

The Electoral Basis of the Icelandic Independence Party, 1929–1944*

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1. The Party System

In a recent analysis of political parties in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and Finland, Berglund and Lindström (1978) argue: 'Five parties are common throughout Scandinavia. These are Conservative, Liberal and Agrarian or Central parties on the one hand, Labor and Communist parties on the other'. However, Berglund and Lindström also note that 'Finland stands out as the deviant case.'

The party system in Iceland must also be considered as a unique case among the Scandinavian nations. Between 1910 and 1930 a system of mass political parties gradually replaced a previous system of cadre political parties almost exclusively concerned with the politics of independence, i.e., Iceland's relationship to Denmark. The party system which emerged after the 1910–1930 transition period has been remarkably stable.

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1. The Party System

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The Scandinavian party system has typically been characterized by a large Social Democratic party, a small Communist party, and an Agrarian party along with Liberal and Conservative parties. The Icelandic party system differs from this pattern in terms of the ideological distribution of political parties, the number of parties, and their relative size. In Iceland the Social Democratic party (SDP) is the smallest of *four* major parties; a left socialist party, the United Socialist Party (USP) in 1938–56, and the People's Alliance after 1956, have been considerably larger than the SDP.

The greatest anomaly from the Scandinavian party system is that in Iceland there are no separate Conservative or Liberal parties and the largest party, the Independence Party (IP), is also the party furthest to the right on the socioeconomic spectrum of Icelandic politics. It is also noteworthy that representation of the IP in the *Althingi* (the Icelandic parliament) has rarely exceeded its popular vote. Thus the electoral system in Iceland is an exception to the generalization proposed by Rae (1967) that 'Electoral systems almost always award more than a largest single share of the seats to the party which pulls the largest single share of the vote' (pp. 72–73).

The size of the IP and its place in Icelandic politics has no equivalent elsewhere in Scandinavia. The argument is not that the IP is completely a unique case among political parties in Western Europe but rather that, in terms of its heterogeneous voting support and ideology of nationalism and class unity, the IP resembles such political parties as the Christian Democratic Party in West Germany and the Conservative Party in Britain rather than the Liberal and Conservative parties in Scandinavia (cf. Edinger 1968, Rokkan 1970). If this is indeed the case, then the Icelandic party system could hardly be placed in the category of 'the Scandinavian party system.'

The purpose of this article is not only to discuss the IP as a political party but also to illuminate through case study some of the differences between the party system in Iceland and the Scandinavian party system. The following analysis of the IP in the 1929–1944 period will concentrate only on the electoral basis of the party: it is not overtly concerned with other aspects, such as its origins and organizations, ideology, government participation (see Grimsson 1977), or candidate recruitment.

Of all the present political parties in Iceland, the IP represents the clearest example of continuity from the previous party system. In 1929 two political parties – the Conservative Party (COP), founded in 1924, and the Liberal Party (LP), founded in 1926 – united to form the IP. The IP inherited most of its parliamentary seats – sixteen out of the seventeen M.P.s who established the IP – and its voting support from the COP. (In

the 1927 election the COP received 42.0 per cent of the vote and the LP 5.8 per cent.) In contrast, most of the IP's emphasis on nationalism and the politics of independence came from the LP (Guðmundsson 1975). In its first parliamentary election, in 1931, the IP received 43.8 per cent of the vote and twelve seats.

Initially the IP was an alliance of M.P.s without any comprehensive party organization or structure. Without great exaggeration one could say that the M.P.s embodied the party. Many of them had been candidates for the *Althingi* under the labels of different political factions – if they used any party designation at all – and some had been connected to different parties or party factions in each of four to five subsequent elections. At first the voting support of the IP appears to have been based mostly on the support of several newspapers and the personal following of its candidates, although this cannot be accurately judged. The IP did have some organizational basis: not a formal party structure but an organization based on the overlap between representing the party and holding positions in established institutions of the state, such as the legal apparatus and other governmental agencies (see Lindal 1970).

Although the IP did not enforce strict party discipline amongst its M.P.s or have such identifiable relationships with interest groups as those prevailing in the SDP and the PP, the IP's local party organization in Reykjavík, Vörður, was probably the most effective in the whole country.

Many members of the COP had wanted to change the name of the party because of the negative connotations of the term 'conservative' (*ihald*) in Icelandic, which can mean 'to be against progress'. These people must have thought that this political party label had some impact. In contrast, the name 'Independence Party' was considered to be an attractive name by its followers as well as its opponents. It also emphasized the party's connection to and continuation of the politics of the struggle for Iceland's independence from Denmark.

The lack of formal party organization also fitted the ideological position of the IP. The party was said to be representative of the nation, not of any interest groups. Its M.P.s were not delegates for any special interests but independent agents acting in the public interest. The IP contrasted this notion of their party as an association of free and independent individuals to the party discipline of the Socialist Parties and the Progressive Party (PP), which were said to subordinate the will of the individual to the tyranny of the parties' top leadership.

The most basic and enduring elements of the IP ideology can be summarized by two concepts: nationalism and unity.

The origins of this ideology are to be found in the politics of independence, which were more concerned with Iceland's relationship with Denmark than with class politics. All of the political parties in the politics of independence period to a varying degree argued that nationalism and class struggle excluded each other. One could not be an Icelandic nationalist and encourage politics of class: a real nationalist would attempt to unify all social classes. Yet all had differing versions of nationalism.

These different definitions of nationalism gave rise to conflicts between the parties, in which they tried to have their version of nationalism accepted by as many people as possible. Consequently, nationalism is not only a unifying force in politics but can also be internally divisive, perhaps one of the more explosive issues in any country because it involves the very foundations of political beliefs, such as definitions of legitimacy and treason.

In this struggle the IP was in a very advantageous position from the beginning. Its definition of nationalism corresponded closely to the conceptions characterizing the politics of independence, which pictured politics as a struggle between two nations: Iceland and Denmark. The IP brand of nationalism was familiar and enjoyed widespread support. Icelandic society was also *not* divided by some of the most obvious social divisions: differences in race, religion, language, or ethnic origin. This helped to support the IP view of an integrated society.

2. The Electoral Basis of the IP

Figure 1 shows the results of a study of party support in Iceland in 1929–44.

Figure 1. Socioeconomic Characteristics of Party Support in Iceland: Parliamentary Elections 1931–1942

Political Parties	Socioeconomic Characteristics of Voters
Independence Party	Capitalists. White-collar workers. Rural support. Some support by manual workers.
Progressive Party	Farmers.
Socialist Parties	Manual workers.

The conclusion outlined in Figure 1 is based on an analysis using a method proposed by Shively (1969) to study the relationship between occupation and voting in Iceland (see Appendix). On the basis of aggregate data, census data, and electoral records, it can be established that people in

non-manual occupations almost unanimously voted for the non-socialist parties, the IP and the PP, while approximately three-fourths of manual workers voted for the Socialist parties, the SDP and the USP. The Socialist parties enjoyed minimal support outside urban areas, and, similarly, the PP received little support in urban areas. Thus it could be concluded that the PP's support was almost exclusively confined to farmers, while the Socialist parties hardly received any support either from people in non-manual occupations or from farmers. The IP, on the other hand, had considerable support in both urban and rural areas and was to some extent supported by all major social classes.

2.1. Capitalists and Middle Class

In 1929–44 the IP enjoyed practically unanimous support from the social class of capitalists – those individuals owning the means of production and employing wage-laborers (Thórleifsson 1973). There were also various connections between the IP and employers' interest groups. The IP defended the private ownership system, while the PP supported the cooperatives and the Socialist parties advocated nationalization. Hence, preference towards the IP by the capitalists can be explained directly in terms of their economic interests. Unity of capitalists was strengthened in Iceland because of the absence of strong private financial or banking interests. Capitalists were less divided over issues, such as inflation, which might have created disagreements between capitalist-debtors and capitalist-creditors. Capitalists were not, however, without some internal disagreements rooted in the division of capitalists into fishing vessel owners and merchants.

Previous differences between the 'bourgeois' political forces diminished as the PP and the SDP gained more strength, and in the 1920's they gradually united in defense of the private enterprise system against increasing government control and regulation of the economy. Unification of those political factions opposed to the SDP and the PP occurred in several steps, the most significant ones being the electoral alliance in 1923; foundation of the Conservative Party (COP) in 1924; and, finally, establishment of the IP in 1929. However, disagreements surfaced within the IP between fishing vessel owners (exporters) and merchants (importers) over the rate of exchange between Icelandic and foreign currencies. In 1925 the COP government raised the value of the Icelandic currency. This decision made Icelandic imports more expensive in foreign markets and resulted in clashes within the COP between fishing vessel owners and merchants (Benediktsson 1966). In 1939 similar disagreements arose in the IP when

the party's M.P.s debated whether it should participate in a coalition government with the SDP and the PP. Nine of the M.P.s rejected a proposal supported by eight M.P.s that as a precondition for government participation the IP should demand control of the ministry in charge of import quotas and distribution of foreign currency. The merchants were vehemently opposed to devaluation of Icelandic currency, while the fishing vessel owners' desire for devaluation provided the main motive for the IP's government participation in 1939. As a compromise one of the two IP ministers in this government was expected to protect commercial interests, while Ólafur Thors, a fishing vessel owner and the IP's chairman, also became a cabinet minister (Benediktsson 1966, Jónsson 1942).

In Iceland the middle class of this period has proved to be the class most difficult to study. Manual workers, farmers, and capitalists had their own interest groups and advanced formulations of economic interests and ideology. The middle class generally did not act as a 'class for itself'. It did not articulate separate class interests, nor did it establish interest groups on a class basis. Consequently, explanations of political preferences of the middle class are more speculative than in the case of other social classes.

The middle class occupied a rather ambiguous case in the occupational reward structure.¹ Along with manual workers it shared the position of wage laborers. There were, however, marked differences in living conditions of manual and non-manual workers. Non-manual workers generally had more security of employment, less rigid supervision, cleaner jobs, and greater opportunities for occupational advancement than manual workers. Support of a great majority of manual workers for the Socialist Parties and support of non-manual workers for the non-socialist parties rested to some degree on differences in occupational rewards and prestige. Furthermore, the economic sectors in which non-manual workers were primarily located – commerce and service occupations – had smaller ratios between employers and employees than in the economic sectors of fishing and industry where manual workers were numerous. Hence, the middle class was relatively close to employers and more likely to share their ideology and voting habits than manual workers. The sharing of an ideology of equal opportunities by capitalists and the professionals was probably strengthened by the success of the professionals in providing their offspring with educational opportunities and preventing downward mobility between generations (Héðinsson et al. 1974). The middle-class proportion of the working population was highest in the two largest towns, Reykjavík and Akureyri. The IP's voting support was also high in these towns, particularly in Reykjavík. Since the IP enjoyed such solid support

of non-manual workers, increase in the population of non-manual workers also worked to the party's advantage.²

2.2 Farmers

In Iceland, two types of party systems must be distinguished for this period: the rural party system characterized by competition between the IP and the PP, and the urban party system in which the IP and the two Socialist Parties competed. The rural areas were predominantly populated by one social class of independent farmers. The social classes of rural proletariat and feudal landlord were absent. Thus, a clear differentiation between the class politics of urban areas and non-class politics of rural areas must be observed.³ This is not to argue that the politics of farmers were not tied to class interests. On the contrary, farmers had a relatively clear perception of class interests and were effective in protecting these interests. Division of voting support between the IP and PP in rural areas cannot, however, be explained on the basis of social class cleavages, since they were generally not inhabited by social classes other than farmers. Continuity in party politics from the politics of independence was much greater in rural areas than in the urban party system; the impact of personality of candidates was probably greater and the whole style of rural politics was more associated with personal and family relationships.

Table 1 shows support of the IP and the PP in districts outside the main urban areas. There are no strong connections between party distribution of the vote and such socioeconomic characteristics of the districts as the proportion of economically active persons in agriculture and the ratio of employees and employers in agriculture. This does not prove that distribution of voting support between the IP and the PP did not follow any structural cleavages within the rural areas. In the case of the PP, its support was mostly concentrated in agricultural areas, and the party received less support in districts which had a high proportion of economically active people in fishing,⁴ with the exception of the county of S-Múla-sýsla in the East. There were also clear regional differences in voting support. The IP's support was lowest in the North and the East, while the PP was particularly strong in these same regions.⁵ Regional weaknesses of the IP coincided with strongholds of the cooperative movements. Perhaps the cooperatives and the PP developed along certain socioeconomic cleavages within the rural areas. One hypothesis, implicit in Jónas Jónsson (1939), is that the cooperatives were strongest in places where there was less inequality between farmers and in periphery areas without access to the commercial center of Reykjavík. The question of possible relation-

Table 1. Support of the IP and the PP in Districts outside Main Urban Areas 1931–42 (Oct.)

Region	Districts*	Average Percent- age of Valid Votes		Percentage** of Work Force Employers to in Agriculture	Ratio of Manual Workers in Agriculture
		IP	PP		
South					
	V-Skaftafellssýsla	48.2	42.0	80.5	1:1.9
	Rangárvallasýsla	48.8	48.0	88.1	1:1.8
	Árnessýsla	36.2	49.2	68.5	1:1.8
	Gullbringu- og Kjósarsýsla	62.0	14.2	31.3	1:1.6
West					
	Borgarfjarðarsýsla	52.0	28.0	46.1	1:1.9
	Mýrasýsla	40.5	52.3	57.0	1:1.7
	Snæfellesnessýsla	46.0	36.7	50.3	1:1.3
	Dalasýsla	49.2	41.0	87.2	1:1.5
North-West Peninsula					
	Barðastrandarsýsla	34.2	46.3	50.5	1:1.8
	Ísafjarðarsýslur	43.3	19.5	43.4	1:1.6
	Strandasýsla	17.5	62.4	65.5	1:1.6
North					
	Húnavatnssýslur	43.6	43.5	71.0	1:1.5
	Skagafjarðarsýsla	44.3	50.7	66.2	1:1.4
	Eyjafjarðarsýsla	28.6	45.6	52.0	1:1.5
	Pingeyjarsýslur	17.5	66.0	62.1	1:1.4
East					
	N-Múlasýsla	33.0	56.5	75.5	1:1.6
	S-Múlasýsla	27.0	44.2	41.3	1:1.5
	A-Skaftafellssýsla	23.2	44.8	77.4	1:1.8

* Six electoral districts (North and West Ísafjarðarsýsla; East and West Húnavatnssýsla; South and North Pingeyjarsýsla) are combined into three districts to correspond with the census classification.

** Data on agriculture are taken from the 1940 census.

ships between structural cleavages and politics in rural areas has not been adequately explored. Such studies probably require new concepts, theories and data, none of which is available at this time.

Farmers and capitalists had considerable experience from the politics of independence in working together. The political aspirations of the rising bourgeoisie and farmers largely coincided in demands for greater national autonomy. Class positions of farmers and capitalists were not very different. Both classes owned property, hired wage labor, and were dependent

on loans from the state banks.⁶ Alliance of capitalists and farmers within the IP was also strengthened by common ideology in which farmers and employers had great prestige but manual laborers were accorded low status. Opposition of farmers to labor unions and socialist parties cannot, however, be explained purely on the basis of objective class interests. Farmers' interpretation of their class interests was greatly influenced by rural cultural traditions and values. (Perhaps the farmers' notions of 'freedom' and 'individuality' predisposed them to take a stand against such 'impersonal' and 'equalizing' measures as a standard hourly wage or paying the lazy worker as much as the industrious one.) The IP newspapers also argued that all increases in wages for manual workers in urban areas increased farmers' production costs, because wages in rural areas would follow all such increases. The IP stressed mutuality of interests between the propertied class of farmers and urban employers. The party maintained that the PP was in fact a socialist party in disguise, participating in a conspiracy to gain farmers' support for socialism (*Morgunblaðið*, July 19, 1934). When the SDP-PP agreement to establish a coalition government in 1934 was published, the IP newspaper, *Morgunblaðið*, commented on July 24, 1934, that it included 'preparations for a special legislation for the state to appropriate farmers' land.'

Farmers' M.P.s both in the PP and the IP were generally more opposed to the Socialist Parties than other M.P.s in those parties. The PP split in 1934 was attributed – at least by those who left the party and established the Farmers' Party – to the PP's cooperation with the SDP. Similarly, in 1944–47 five M.P.s from rural areas in the IP did not support the coalition government of the IP and the Socialist parties (Jónsson 1969, p. 259). These M.P.s were not expelled from the party and the government's majority in the Althingi was not threatened by their opposition. In fact, as Magnús Jónsson (1957, p. 85) reports, the bylaws of the IP adopted in 1936 did not bind any M.P.s to decisions by the party.

2.3. *Manual workers*

It is one of the basic characteristics of Icelandic politics that the proportion of manual workers voting for the non-socialist parties is much higher than proportion of non-manual workers voting for socialist parties (Table 2). Since manual and non-manual occupations among the Icelandic working population of voting age were roughly equal in size (Table 3), the net advantage of the vote, which deviated from the voting habits of the great majority of their social class, went to the non-socialist parties.

Table 2. Class Voting in Iceland 1931–1942.

	Parties	Occupational Distribution of Votes		r	r ²
		Percentage of Manual	Percentage of Non-manual		
Election 1931	Socialist	73.29	16.61	0.866	0.751
	Nonsocialist	26.71	83.39		
Election 1933	Socialist	77.78	12.24	0.900	0.810
	Nonsocialist	22.22	87.76		
Election 1934	Socialist	79.88	12.08	0.940	0.833
	Nonsocialist	20.12	87.92		
Election 1937	Socialist	81.18	9.85	0.894	0.799
	Nonsocialist	18.82	90.15		
Election 1942 (July)	Socialist	80.43	4.70	0.896	0.803
	Nonsocialist	19.57	95.30		
Election 1942 (Oct.)	Socialist	83.47	6.22	0.928	0.862
	Nonsocialist	16.53	93.78		

Table 3. Distribution of Manual and Non-Manual Workers in Iceland 1930–50

Occupations	Census 1930*		Census 1940*		Census 1950*	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Manual	16,900	45.28	17,935	43.78	23,227	46.12
Nonmanual	20,425	54.72	23,034	56.22	27,139	53.88

* These figures only include those workers who are 21 years of age and over. If we consider only those workers 25 years of age and older, according to the 1930 census, the number of manual workers is 14,111, or 44.03 per cent, and of non-manual workers 17,937, or 55.97 per cent. Total: 32,048 working people.

The question of the social class source of the vote is different from that of the party destination of the vote. In discussing the manual workers' support for the IP, we would want to know not only the percentage of manual workers voting for the party but also the percentage of such support out of the total vote received by the IP. The problem is that we only have information about the percentage of manual workers voting for both the non-socialist parties combined. We also do not know the voting habits of those voters who were not part of the work force. It has been shown that women are more likely to vote for non-socialist parties than

men. When it is assumed that the proportion of the vote that the non-socialist parties receive from *manual workers' households* is equal to the percentage of *manual workers* voting for these parties, then this assumption involves an underestimation of the working class votes that go to the non-socialist parties.

But is it possible to estimate how the non-socialist vote of manual workers is divided between the IP and the PP? The probability is very high that the IP received a great majority of this vote. The PP was predominantly a rural party with very little support in the urban areas: it received a very low percentage of the vote in the six urban areas which formed independent electoral districts (Table 4). In one election, in 1933, it did not even have candidates in these six districts. Generally, the PP did not try to appeal to manual workers; the party defined itself as the party of farmers. Neither was there any overlap at the leadership level between the trade unions and the PP. This is not conclusive evidence, and it is possible that the PP received some support from manual workers in villages, particularly in areas in which the cooperative movement and the PP were strong.⁷

Table 4. Party Distribution of the Votes from Manual Workers Received by the Non-Socialist Parties in Elections 1931–42 (Oct.)*

Election	(1) Percentage of Manual Workers Voting for the Non-Socialist Parties	(2) Percent- age of the Valid Vote	(3) IP Per- centage of the Valid Vote	(4) Manual Percent- age of the IP Vote	(5) PP Per- age of of the Valid Vote	(6) PP Percent- age of the Valid Vote in Six Urban Districts
1931	26.71	12.1	43.8	27.6	35.6	10.3
1933	22.22	10.1	48.0	21.0	23.9	No Candidates
1934	20.12	9.1	42.3	21.5	21.9	5.2
1937	18.82	8.2	41.3	19.9	24.9	6.3
1942 (June)	19.57	8.6	39.5	21.8	27.6	7.7
1942 (Oct.)	16.53	7.2	38.5	18.7	26.6	7.8

* The information in column 2 is based on Table 2 and 3, column 2 shows column 1 as percentage of valid votes. Column 4 shows column 2 as a percentage of column 3. The six districts in column 6 are: Reykjavík, Hafnarfjörður, Ísafjörður, Akureyri, Seyðisfjörður, and Vestmannaeyjar.

The figures in column (2) are arrived at by multiplying the percentage of manual workers voting for the non-socialist parties (see Table 2) by the percentage of manual workers of the work force at voting age according to the census closest to each election (see Table 3). As an example, in the election of 1934 this formula produces: $20.12 \times \frac{45.28}{100} = 9.11$

100

We can assume *underestimation* of the IP's vote from manual households due to women's more conservative voting, and *overestimation* of the IP share of this vote by attributing all the non-socialist votes of manual workers to the IP. In Table 4, column 4, it is assumed that these two 'errors' cancel each other out, achieving a good estimate of the proportion of the working-class votes out of the total votes received by the IP.

In the 1931–42 period, this percentage ranged from a high of 27.6 per cent in 1931 to a low of 18.7 per cent in 1942 (Oct.). Since these figures are calculated after making rather arbitrary and, perhaps, questionable assumptions, these percentages are not very dependable. They give an indication, however, of the great importance of working-class support in establishing the IP as an alliance of all social classes and the largest party in Iceland. Following this estimation of the size of the working-class conservatives, the next step is to investigate the ideas of the IP concerning the working class.

There is no evidence to indicate that the IP or its predecessors ever conceded to the Socialist parties any monopoly over the labor unions or political support of the working class. In Reykjavik there was at least one early attempt to organize rival labor unions (Dagsbrún, 1956, p. 14). In another case, an IP M.P. was very influential in a labor union. The socialist leadership of the unions was also challenged and sometimes these efforts succeeded (see Málfundafélagið 1958).

The general ideology of the IP claimed that the party represented the interests of all classes. This ideology was also accompanied by a certain willingness of some people holding these ideas to accept 'reasonable' demands of the working class. The trade unions were considered legal and no attempts were made to outlaw them. (Whether they were recognized as having the right to bargain is another question.) The working class in Iceland enjoyed, for the most part, the rights of association and political rights, such as voting, in the early days of the labor union movement. Some political leaders showed a clear awareness of the need for reform in order to prevent the same dangerous class struggle as had happened in many neighboring countries from developing in Iceland.⁸

In the first years after the IP was established, there were no known attempts to organize the working-class supporters of the party. In 1938, however, Óðinn, 'a society of independent sailors and workers,' was founded in Reykjavik and constituted one branch of the IP. Subsequently similar working-class societies were established in different parts of the country, and in 1940 12 came together in a country-wide organization. These organizations are not only evidence of concentrated efforts by the

IP to gather and consolidate working-class support, they also produced explanations and justification of their working-class conservatism (Málfundafélagið 1958).

There is a considerable literature on working-class conservatives. Iceland resembles Britain, rather than the other Scandinavian countries, in that the proportion of the working class voting for non-socialist parties is much higher than the proportion of non-manual workers supporting socialist parties. This is one of the factors explaining how large the parties of the 'right' are in both countries, the IP in Iceland and the Conservative Party in Britain.

Parkin (1967, 282–284) has proposed a theory of working-class conservatism based on the British literature and information gathered in Britain, that might also apply in Iceland. He suggests that 'electoral support for Socialism will occur predominantly where individuals are involved in normative subsystems which serve as barriers to the dominant values of the society.' 'The first of these refers to the value system generated by working class communities whether of a traditional or recently settled kind.' The second subsystem is 'the value system created by industrial workers in response to the organization of production and their collective experiences at the workplace.'

In those communities in which a great majority of the working population were manual workers, the Socialist parties received disproportionately high voting support. Similarly, the IP was relatively stronger in communities in which manual workers constituted a minority. The strength of the IP in urban areas, such as Akureyri and Reykjavík, seems to support Parkin's theory. Parkin's hypothesis of the impact of the workplace on distribution of voting support is also plausible, because of the IP's strong support among those working-class groups – foremen for example – in unusually close personal contact with employers.

There is, however, little information concerning the question of whether the IP enjoyed relatively high voting support from some occupations within the working class. The Icelandic working class is generally in closer contact with other social classes than is the case in Britain and most, if not all, other industrialized countries. Some indication of occupational differences in working-class conservatism is available by analyzing the composition of the leadership of Óðinn in Reykjavík, the largest of the IP working-class societies and the most active one.⁹

From 1938 to 1958 a total of forty-three persons, all males, were members of Óðinn's steering committee. Of these nineteen, or almost half, were drivers, followed by eight unskilled workers and six foremen. Now

drivers and foremen constitute a very low percentage of the working class, so their representation on the steering committee is far out of proportion to their relative numbers. Unskilled workers are clearly underrepresented, and no sailor was on the steering committee from 1938 to 1958, in spite of Óðinn's designation as 'a society of independent workers and sailors.' Only one unskilled worker has been a chairman of the steering committee. The overrepresentation of drivers and foremen on Óðinn's steering committee clearly fits the analysis of marginally working-class groups as being particularly susceptible to working-class conservatism: both were situated close to the upper limits of the working class.

As the party with by far the most support from employers, the IP was also in a position to reward workers for voting organizational efforts on behalf of the party. These potential or actual material rewards and punishments were not confined to private employers sympathetic to the IP. The IP also had a majority on the Reykjavík city council. This could be useful to the party not only because of patronage and the granting of contracts to people in various occupations, but also because the township controlled zoning. Zoning of building might be very important for members of Óðinn, given their emphasis on home ownership. In fact, Óðinn established a house-building society, Hofgarður, in 1946.

Our conclusion must be that the explanation of working-class conservatism is very complex, although one can point to some structural features of Icelandic society which would support such tendencies. It seems that non-socialist voting habits of working-class people in Iceland are best explained as the outcome of several interrelated factors, the main ones being (1) ideology; (2) class position; and (3) material rewards and punishments. An attempt has been made to describe each of these factors and their relationship to working-class conservatism in general, but the evidence does not enable us to assess the relative impact of each factor.¹⁰

2.4. Women

The IP solicited women's support on the basis of its stand against political conflict. Other political parties were portrayed as introducing conflict and disharmony into society. The IP emphasized that women had a special role in society, and that the mission of women in politics is to counter tendencies towards dividing the nation into hostile camps. 'When women work together as good sisters who are united in advancing the honor and welfare of their nation, then political conflicts will not find a place' (Morgunblaðið, May 11, 1930). The IP's ideology for women exhibited the same basic idea as the party's general ideology, i.e., nationalism and unity. How success-

ful was the IP in attracting women voters; how can this support be explained; and what was the role of the IP female candidates in linking women and the party?

Women in Iceland were more likely than men to vote for the non-socialist parties. In the case of working-class women, this was particularly true in the elections between 1931 and 1937, to some extent in the two elections in 1942, but much less in subsequent elections.¹¹

Thus, we have indirect evidence of the greater tendency of women to vote for the IP. There is also some reason to conclude that this tendency of women to vote for the more conservative parties in Iceland predated the founding of the IP. When the anti-socialist forces in Reykjavík were organizing themselves before the town council election of 1918, determined not to repeat their defeat by the trade unions in the local election of 1916, their joint list was put forward by a local association of HRP and IP (old) supporters and the Association of Women.

In the country-wide election of 1922, a list composed only of women gained considerable support. Table 5 compares the results of the 1922 election to the next country-wide election in 1926.

Table 5. Party Distribution of the Vote in the Country-Wide Elections of 1922 & 1926.

Party	Election 1922		Election 1926		Changes	
	Valid Votes	Percentage	Valid Votes	Percentage	Valid Votes	Percentage
SDP	2,033	17.2	3,164	22.7	+1,131	+ 5.5
PP	3,196	27.1	3,481	25.0	-285	- 2.1
Women's List	2,678	22.7	489	3.5	- 2,189	-19.2
HRP	3,254	27.6				
IP (old)	633	5.4				
COP			5,501	39.4		
LP			1,312	9.4		
Total	11,794	100.00	13,947	100.00		

In 1926 the political forces outside the SDP and the PP had regrouped. In that election the COP, the LP, and the Women's List received 52.3 per cent of the vote but the HRP, the IP (old), and the Women's List had 55.7 per cent in 1922. It appears that just about all the votes the Women's List had received in 1922, but lost in 1926, went to the COP and the LP. (Three years later, in 1929, the COP and the LP united and formed the IP.) A high crossover of votes from the Women's List to the IP forces is almost certain.

The great defeat, or rather the collapse, of voting support for the Women's List in 1926 is very difficult to explain, but in 1926 the party system was much less fluid than in 1922 and had less room for nonpolitical maneuvers, like the Women's List. It could also have had some effect that the top candidate on the Women's List in 1922 and the only woman elected, Ingibjörg H. Bjarnason, became one of the COP's founding members in 1924.

How can we explain the success of the IP in attracting women's votes? First of all, this finding should not come as a great surprise, because in many countries women vote for non-socialist parties to a greater degree than do men. Consequently there should be something about the situation of women which makes them particularly susceptible to such parties. It is characteristic of women in all Western societies that they participate less in the job market than men. Women are also less likely to be involved in the conflicts generated by the system of production. Thus, they have more tenuous social class identity and develop socialist voting habits slower than men.

The IP's ideology is a non-class ideology; it tends to stress issues which are not directly tied up with conflicts over economic rewards. Many of these issues are connected with the place of women in our society – the home, family, and children. The IP also emphasized its support of the Lutheran church as opposed to the alleged anti-Christian attitudes of the Socialist Parties. If S. M. Lipset's statement (1963, 260) that 'everywhere in the Western World women are more faithful religious adherents than men' holds for Iceland, we would expect religion to be one of the links between the IP and women. We have, however, no systematic evidence of the political leanings of the Lutheran church in Iceland. Whatever the real impact of the IP's attempts to picture itself as a defender of the Christian faith and the socialists as opponents of Christianity, the SDP's newspaper often complained about such accusations.

The IP women candidates served a special function in connecting the IP and women. These candidates professed to be above politics, thus voting for them was voting against political conflict. As one candidate put it, 'Without doubt there are many, particularly among the female voters, who can see virtues as well as faults in all our political parties and think that party politics and party hatred are the most dangerous elements in society' (Morgunblaðið, May 11, 1930). The IP women candidates also emphasized that by voting for them, women could advance the cause of all women. One of them, Guðrún Lárusdóttir, said before the election of 1930: 'If this election does not show clearly that women will support the only woman

candidate who has a chance of being elected [i.e., herself] strongly enough so that she gets elected, then it will be a long time until women get another opportunity to have a female M.P.' (Morgunblaðið, May 11, 1930). These warnings may have worked as intended; at least, Guðrún Lárusdóttir was elected. Women candidates have been much more prominent in the IP than in the other political parties. It is not possible to determine the importance of women candidates in attracting female voters to the IP. It seems that the IP ideology and candidates reinforce each other in that both emphasize the special qualities of women and the particular compatibility between these female qualities and the IP.

3. Conclusion

The IP's government participation with the Socialist parties in 1944–47 as well as the party's toleration of government opposition by its own M.P.s manifested tendencies of the party towards compromise and pragmatic politics rather than inflexibility of ideology and policies. Perhaps the most telling proof of these compromises and intra-party negotiations is that in spite of its heterogeneous voting support and the diversity of interests of the social groups included in the party, the IP did not experience any serious splits within the party.

Dahl (1966, 380) has argued that

. . . with two parties the process of conciliation is necessary not only in the legislature (as in a multiparty system) but also in nominations and elections . . . in a two-party system a good deal of the process of negotiations takes place among politicians of the same party rather than among politicians of different parties; in this case the incentive to arrive at a viable compromise is strengthened, not weakened by party loyalties.

The case of the IP indicates that Dahl is correct in pointing out the importance of intra-party negotiations and compromise, but wrong in attributing these tendencies to the dynamics of the two-party system. The main explanatory variable is not the party system but the composition and ideology of each political party. The organic ideology and heterogeneous voting support of the IP provided strong incentives towards adopting policies agreeable to all groups in the party and which might appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate.

The IP ideology emphasized an organic conception of society and unity of social classes. The party also received some voting support from all social classes. These characteristics help to account for the spirit of

compromise prevailing within the party. The IP maintained, for example, a pattern of not adopting a fundamentally hostile attitude towards any social group. The IP accused the PP and the Socialist parties of misuse of the cooperative movement and the labor unions, but it did not question the right of these or other interest groups to exist. Neither did the IP advocate the absolute non-interference of the state in economic activities. Similarly, the IP did not emphasize an ideology of classical liberalism in which government activities and individual liberties are postulated as mutually exclusive and individual freedom is thought to diminish as the role of the government increases. The social-liberal ideology of the IP allowed for a legitimate role of the state as an integral part of society.¹² The IP did not attack policies of the PP-SDP government of 1934-39 because the state provided support for farmers and fishing vessel owners hard-pressed by the Great Depression. In fact, the IP demanded such action (Jóhannesson 1948, 362-372). The IP was not opposed in principle to a role for the state in economic activities, but the party bitterly protested and fought against those government policies which the IP considered as representing illegitimate use of state power in depriving individuals of ownership and full control of their property. In line with its social-liberal ideology, the IP did not in 1935 adopt a policy of fundamental opposition to a government-sponsored social security system. M.P.s for the IP argued, however, that such a system was too expensive in the difficult economic situation (Alþingistiðindi 1935, B, 1539-1695).

We emphasize that both ideology and voting support of the IP has fundamentally remained quite similar ever since the party was established. The party's emphasis on nationalism and organic solidarity of all social classes has not changed. Neither has the class distribution of the party's support. The IP is probably now as in 1929-1944 supported by almost all capitalists, a great majority of the middle class, somewhat less than half of the farmers and a sizeable proportion of manual workers. The main changes in the IP's voting support probably consists in its increasing share of the working-class votes, which has compensated for the party's loss of its previous special hold on the women's vote.

Development of the IP cannot be divided into stages on the basis of changes in its voting support or in parliamentary representation. This article has dealt with the IP in the 1929-44 period, which is considered to be the formation period of the party. During these years the basis of the IP's electoral support was established, which the party has since maintained. In the post-World War II period, the position of the IP in Icelandic politics has changed considerably. This development is outside the main

focus of this article, but some features of this change can be sketched briefly. First, there is the question of government participation. In 1929–39 the IP was in government opposition, except for two years, 1932–34. Since 1944, however, the IP has participated in the national government continuously, except for two short periods, 1956–59 and 1971–74.

Second, there has been an ideological shift. Jónsson (1957) has divided the history of the IP into two periods: the ‘classical period,’ 1929–44, in which the party ‘adhered to the ideology of economic freedom and private initiative’, and the post – 1944 period ‘when the party thought that, because of the prevailing public opinion, it had to compromise its previous policies in order to maintain its position of leadership in Iceland’ (p. 5). Although Jónsson exaggerates the differences in IP ideology between these two periods, he is undoubtedly correct in pointing out the IP’s greater acceptance of the welfare state, including social welfare legislation and increasing government involvement in the economy.

Iceland’s membership in NATO and the presence of U.S. troops in the country has been one of the most controversial issues in Icelandic politics since World War II. On this issue, according to B. Bjarnason (1972, 65), ‘the one party that has consistently supported membership of NATO . . . is the Independence Party . . .’ The two parties most opposed on the NATO/U.S. base issue – the IP and the People’s Alliance (PA; earlier the United Socialist Party, the USP) – have not cooperated in a national government, except in 1944–47.

Finally, in the post-1944 years, the IP has greatly increased its influence in the labor unions. The party is particularly strong among workers in service occupations, such as workers in retailing and office employees, but also among factory workers in the capital, Reykjavík, and skilled workers. At the 1976 convention of the Association of Icelandic Labor Unions (ASÍ), according to uncontested newspaper reports, approximately one-fourth of the delegates were supporters of the IP. But considerable voting support for the IP by manual workers is not a recent phenomenon: from its inception, circumstance and inclination pushed the party towards a ‘catch-all’ organization, ideology, and electoral base.

NOTES

- 1 The ideas about the differences between manual and non-manual workers follow those of F. Parkin (1971), pp. 25–26.
- 2 The number of manual workers increased from 13,742 in 1930 to 16,518 in 1940 – or 20.9 per cent – in the eight largest urban areas (Reykjavík, Hafnarfjörður, Ísafjörður, Siglufjörður, Akureyri, Seyðisfjörður, Neskaupsstaður, Vestmannaeyjar). Salaried workers in these eight towns numbered 3,867 in 1930 and 5,612 in 1940, or increased by 45.1 per cent.

- Salaried workers were 19.3 per cent of the work force in the eight towns in 1930, but 22.6 per cent in 1940, while the share of manual workers decreased from 68.6 per cent in 1930 to 66.8 per cent of the work force in 1940.
- 3 The lower level of party conflict in rural areas is indicated by the nature of local elections in Iceland. S. Rokkan (1970), pp. 140–141, reports that in 1950 non-partisan lists received 0.0 per cent of valid votes in contested elections in towns, 24.4 per cent in villages and 69.2 per cent in other rural areas.
 - 4 The districts with higher percentages of the work force in fishing are those with relatively lower percentages in agriculture, notably Gullbringu- og Kjósarsýsla, Borgarfjarðarsýsla, Ísafjarðarsýslur and S-Múlasýsla.
 - 5 Of the eleven districts in which the IP received on the average less than 40 per cent in 1931–42 (Oct.), four were in the North (W-Húnavatnssýsla, Eyjafjarðarsýsla, South and North þingeyjarsýsla), which had a total of six districts, and three were in the East. The East only had these three districts.
 - 6 This alliance of capitalists and farmers was in some areas strengthened by unclear distinctions between farming and fishing, i.e., the same people engaged in both of these economic activities. This was the case in, at least, N-Ísafjarðarsýsla, Borgarfjarðarsýsla, Gullbringu- og Kjósarsýsla, and Snæfellsnessýsla.
 - 7 The PP's support in the town of Akureyri indicates some strength of the party in urban areas in the North. The same was probably also true in the East.
 - 8 The pattern of relatively high tolerance and mild response of the upper classes to various new social forces was quite consistent. This was the case in the development of the suffrage, the women's movement, and the cooperative movement. This attitude was also evident in discussions in the Althingi about various social welfare legislation. Capitalism developed much later in Iceland than in the neighboring countries, and many political leaders emphasized the need to prevent similar class conflict in Iceland as had developed in other countries. Skúli Thoroddsen, one of the leaders of the IP (old), expressed such ideas in 1915 when proposing a social welfare legislation. (See J. Blöndal and S. Kristjánsson (1954), p. 48.) In a debate in the *Althingi* in 1919 on legislation providing for eight hours rest each day for trawler fishermen, Jörundur Brynjólfsson and Jón Magnússon, the Prime Minister, argued that if such 'reasonable' labor legislation was not passed, then, as Jón Magnússon said, the workers' 'demands will become greater, because we have not been favorable now towards such fair requests as this one is' (*Alþingistíðindi* C, 1919, p. 200). The SDP also put forward ideas on actions preventing the creation of such a class society as had developed in other countries. See *Alþýðuflokkurinn* (1917), p. 4.
 - 9 In fact, Óðinn is the only one of these societies which is still active. The other working-class societies were probably only active for a few years.
 - 10 In explaining working-class conservatism in Iceland, a great emphasis should be placed on importance of the relatively close contact between employers and employees due to the smallness of the population and small work-places. Large factories were almost completely absent in Iceland, but as S. M. Lipset (1963) explains: 'A large plant makes up for a higher degree of intra-class communication and less personal contact with people on higher economic levels.' (p. 267)
 - 11 An increasing women's vote for the Socialist parties is considered one of the main reasons for the increasing fit between the election outcome predicted on the basis of class voting and the actual outcome. (see appendix.)
 - 12 The term 'social-liberalism' is used here in the same sense as in Berglund and Lindström (1978; pp. 51–52, p. 59) to indicate ideology which combines liberal elements with an acceptance of the increasing role of government, particularly in the field of social welfare.

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APPENDIX

The index of class voting depends on two dichotomies: a) socialist–non-socialist, and b) manual–non-manual. The Independence Party and the Progressive Party were classified as non-socialist parties, the Social Democratic Party, the Communist Party and the United Socialist Parties as socialist parties. The electoral statistics, showing the party distribution of the vote in each electoral district in every election, are easily converted for use in computing the table of class voting, once the socialist–non-socialist classification of parties has been established. Only the Socialist Parties percentage of valid votes in each district must be calculated.

The percentage of manual workers in each district is not so easily computed. Census data must be used which has certain limitations. First of all, there is a time lag, as the census was taken every tenth year, i.e., 1930, 1940 and 1950, while elections were held in 1931, 1933, 1934, 1937, and both July and October of 1942. In the computation of class voting the census taken closest to each election was selected. The time difference between the census date and the date of the election does not pose very serious problems because the changes in the percentage of manual workers have been minimal.

The census districts, however, are not identical with the electoral districts; six of the electoral districts must, for the purpose of analysis, be combined into three to fit the census units. Instead of analyzing twenty-seven electoral units in the period 1931–42 (July), and twenty-eight units in 1942 (Oct.), the units numbered twenty-four and twenty-five.

The third problem in using the census data is that a sizeable number of people under the voting age are included in the information about the working population. This could be particularly misleading because the percentage of working people under the voting age differs with respect to at least two factors: (1) Occupational sectors. For instance, there are more young people in agriculture than in fishing. This would confound comparisons, e.g., between the percentage of manual workers in a fishing village and in an agricultural district. (2) Occupational categories. There is a lower percentage of working people under the voting age among salaried workers and, particularly, among employers rather than among wage earners. In order to eliminate or at least minimize this bias, the raw census data on occupations were corrected to include only those working people who were old enough to vote. Fortunately the Icelandic census is rather detailed and contains a breakdown into eight to nine economic sectors and three occupational categories – employers, salaried employees, and wage earners – within *each* economic sector in *each* census district. Employers and salaried workers were classified as non-manual and wage earners as manual workers. There was only one exception to this rule: wage earners in agriculture were classified as non-manual workers.

The index of class voting is based on aggregate data, which has several shortcomings, due to at least these factors: 1) The electorate itself had changed considerably from 1931 to 1942, notably by the enfranchisement of welfare recipients and lowering of the voting age from twenty-five to twenty-one, which was adopted in 1934. 2) We do not know who the non-voters are. 3) We have insufficient information about those voters who do not belong to the working population, as defined in the census. This group is mainly composed of women. We guess that women are slower than men in developing socialist voting habits. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the 'surplus' between the prediction on the basis of class voting and the actual outcome of the election has been decreasing rather steadily in the period 1931–1959. This appears to indicate that the non-working people, mostly women, became more like working people in their voting habits.

For all these reasons, the index of class voting presented in Table 2 does not show precisely the relationship between class and voting. It indicates, however, the underlying structuring of the vote by social class.