Post - collectivist" is not much more euphonious, but at least it implies a degree of coherence missing from the other term, and the words do make clear the term's interim status until future research can clarify the nature of this post-collectivist era.

18. In the American context, the contrast would be between Flower Children and Yuppies, and the fact that some of the former have turned into the latter may be easier to understand in the context of a two-dimensional view of value change.

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