

## Notes and Comments

### **Tactical Voting and Party Constituency Campaigning at the 1992 General Election in England**

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#### INTRODUCTION: TACTICAL VOTING, CONSTITUENCY CAMPAIGNING

Tactical voting has become increasingly salient in recent elections in England. However, it is not only voters who behave tactically. Political parties may also act tactically by focusing their election campaigns on marginal seats. This Note provides a unique exploration of the relationship between local campaigning and tactical voting in England, at the 1992 general election.

Evidence of partisan dealignment since the late 1960s would suggest an increasingly discerning and volatile and therefore probably increasingly tactically-minded electorate,<sup>1</sup> but it is only since the mid-1980s that tactical voting has become a major subject of public and media interest.<sup>2</sup> A number of studies have used aggregate constituency election results to show that in 1987 and 1992, opposition parties generally did better than average in seats where they finished in second place at the previous election, and worse than average in seats where they were third or fourth.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, analysis of constituency flow-of-the-vote estimates suggests a rational electorate which is most likely to indulge in tactical voting where the chances of influencing the outcome are greatest.<sup>4</sup>

Estimates based on constituency data suggest that only a relatively small number of voters engage in tactical voting. Johnston and Pattie's study, for instance, suggested that the proportion of electors voting tactically in 1987 was around 5.8 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Even so,

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<sup>1</sup> B. Särilvik and I. Crewe, *Decade of Dealignment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); M. Franklin, *The Decline of Class Voting in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1987* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); N. Fishman and A. Shaw, 'TV87: The Campaign to Make Tactical Voting Make Votes Count', in I. Crewe and M. Harrop, eds, *Political Communications: The General Election Campaign of 1987* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> J. W. Galbraith and N. C. Rae, 'A Test of the Importance of Tactical Voting: Great Britain, 1987', *British Journal of Political Science*, 19 (1989), 126–37; J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Analysis', in Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1987*; J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'The Results Analysed' in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Tactical Voting in Britain in 1983 and 1987: An Alternative Approach', *British Journal of Political Science*, 21 (1991), 95–128.

<sup>5</sup> Johnston and Pattie, 'Tactical Voting in Britain in 1983 and 1987', p. 104.

tactical voting then may have altered election results: on one estimate, tactical voting reduced the Conservative majority by sixteen seats in 1987 and six in 1992.<sup>6</sup> However, critics have pointed out, by focusing on net change in votes, studies of aggregate election results may underestimate the real extent of tactical voting.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, many studies have drawn on survey evidence to gain some insights into the extent of gross tactical voting.<sup>8</sup> In their analysis of the 1987 British Election Study, Heath *et al.* estimated that only 6 per cent of those who voted in that election said they really preferred a party other than the one they eventually chose<sup>9</sup> but confirmed that 'tactical voting ... occurred where one would have expected it to'.<sup>10</sup> According to a later study, there was a significant increase in the proportion voting tactically at the 1992 election, from 6 per cent to 9 per cent of voters, reflecting an increase in opportunities for tactical voting.<sup>11</sup> It was demonstrated that the probability of voting tactically was related to the distance from contention of the preferred party and to the strength of a voter's partisan identification: the closer the preferred party was to contention in a seat, and the stronger a voter's sense of attachment to that party, the less likely was tactical voting.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas tactical voting has been a highly topical subject in studies of British elections in recent years, constituency campaigning has been relatively neglected. The received wisdom in studies of British elections is that the local campaign has declined drastically in importance since the end of the Second World War, as the national campaign has grown. It has been argued that the constituency campaign is now of only ritual importance, giving local party activists a feeling of involvement in the battle, but that it has 'little success in changing political attitudes'.<sup>13</sup>

However, there is also some evidence to suggest that local campaign efforts can have noticeable effects on constituency results. Studies of single constituencies and wards

<sup>6</sup> Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1987*, p. 266; Butler and Kavanagh, *The British General Election of 1992*, p. 280.

<sup>7</sup> H. Catt, 'Individual Behaviour Versus Collective Outcomes: The Case of Tactical Voting', *Politics*, 10 (1990), 17–24.

<sup>8</sup> W. L. Miller, D. Broughton, N. Sonntag and D. Mclean, 'Political Change in Britain During the 1987 Campaign', in Crewe and Harrop, eds, *Political Communications*; W. L. Miller, H. D. Clarke, M. Harrop, L. LeDuc and P. Whiteley, *How Voters Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). These employed survey data based on a panel of voters interviewed throughout the 1987 campaign.

<sup>9</sup> A. Heath, R. Jowell, J. Curtice, G. Evans, J. Field and S. Witherspoon, *Understanding Political Change* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991), p. 53. Estimates from most aggregate data are remarkably close to this. However, one study put the estimated proportion of tactical voters at the 1987 election as high as 17 per cent: R. Niemi, G. Whitten and M. Franklin, 'Constituency Characteristics, Individual Characteristics and Tactical Voting in the 1987 British General Election', *British Journal of Political Science*, 22 (1992), 229–40. This has been severely criticized on grounds of measurement error: G. Evans and A. Heath, 'A Tactical Error in the Analysis of Tactical Voting', *British Journal of Political Science*, 23 (1993), 131–7.

<sup>10</sup> Heath *et al.*, *Understanding Political Change*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> G. Evans, 'Tactical Voting and Labour's Prospects', in A. Heath, R. Jowell and J. Curtice, eds, *Labour's Last Chance?* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Press, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> D. Kavanagh, *Constituency Electioneering in Britain* (London: Longman, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> R. T. Holt and J. E. Turner, *Political Parties in Action: The Battle of Barons Court* (New York: Free Press, 1968); J. Bochel and D. Denver, 'Canvassing, Turnout and Party Support: An Experiment', *British Journal of Political Science*, 1 (1971), 257–69; J. Bochel and D. Denver, 'The Impact of the Campaign on the Results of Local Government Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 2 (1972), 239–60.

have shown that extra effort on the local campaign, and particularly effort put into more thorough, more frequent canvassing and into getting the vote out, can pay marked dividends in mobilizing a party's supporters and improving its final performance.<sup>14</sup> In the North American literature, party campaign spending has been used as a measure of local campaign intensity, the assumption being that the more a party spends on its campaign, the more effort it is putting in, and the more votes it should win, *ceteris paribus*.<sup>15</sup> In Britain, recent research demonstrates that the level of constituency spending is closely related to other, independent measures of campaign effort.<sup>16</sup> Several studies have successfully used constituency spending data to evaluate the effectiveness of constituency campaigning.<sup>17</sup> Spending data would seem, therefore, to provide a ready and reasonable surrogate for party campaign effort in British constituencies.

Because the potential effectiveness for tactical voting is dependent on the local electoral context, it is local campaigning which gives each party an opportunity to maximize its tactical vote. Clearly it is in a party's interest to convince the local electorate that they are the best home for tactical votes. This may be achieved by creating an impression of local strength or by persuading potential tactical voters to turn out.<sup>18</sup> It is this previously unexplored relationship between tactical voting and campaign spending with which this Note is concerned. The expected relationships are set out in a series of hypotheses:

1. *The rational tactical party hypotheses.* A rational party will campaign harder (and therefore spend more money) in those constituencies where they have most to gain. The more marginal a seat for a party at the previous election, the more that party should spend on its local campaign. The rational party should also spend more on its campaign in seats where it is in second place than in seats where it is not, since these are the seats where extra support is most likely to provide a win. It should also spend more on seats where it won at the last election than in seats where it was third

<sup>14</sup> P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, 'The Labour Vote and Local Activism: The Impact of Local Constituency Campaigns', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45 (1992), 582–95; P. Whiteley and P. Seyd, 'Local Party Campaigning and Electoral Mobilization in Britain', *Journal of Politics*, 56 (1994), 242–52.

<sup>15</sup> See G. Jacobson, 'The Effects of Campaign Spending in Congressional Elections', *American Political Science Review*, 72 (1978), 469–91; and G. Jacobson, 'The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections: New Evidence for Old Arguments', *American Journal of Political Science*, 34 (1990), 334–62. However, see also D. P. Green and J. S. Krasno, 'Salvation for the Spendthrift Incumbent: The Effects of Campaign Spending in House Elections', *American Journal of Political Science*, 32 (1988), 884–907; and D. P. Green and J. S. Krasno, 'Rebuttal to Jacobson's 'New Evidence for Old Arguments'', *American Journal of Political Science*, 34 (1990), 363–72.

<sup>16</sup> C. J. Pattie, P. F. Whiteley, R. J. Johnston, and P. Seyd, 'Measuring Local Campaign Effects: Labour Party Constituency Campaigning at the 1987 General Election', *Political Studies*, 42 (1994), 469–79; see also D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Measuring the Intensity and Effectiveness of Constituency Campaigning in the 1992 General Election', in D. Denver, P. Norris, D. Broughton and C. Rallings, *British Elections and Parties Yearbook, 1993* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Examples include: D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Marginality and Turnout in British General Elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 4 (1974), 17–35; D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Marginality and Turnout in British General Elections in the 1970s', *British Journal of Political Science*, 15 (1985), 381–8; R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign Spending and Votes: A Reconsideration', *Public Choice*, 33 (1979), 83–92; R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign Spending and the Efficacy of Advertising at the 1974 General Election in England', *Political Studies*, 27 (1979), 114–19.

<sup>18</sup> Galbraith and Rae, 'A Test of the Importance of Tactical Voting', p. 132.

or worse, since the former need to be defended while there is little hope of winning in the latter.

2. *The rational tactical voter hypotheses.* In line with the existing evidence on tactical voting, we expect that at the level of the individual voter, the rational tactical voter will only vote tactically when her preferred party is not in first or second place in a seat. The corollary of this at the aggregate level is that we expect to see larger flows to a party from the other opposition party in seats where it is in second place than in seats where it is in third place or worse. We also expect that the propensity of voters to act tactically will also be a function of the marginality of the seat. The more marginal a seat is the more likely it is that rational voters who do not support the first or second placed party will vote tactically.
3. *The campaign spending and tactical voting hypotheses.* Even if both the above sets of hypotheses are validated, there is one further step in the argument before we can conclude that parties' local campaign efforts had an influence upon tactical voting. It may be that parties are rational in their spending, and that voters are rational in their tactical choices, but that the former has no effect on the latter. If party spending does influence tactical voting, we would expect both that: (a) the 'rational tactical party' and 'rational tactical voter' hypotheses are validated, and (b) even when we control for the prior marginality and state of the parties in each seat there should still be a positive, significant relationship between how much a party spends in seats which it is not defending and how well it does at an election, and a negative relationship between how much it spends and how well its opposition rival does.

At an individual level the tactical voting and spending hypotheses suggest that having controlled for key individual characteristics (class and party identification) and for the marginality of the seat, the propensity of any voter to vote tactically for a party should be positively associated with the amount spent by that party on their campaign. Conversely, campaign spending will reduce the flow of tactical voters to other parties.

This Note draws on data at both the constituency and the individual levels in order to assess the relationship between local campaigning and tactical voting in England. Data for Scotland and Wales are excluded because of the important role of nationalist parties which make direct comparisons with the English three-party system impossible.

#### RATIONAL TACTICAL PARTIES?

In order to investigate the rational tactical party hypotheses, constituency spending data is analysed in conjunction with constituency election results from the 1987 and 1992 elections. Parties are legally required to submit information on their constituency campaign spending to the local returning officer in each constituency and these data are collated and published by the government after each election.<sup>19</sup> The maximum level of constituency spending allowed by law varies from constituency to constituency. We therefore express the amount a party spent as a percentage of the legal maximum permitted in that seat. Table 1 shows a summary of the percentage of the legal maximum spent by each party, according to how marginal the seat was for the party. On the whole,

<sup>19</sup> R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Great Britain: Twentieth Century Parties Operating under Nineteenth Century Regulations', in A. B. Gunlicks, ed., *Campaign and Party Finance in North America and Western Europe* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1993).

TABLE 1 *Average Constituency Campaign Spending in England as a Percentage of Maximum Allowed, According to Marginality*

Margin	Conservative	Labour	Lib. Dems.
Over 20% behind	48.0	49.8	34.4
– 10% to – 19.99%	61.3	88.2	57.2
– 0.01% to – 9.99%	78.4	95.2	80.7
0% to + 9.99%	93.2	87.5	85.6
+ 10% to + 19.99%	90.5	76.6	95.9
Over 20% ahead	89.7	75.2	–
Mean	82.0	69.8	44.3

the Conservatives spent the most (82 per cent of the legal maximum) followed by Labour (69.8 per cent). On average, the Liberal Democrats spent the least – only 44.3 per cent of the legal maximum.

However, Table 1 also reveals that the level of spending varied considerably according to the marginality of the seat. All parties spent least where they were over 20 per cent behind the 1987 victor and hopelessly out of contention. Labour spent a relatively large amount in seats in which they were behind by less than 20 per cent, perhaps reflecting their progress in the opinion polls since 1987 which made such seats realistic targets. All the parties spent over 80 per cent of the legal maximum where they were less than 10 per cent behind the victor or less than 10 per cent ahead of the second-placed parties. The Conservatives spent most in marginal seats in which they were the incumbents (93.2 per cent) whilst Labour spent most in seats where the party was trailing by less than 10 per cent. The Liberal Democrats simply spent more where they were relatively more successful. In relatively safe seats all parties spent at levels above their national average perhaps reflecting their greater organizational strength, and hence greater resources, in such seats. However, for the Labour party these levels were still below those for marginal seats, indicating that, of all the major parties, Labour appeared to target its spending most carefully.

Whilst Table 1 offered some evidence of tactical spending, there was also a suggestion that parties were spending large amounts in relatively safe seats. Because parties raise money locally and have no established procedures for redistributing money between relatively autonomous constituency parties, it may be that parties spend more simply where they have greater access to resources or a greater money-raising potential. Consequently, spending is also closely related to the performance of the party at the previous election, which may act as a surrogate for the local strength of the party (Table 2).

Both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats spent more in the 1992 local campaign as their 1987 vote increased. Liberal Democrat spending appears to have been the most dependent on previous vote share. There are two possible explanations for this: first, the *availability* of resources may have been more variable for the Liberal Democrats than for other parties, probably because of the difficulties of raising resources locally

TABLE 2 *Average Constituency Campaign Spending in England as a Percentage of Maximum Allowed, According to Party Share of Vote in 1987*

Share of vote, 1987	Conservative	Labour	Lib. Dems.
Less than 15%	58.6	46.0	22.3
15% to 29.99%	60.8	83.7	57.0
30% to 44.99%	90.8	82.9	86.5
45% and over	90.3	68.7	—
Mean	82.0	69.8	44.3

in areas where the party has little support. Secondly, the party's central organization may have been more careful to direct extra resources to where they were most needed.

The Labour party again behaved slightly differently. Whilst they did spend more where their 1987 vote was between 15 per cent and 45 per cent than where it was below 15 per cent, they also spent more in these seats than in seats where they won over 45 per cent of the vote in 1987. This again suggests that Labour campaigned hardest where votes were most needed rather than simply where the party was strongest.

In a three-party system it is also plausible that parties will spend more against one opponent than another and will spend considerably less where it is in third place or worse than where it is in second place. This is investigated in Table 3, which breaks down party spending by the 1987 winner and runner up.

As might be expected according to the tactical-voting hypotheses, all parties spent least where they were in third place. Both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats spent most where they were in first place. The Liberal Democrats spent most of all in the seats which they won in 1987 where Labour came second. However, of the seats in which the Liberal Democrats came second, they spent relatively more where the winner

TABLE 3 *Average Constituency Campaign Spending in England as a Percentage of Maximum Allowed, According to First and Second Place at Previous General Election*

First and second place in 1987	Conservative	Labour	Lib. Dems.
Conservative, Labour	91.0	88.2	30.4
Conservative, Alliance	90.9	51.0	65.7
Labour, Conservative	62.0	79.8	19.1
Labour, Alliance	57.0	83.9	53.1
Alliance, Conservative	90.6	60.4	81.1
Alliance, Labour	76.6	93.5	96.5



in 1987 had been the Conservatives (65.7 per cent) than where it was Labour (53.1 per cent). This may reflect the Liberal Democrats' relative weakness in traditional Labour seats compared to their standing in the Conservative heartlands of the South. Similarly, the Conservatives spent much more where they were challenging a Liberal Democrat than where they were second to Labour, probably because on average they were closer to Liberal than to Labour incumbents.

The pattern of spending by the Labour party was, again, slightly different. Rather than spending most in seats where they were in first place, they spent most where they were second to the other major parties. This may reflect their need in 1992 not to protect what they had won in 1987 (which, given the changing popularity of the parties since 1987, should have been safe), but to target seats in which they had been runners-up in 1987. In seats where the Liberal Democrats were first or second to the Conservatives, Labour's spending was low (60.4 per cent and 51 per cent respectively), suggesting they may have been content to allow the Liberal Democrats a relatively free run at the Conservatives. This was also true of the Conservatives who spent only 76.6 per cent where the Alliance was second in 1987 to Labour.

The preceding tables have provided evidence consistent with rational tactical parties, but it is unclear whether these relationships exist independently of each other. For example, it was suggested that the effect of marginality was connected to the effect of previous share of the vote, which could be linked with levels of resource availability rather than tactical behaviour. The multiple regression models in Table 4 provide estimates of the independent effects of each of these aspects of tactical spending and also estimates the extent to which parties spend more to compete with stronger campaigns by their opponents. The dependent variable is the percentage of the allowed maximum spent by each party in 1992. The independent variables reflect those factors discussed above plus the amount spent by the other major parties. This allows us to judge whether or not parties anticipate and react to the strength of the opposition's campaign.

Table 4 confirms many of the findings outlined above. All parties spent more where they were stronger and more where the seat was more marginal. The Liberal Democrats' spending was most affected by previous share of the vote supporting the suggestion that they focused their campaign (for tactical or for pragmatic reasons) in areas where they had built a solid base of support. There is further evidence that, of the major parties, Labour was the most sensitive towards tactical considerations in so far as their spending was the most responsive to the marginality of the seat. Having taken these factors into account, the Conservatives spent significantly less in all Labour held seats than in the baseline category, seats in which the Conservatives were first and the Alliance were second. Labour spent more in seats where they were second, hoping to topple a Conservative incumbent, compared to the base category. Other things being equal, in comparison with seats in which they were second to the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats spent significantly less where they won and the Conservatives were second and where they were in third place. Most of the effects appear to be consistent with tactical spending, although the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats appeared more inclined to spend where they already were strong and less where Labour had won in 1987. This is not surprising given the state of the parties in 1992 (in the opinion polls) compared to that in the 1987 general election.

Table 4 also suggests that the main parties were quite effective at gauging the campaigns of their opponents. Conservative spending was 0.14 per cent higher for every extra 1 per cent spent by Labour and 0.09 per cent higher for every 1 per cent spent by the Liberal Democrats. These effects are significant even after taking into account all

TABLE 4 *Multiple Regression Models of Percentage Spent by Each Party in 1992 in England*

	Conservative spending	Labour spending	Liberal Democrat spending
Share 1987†	+ 0.84	+ 1.05	+ 1.79
Margin 1987‡	- 0.51	- 0.99	- 0.65
Conservative, Labour	*	+ 6.92	- 17.78
Labour, Conservative§	- 14.90	*	- 16.66
Labour, Alliance§	- 14.38	*	*
Alliance, Conservative§	*	*	- 18.85
Alliance, Labour§	*	*	*
Conservative spending¶	NA	+ 0.16	+ 0.23
Labour spending¶	+ 0.14	NA	*
Liberal Dem. spending¶	+ 0.09	+ 0.09	NA
Constant	52.21	49.1	- 17.46
R <sup>2</sup>	0.58	0.62	0.63

\*Insignificant at  $p = 0.05$ ; NA, Not applicable.

†The percentage share of the vote won by that party in 1987.

‡The difference between the percentage share won by the party in 1987 and the percentage won by the winning party (non-incumbents), or the difference between the incumbent's share (if the party won in 1987) and the share of the party in second place.

§Dummy variable representing the first and second placed parties in 1987 (the comparator group omitted from the equation is 'Conservatives, Alliance' or seats won by the Conservatives in 1987 with the Alliance in second place).

¶The percentage of the legal maximum spent by the *other* major parties.

the other tactical considerations in the model. Labour spending was similarly related to Liberal and Conservative spending. Liberal Democrat spending was 0.23 per cent higher for every percentage point increase in Conservative spending, but the party did not spend more where Labour spent more. Even after controlling for the state of the parties in each constituency the Liberal Democrats appear to have been more concerned with competing with the Conservative's campaign than with Labour's.

Notwithstanding the tendency of all the major parties to spend more where they are organizationally stronger – where their base of support is greater – there is a considerable amount of evidence for the tactical rational parties hypotheses, especially in relation to the Labour party. But before we can make the link between tactical spending and tactical voting it is necessary to establish (a) that voters vote tactically (the rational tactical voter hypotheses) and (b) that this is encouraged by spending (the rational tactical spending and voting hypotheses). The existing literature provides considerable support for the former (see above), but the latter has yet to be explored. The following section examines links between tactical switching and party spending.



## RATIONAL TACTICAL VOTERS AND PARTY SPENDING: EXPLORING THE LINKS

*Constituency Flow-of-the-Vote, Tactical Voting and Spending*

Constituency flow-of-the-vote matrices, based on constituency election results in 1987 and 1992 and the national flow-of-the-vote matrix taken from the 1992 British Election Survey, were estimated using entropy maximizing procedures.<sup>20</sup> These allow us to say what proportion of those who voted for a party in a constituency at the 1987 election shifted their allegiance to another specified party in 1992. So, for instance, we can estimate the percentage of 1987 Conservative voters in a seat who switched to the Liberal Democrats in 1992.

Tables 5–7 show regression models of the estimated constituency flow-of-the-vote between the three main parties in seats with different tactical situations. The explanatory variables measure the electoral context in relation to the party receiving the flow of votes in 1992 (the destination party) and the spending activity of the three main parties. To allow for different relationships between flows and spending in different contexts, separate models are provided for seats with different winners and runners up in 1987, though there were too few seats won by the Alliance or seats where the Alliance was second to Labour for analysis. All variables were included in the models simultaneously, but only statistically significant results are reported.

Table 5 presents the models for Conservative held seats where Labour was second. It shows a number of important results. First, having taken into account the position of the parties in the 1987 election (Conservative first and Labour second), marginality and previous share of the vote make little difference on the flows between parties but do affect loyalty. Conservative loyalty is lower where the margin of victory is greater. This is consistent with a failure of voters to turn out where there was little chance of the result being reversed. Liberal loyalty, however, is higher where the margin between the Alliance and the Conservatives was greater in 1987. Share of the vote in 1987 was positively associated with loyalty for the Conservatives and the Liberals, but not for Labour. This indicates that the Liberal Democrats were more effective at retaining support where they had a solid base to build on. Flows from the Alliance to the Conservatives were also greater where the Conservatives were stronger, whilst flows from Labour to Conservatives were smaller.

More importantly, with respect to the campaign spending and tactical voting hypotheses, it was suggested above that even when we control for the marginality and state of the parties in each seat, there should still be a positive, significant relationship between how much a party spends in seats which it is not defending, and how well it does at an election. Table 5 provides some evidence of this, albeit in a limited number of circumstances. Even after controlling for the electoral context, the campaign spending of at least one of the major parties was significantly related to the flow-of-the-vote in all of the models. According to the hypotheses, the greatest opportunity for tactical voting in seats defended by the Conservatives and where Labour was the main challenger would have been for anti-Conservative supporters of the third-placed Alliance parties to switch to Labour. The relatively large constant for this model (Alliance to Labour)

<sup>20</sup> More information on this approach can be found in R. J. Johnston and A. Hay, 'On the Parameters of Uniform Swing in Single-Member Constituency Electoral Systems', *Environment and Planning A*, 14 (1982), 61–74, and in R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie, 'Using an Entropy-Maximising Procedure to Estimate Territorial Social Indicators: An Introduction and Illustration', *Social Indicators Research*, 27 (1992), 235–56.

TABLE 5 Multiple Regression Models of Estimated Flows of Votes in English Seats Won by the Conservatives in 1987 Where Labour Were Second

	C-C	C-L	C-Li	L-C	L-L	L-Li	A-C	A-L	A-Li
Margin 1987	-0.25	-0.10	*	*	*	*	*	*	0.40
Share 1987	0.86	0.03	*	-0.10	*	*	0.32	*	0.64
Con. spending	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lab. spending	*	0.03	*	-0.01	*	*	*	0.07	*
Lib. spending	*	-0.02	0.04	*	-0.07	0.06	-0.03	-0.08	0.14
Constant	47.3	*	*	*	81.2	*	9.89	27.3	*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.23	0.12	0.20	0.08	0.07	0.16	0.28	0.21

Note: Variables defined as in Table 4, except: (a) Share 1987: percentage share of vote won by destination party in 1987; (b) Margin 1987: the margin between the first-placed party and the destination party of the flow.

\* Insignificant at  $p = 0.05$ ; C = Conservative, L = Labour, Li = Liberal Democrats, A = Alliance parties (1987).

suggests such switches were not uncommon. They did not, however, appear to be linked with either the amount of ground Labour needed to make up on the Conservatives nor Labour's local strength (Labour share, 1987). What was significantly linked to this flow was the amount spent by the Liberal Democrats and Labour. Although the Liberal Democrats spent, on average, only 30 per cent of the legal maximum in these seats (Table 3), the more the Liberal Democrats spent the less likely their supporters were to desert them for second-placed Labour. This suggests even a modest campaign could help prevent tactical desertion. By contrast, the more Labour spent, the greater these flows. Local party spending, especially by the Liberal Democrats, also had an impact on other flows. Other things being equal, Liberal loyalty and flows to the Liberal Democrats were significantly boosted by local campaign spending. Liberal spending was also linked with lower rates of Labour loyalty in these seats. The lack of significant effects associated with Conservative spending is striking. The most likely explanation of this is that Conservative spending was uniformly high in these seats and is therefore unlikely to explain much of the variation in flows (see Table 3). However, this does not suggest that if the Conservatives had spent less in these seats they would not have suffered. As with any regression analysis, we cannot infer a relationship beyond the range of the data.

A clearer pattern emerges in seats where the Alliance was second to the Conservatives in 1987 (Table 6). The party's share of the vote in 1987 generally had a substantial beneficial impact for each party in terms of both loyalty and vote switching to that party. Marginality, however, appeared to have mixed effects. Flows between Labour and Conservative (both directions) and from the Alliance to Labour were negatively associated with the size of the Conservatives' lead over Labour. In other words, the closer Labour were to the Conservatives the more switching there was between the two parties and the more likely people were to switch from the Alliance to Labour. Given the large opinion poll lead of the Labour party over the Liberal Democrats in 1992, Labour may have been perceived as better placed to challenge the Conservatives in many of these seats, making a switch from the Alliance to Labour, where Labour were relatively well placed, consistent with tactical voting. Flows to the Liberals (and Liberal loyalty), however, were greater where the Conservatives' margin of victory was greater. The Liberals, it appeared, performed relatively well where the Conservatives were stronger.

More importantly, however, it was flows between the second- and third-placed parties which were most affected by the local campaign. The flows theoretically most likely to be affected by tactical voting in these seats were from Labour (in third place) to the Liberal Democrats in second. Whilst there were strong marginality and share-of-the-vote effects on both these flows, both Liberal Democrat and Labour spending also had a significant impact. Labour spending significantly reduced the leakage of votes to the Liberal Democrats, whilst Liberal Democrat spending had the opposite effect of increasing these flows. Furthermore, there is also likely to have been tactical switches from the Alliance to Labour in some seats because of Labour's favourable position in the opinion polls. Not surprisingly, therefore, this flow also appears to have been affected by local campaign spending by the two parties in question. As hypothesized, higher Labour spending was associated with larger flows to Labour and higher Liberal spending with lower flows. In addition to this, Liberal and Labour spending was positively associated with loyalty for the respective parties and negatively associated with the other. Again, Conservative spending appeared to be unrelated to the flow of the vote in these seats, though this may reflect uniformly high levels of expenditure (Table 3).

Table 7 shows the equivalent models for seats won by Labour in 1987 where the

TABLE 6 *Multiple Regression Models of Estimated Flows of Votes in English Seats Won by the Conservatives in 1987 Where the Alliance Were Second*

	C-C	C-L	C-Li	L-C	L-L	L-Li	A-C	A-L	A-Li
Margin 1987	*	-0.07	0.11	-0.07	*	0.56	*	-0.16	0.73
Share 1987	0.45	0.19	0.26	0.29	1.48	0.98	*	0.53	1.13
Con. spending	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lab. spending	0.2	0.01	-0.04	-0.01	0.07	-0.10	0.03	0.05	-0.13
Lib. spending	-0.05	-0.03	0.09	0.02	-0.18	0.17	-0.07	-0.10	0.24
Constant	56.7	7.3	*	-5.5	61.4	-27.9	16.7	18.7	*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.37	0.67	0.54	0.59	0.67	0.58	0.48	0.69	0.63

\*Insignificant at  $p = 0.05$ . Note: Variables defined as in Table 5.

TABLE 7 *Multiple Regression Models of Estimated Flows of Votes in English Seats Won by Labour in 1987 Where the Conservatives Were Second*

	C-C	C-L	C-Li	L-C	L-L	L-Li	A-C	A-L	A-Li
Margin 1987	-0.20	0.11	*	*	-0.30	*	0.08	*	*
Share 1987	1.33	0.03	*	0.10	0.51	*	0.46	0.30	*
Con. spending	*	*	-0.02	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lab. spending	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lib. spending	*	*	0.03	*	*	*	-0.03	*	*
Constant	29.7	12.4	*	*	66.3	5.8	*	18.1	45.2
R <sup>2</sup>	0.68	0.27	0.06	0.58	0.18	0.04	0.62	0.07	0.03

\*Insignificant at  $p = 0.05$ . Note: Variables defined as in Table 5.

Conservatives were second. Here we find the marginality of the seat was related to Conservative and Labour loyalty and to a lesser extent to Conservative–Labour and Alliance–Conservative flows. Again, a party's 1987 share was generally associated with higher flows to that party and higher loyalty, although it was not significant for flows to the Liberal Democrats who were in third place. Spending had a less marked effect in these seats than elsewhere. However, it was the flows between the Alliance and the Conservatives which offered the most opportunity for tactical voting in these seats, and those flows were affected by spending. There was a slight increase in switches from the Conservatives to the Liberal Democrats where they spent more and slightly less where the Conservatives spent more. Similarly, Liberal spending was associated with a slightly lower rate of defection of erstwhile Alliance voters to the Conservatives.

These analyses provide evidence that strong campaigning, as measured by campaign spending, can both win over potential tactical voters from other parties and persuade supporters not to switch to other parties. In particular, spending appeared to have the biggest impact where the opportunity for tactical voting was greatest, but in many situations had little or no impact at all. This suggests that, in certain situations, running a strong campaign may have been an important factor in persuading people to make tactical switches between parties in second and third place, perhaps by convincing the local electorate that their party was best placed to unseat the incumbent. This was most evident where those parties were Labour and the Liberal Democrats, suggesting that, whilst the Conservatives may or may not have been the recipients of tactical votes, it was the opposition parties which were most likely to encourage tactical switching through competitive campaigning. This is consistent with the common (but not necessarily correct) perception that tactical voting was most likely to be directed against the Conservatives. However, we can only establish a direct link between tactical voting and spending using individual survey data. It is to these data we now turn.

#### *Campaign Spending and Tactical Voting: Individual Level Analyses*

The preceding analyses have provided evidence that parties spend tactically and that voters behave in a manner consistent with the tactical voter hypotheses. It has also been shown that party spending can have a significant impact on the flow-of-the-vote even after controlling for the tactical situation in each seat. This suggests that a party's campaign encourages voters to switch to that party either for non-tactical reasons or because a strong campaign may encourage voters to believe that a vote for that party is tactically advantageous. However, it falls short of making a concrete link between the level of local party spending and the conscious decision to vote tactically. It is possible to address the impact of the latter directly, using individual level data from the 1992 British Election Survey (cross-section). Using these data, we are able to make the direct link between rational tactical spending and rational tactical voting.

For the following analyses, we follow Evans' definition of a tactical voter.<sup>21</sup> Tactical voters were considered to be those saying that they really preferred another party plus those who volunteered 'other' reasons which indicated tactical motivations. Respondents giving tactical motivations for their choice of party were asked which party they really preferred. If this was the same as the party they claimed to have voted for, they were not considered to be genuine tactical voters, and they were omitted from the tactical

<sup>21</sup> Evans, 'Tactical Voting and Labour's Prospects'.

voter category. Tactical voters made up between 6 per cent and 9 per cent of all voters in 1992 and the Conservatives were the only net gainers from tactical voting.<sup>22</sup> What is of interest here, however, is not the net effect of tactical voting on the swing, but the degree to which parties can attract tactical voters through their local campaigns. Table 8 shows two sets of logit models. The first set examines the factors affecting the probability of voting tactically against one's preferred party. The second set examines the recruitment of tactical voters from the ranks of the other parties. The models estimate the independent effects of the respondent's social class and party identification; the tactical situation in the seat in which he or she lived; and the amount spent by each party in their local campaign on desertion from and recruitment to each of the major parties. Desertion is defined as the loss of 'preferrers' through tactical voting and recruitment the winning of tactical votes from other parties. The population base for the desertion model is all voters 'preferring' the party in question and the dependent variable is whether or not they vote tactically for a different party. The population base for the recruitment model is all voters not 'preferring' party, and the dependent variable is whether or not they voted for them tactically. The independent variables were entered simultaneously, but only those significant to a 95 per cent confidence level are reported.

Neither the desertion nor the recruitment models provide a very good fit to the data, which, given the small number of tactical voters and the highly complex nature of the decision to vote tactically, is not surprising. However, all the models provide a significant improvement in chi-squared (on a model containing only the constant) and some important variations are apparent. The coefficients represent the increase (or decrease) in odds of a preferrer of the party in question voting tactically for another party for each unit increase in the explanatory variable. Values of less than unity suggest that an increase in the independent variable is associated with a decrease in the probability of the event occurring. For the categorical variables (all those but margin and spending), this is a one-off increase, or the odds ratio of being a deserter for those belonging to any group compared to the baseline category. Probabilities of greater than one mean that the group in question are more likely than the baseline category to desert or be recruited, whilst values below one suggest that group is relatively less likely to do so.

Looking first at the desertion models, Table 8 shows that Conservative *identifiers* are much more likely than non-identifiers to vote tactically against either Labour or the Liberal Democrats even though they expressed a *preference* for one of those parties. Similarly, Liberal Democrat identifiers are much more likely to switch from Labour than non-identifiers and less likely to desert their own party. The relationship between party identification and preference raises some questions over the definition of tactical voting: it could be argued that if a voter identifies with a party and subsequently votes for them, then this should not be considered a tactical vote even if a tactical motivation is expressed. However, we may consider this a legitimate tactical vote if we adopt the strict interpretation of party identification as a long-standing sense of attachment as opposed to a *preference* at any fixed point in time.

The tactical situation also appears to have some impact on desertion from both the Conservatives and Labour. In these models the variable margin measures the percentage point by which the preferred party trails the winning party. The further the preferred party was from winning the seat in 1987, the greater the probability of desertion from that party. This is consistent with the flow models reported above. The models also

<sup>22</sup> Evans, 'Tactical Voting and Labour's Prospects'.

TABLE 8 *Tactical Desertion and Recruitment: Logit Models of Party Preferences Voting Tactically for Another Party in England: Odds Ratios (Exp. B)*

	Desertion from:			Recruitment to:		
	Conservatives	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Conservatives	Labour	Liberal Democrats
Conservative identification†	*	5.49	4.39	6.13	0.29	0.22
Labour identification†	*	*	*	0.09	2.72	*
Lib. Dem. identification†	*	83.35	0.30	*	*	3.60
Margin‡	1.07	1.05	*	*	*	*
Con. spending %§	*	*	1.03	1.02	*	*
Lab. spending %§	1.02	*	*	*	*	0.99
Lib. spending %§	*	1.04	0.98	*	*	1.02
Salariat¶	*	*	*	*	0.33	*
Routine non-man.¶	*	*	*	*	*	*
Foremen and technical¶	*	*	*	*	*	*
Skilled manual¶	*	*	*	*	*	*
Model chi <sup>2</sup> (12df)	30.830	155.567	64.481	76.940	50.665	79.410

Notes: Population base for desertion models is 'preferers' of each party. Dependent variable is 1 if person voted tactically for a different party and 0 otherwise. Base for recruitment models is all persons *not* preferring the party in question. The dependent variable for these models takes a value of 1 if person voted (tactically) for the party and 0 otherwise.

Party preference is defined as party voted for, except where respondent claimed to have voted tactically because own party had no chance. These respondents are classed according to their preferred party. Other tactical voters cannot be attributed a preference. Upper figures are row totals, lower figures are column totals.

\*Insignificant at  $p = 0.05$ .

†Respondents' party identification (compared to baseline category, no party identification);

‡The percentage by which the party *trailed* the winning party (zero if the party in question won in 1987) in the desertion model; in the recruitment model, the percentage margin of victory or defeat;

§The amount spent by each party locally as percentage of legal maximum.

¶Social class of respondent (compared to baseline category, working class).



control for the social class of the respondent, but this has no significant impact. However, even after controlling for party identification, the marginality of the seat and social class, in some instances party spending does affect the probability of tactical desertion. The more the Labour party spent in a constituency, the greater the probability of Conservative preferers voting for someone else, whilst the more the Conservatives spent, the greater the probability of Liberal preferers voting tactically. Similarly, Liberal spending was associated with significantly higher levels of desertion from Labour and lower levels of desertion by their own supporters.

Further evidence for the relationship between tactical voting and spending is provided by the recruitment models. These look not at the loss of tactical voters to other parties, but to the gaining of votes from preferers of *other parties* for tactical reasons. The models show that identifiers of a party who claimed to have voted tactically and expressed a preference for a different party were much more likely than anyone else to return (for tactical reasons) to the party with which they identified. Thus of all voters not 'preferring' the Conservatives in 1992, Conservative identifiers were over six times more likely actually to vote for the Conservatives for tactical reasons than people with no party identification. Similarly, Labour and Liberal Democrat identifiers were more likely to return home to their respective parties. Conversely, Conservative identifiers were less likely to be recruited by Labour or the Liberal Democrats and Labour identifiers were much less likely to be recruited by the Conservatives. In these models marginality was measured in both directions (since a party with a narrow majority might just as well be the recipient of tactical votes than one narrowly behind) but had no significant affect on recruitment. Class was insignificant with the exception that Labour were less likely to recruit tactical voters from the salariat than from the working class. Having controlled for these other factors, it was found that spending only encouraged the recruitment of tactical voters in a limited number of circumstances. First, the more the Conservatives spent, the more likely people were to switch from their preferred party to the Conservatives. Secondly, the more the Liberal Democrats spent, the more likely they were to recruit tactical voters and, thirdly, the more Labour spent, the less likely Liberal Democrat recruitment became.

These findings are consistent with the flow models presented above, lending credence to the hypothesized links between tactical voting and campaign spending. Not only did parties spend tactically, but they were rewarded for their efforts by tactical voters. However, the relatively small numbers of tactical voters in the electorate and the marginal role of campaign spending in the context of the individual voting decision meant that the magnitude of these effects was small. Given the correct tactical context the major parties were able to attract a small number of extra tactical votes by creating a climate of confidence through a vigorous local campaign. This may not be enough to alter the party's national share of the vote but campaigning targeted at tactical voters could well affect the outcome of important marginal seats.