

CONSTITUENCY CAMPAIGNING IN SCOTLAND AT THE 2001 GENERAL ELECTION

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Constituency campaigning is a traditional and familiar aspect of general elections in Britain. In the weeks leading up to the election, posters are displayed, candidates 'press the flesh', leaflets are handed out in the street or delivered to voters' homes, party workers canvass the electorate and so on. On polling day itself the parties mount 'get out the vote' operations. Until the 1990s, however, academics and commentators paid little attention to local campaigning (see, for example, Kavanagh, 1995) and even the parties themselves appeared more concerned to ensure that their election broadcasts were well-produced, that leading figures performed well on television and that they had an effective media strategy than they were with the quality of campaigning on the ground.

Over the last decade, however, there has been a renewal of interest in, and revaluation of, the impact of constituency campaigning on election outcomes. The parties as a whole have taken constituency campaigning much more seriously. In parallel, a significant 'revisionist' literature has emerged arguing that constituency campaigning has become much more sophisticated and that variations in the effectiveness and intensity of constituency campaigning gave rise to variations in party performance. The better the local campaign, the better the local result (see, for example, Denver and Hands, 1997; Denver

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et al., 2002; Pattie, Johnston and Fieldhouse, 1995; Whiteley and Seyd, 1994).

Thus far this literature has focussed entirely on Britain as a whole. This is understandable but it means that distinctive elements of electoral politics and of the electoral context in Scotland are effectively ignored. Most obviously, perhaps, little attention has been paid to SNP campaigning even although the SNP, in terms of vote share, has been the second party in Scotland in the last two general elections. Moreover, the significant presence of the SNP means that patterns of party competition at constituency level are more varied and more complicated than is the case in most English seats. In addition, campaigning is likely to be affected by the fact that a much larger proportion of Scottish constituencies (35 per cent) are rural seats than is the case in England (16 per cent). The electoral status of Scottish seats, a factor which critically affects the strength of campaigns, also differs markedly from those in England. There are proportionately more safe Labour seats, for example, and in 2001, while over a quarter of the constituencies in England were 'targeted' by Labour, only eight per cent of Scottish seats were on the UK target list. On the other hand, of course, there are no safe Conservative seats in Scotland. Finally, accounts of the parties' strategies in respect of constituency campaigning tend to concentrate on the strategies of the British-wide parties as laid down by their London headquarters. In practice, however, all of the parties devolve considerable autonomy to their Scottish headquarters and, as we shall see, specifically Scottish strategies are developed which deviate from the line determined in London. In part, this reflects the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. In Westminster elections the parties in Scotland now take the experience of the last round of Scottish Parliament elections into consideration and also have in mind plans for campaigning in the next round.

PARTY STRATEGIES FOR CONSTITUENCY CAMPAIGNING IN 2001

Labour

Labour's strategy in respect of constituency campaigning in 2001, across Britain as a whole, was called 'Operation Turnout'. Although the party consistently led the Conservatives in opinion polls, Labour had been given something of a jolt by the results of the 1999 European Parliament election in

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which, on a turnout of 23 per cent, they obtained only 28 per cent of the votes – more than seven points behind the Conservatives. In addition, in the Scottish Parliament election Labour support slumped in traditional strongholds. The main problem facing the party, therefore, was thought to be apathy among its own supporters. So Operation Turnout, as the name suggests, focused mainly on rebuilding Labour support and getting supporters to the polls.

There were three distinct phases to the strategy. The first, begun more than a year before the election, involved identifying target voters. Most of this was done by telephone, initially by volunteers but later by paid employees from a national call centre in North Shields, using a standard five-question script. The main focus subsequently was to be upon 'weak Labour' voters – 'those who vote Labour but do not vote at every election' – and first-time voters. Phase two of Operation Turnout was about 'building relationships and delivering the message'. The emphasis was placed on local activity in order to keep in touch with the target voters. Finally, of course, relevant voters had to be persuaded to vote on polling day. Although any constituency could opt in to Operation Turnout, in practice attention was focused on 148 'priority' seats – all but two of which had been gained in 1997.

The Scottish Labour party's organisational effort – directed by general secretary Lesley Quinn – fitted into this overall strategy. The party had gained six seats in Scotland in 1997 (in comparison with the 'notional' results for 1992 based on the new constituency boundaries) and these became targets (or 'strategic seats' as they were known in Scotland) for the 2001 campaign. In addition, however, the Scottish party added a further two seats to the list. One was certainly Ayr – retained by Labour in 1997 (again on the basis of notional results in 1992) but lost to the Tories in a Scottish Parliament by-election in March 2000. The identity of the other remains unclear but it could well have been Dundee West which had been very nearly lost to the SNP in the Scottish Parliament election.

Each strategic seat had a campaign organiser in place (all but one managed directly from Glasgow) months before the election. The Glasgow headquarters also installed a phone bank – staffed by volunteers – dedicated to contacting voters in the strategic seats. This telephone canvassing was supplemented by work done by the constituencies themselves – each strategic seat typically had a phone bank containing four or five lines. Labour's main innovation in the election was the distribution of videos on a large scale, a

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technique that had first been used in the Falkirk West by-election in December 2000. In 2001 five of the key seats received a video to distribute. This lasted about ten minutes and featured a common section presented by the actor Tony Robinson and a section featuring the local Labour candidate. The videos were sent out on the last weekend of the campaign and were distributed by local workers to large households (so as to get multiple viewers), weak Labour supporters, and areas where turnout was predicted to be low. In terms of workers on the ground, party officials were under no illusion that they could rely on the same numbers that they had enjoyed in the 1997 campaign. In that election, there was a system for directing activists to key constituencies but no such organised system operated in 2001. Activists were merely encouraged to work in the more important constituencies.

Strategic seats, and Labour's campaign generally, received considerable help from trade unions in Scotland, co-ordinated through what was known as the Scottish Trade Union Labour Political Committee (STULPC), consisting of the regional secretaries of unions affiliated to the Labour Party. As well as having a Trade Union Liaison Officer in each of the strategic seats, around eight union officials were seconded to the party's headquarters in Glasgow and worked with the party's full-time staff in a variety of campaign-related roles.

Constituency campaigning is not just about target seats, however. Campaigns in other seats also have to be planned, organised and serviced by headquarters. In 2001 all Scottish constituency parties were offered a central print scheme, which reduced costs for local parties and allowed the development of a uniform corporate image in terms of the designs of the leaflets and the colours used. Unlike in 1997 – when leaflets normally carried a general message – much material in 2001 was specific to the local candidate and tailored to local issues. This change arose from work done by the party in the Falkirk West by-election in which it had become clear that the party had to have a greater local focus in their literature. Party headquarters also tried to assist non-strategic seats in other ways. Some financial resources were diverted from seats that were already relatively well-endowed to those that were struggling, and Scottish ministers visited some of the seats where the party was in a relatively weak position. These visits, it was thought, would create favourable publicity in the local press and show that the party was not ignoring any constituencies.

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SNP

The 2001 general election presented the SNP with a number of problems in relation to campaigning. The party's main focus was clearly now the Scottish Parliament and some in the party even suggested that it should not contest Westminster seats. With five of the SNP's six Westminster MPs standing down to concentrate on the Scottish Parliament, opponents could argue that the SNP were not taking the contest seriously and were an irrelevance. As a result, the leadership's first campaign task was to convince activists and electors alike that the party still considered the House of Commons important. In addition, the party had to decide whether to concentrate on winning seats in the election or on preparing the ground for the next Scottish Parliament elections.

As with the other parties, the necessity of concentrating resources in key constituencies under the first-past-the-post electoral system is well understood by national party officials. Allison Hunter directed the SNP's campaigns and a national strategy was worked out which involved assigning seats to different levels of priority for central assistance. Although the SNP does not refer to 'target' seats, a number of key constituencies were identified, largely on the basis of results in the 1999 Scottish Parliament election and the work done on the ground since then. Two of their Westminster seats – Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, and Perth – were perceived to be vulnerable but the other four seats that the party held were considered relatively safe and did not receive additional help from the centre. Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber, where the SNP were second to Labour at the 1997 general election but had won in the Scottish Parliament election, was also a key target. In addition, Dundee East, Dundee West and Aberdeen North – seats the SNP came close to winning from Labour in 1999 – were considered top priorities, as was Argyll and Bute (where the incumbent Liberal Democrat MP was standing down). It is worth noting that in 2001 the SNP effectively gave up on some seats that had been targeted in previous general elections campaigns (such as Ochil, Glasgow Govan and Kilmarnock and Loudon). The reasoning was that the party had campaigned hard in these seats for some time but to no avail.

Identifying target or priority seats is one thing, making special campaign efforts in them is another. Highly professional, centrally-directed campaigns cost a lot and the SNP generally lack the resources to do very much from the centre. In 2001, in addition, resources had been depleted by the effort put into

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the 1999 Scottish Parliament election. The 2001 election budget was around £300,000, and out of that a new headquarters in Edinburgh had to be paid for, so that only limited support from the centre for their target constituencies could be provided. There was no telephone canvassing from the party headquarters, for example, although financial assistance was given to constituencies to do their own telephone canvassing. The centre also offered support in the training of key campaign workers (as all parties do) and sent out a direct mail letter from SNP leader John Swinney, with a booklet encapsulating the party's message, to those voters identified as possible SNP supporters in some constituencies. Party headquarters also provided an election address – with a national message on one side and space for local issues on the other – for around 30 to 40 candidates but this is not much more than routine servicing of constituency campaigns. On the whole, the centre's input into SNP constituency campaigns was limited.

Conservatives

As with Labour, the Conservative strategy vis-à-vis constituency campaigning was determined by party headquarters in London. A total of 180 target seats were identified – all of them seats in which the party was challenging the incumbent. It seems clear, however, that some of the party's more distant prospects were placed on the target list more in hope than expectation and that in practice attention was increasingly concentrated on a smaller number, especially since campaign polls failed to detect any marked shift in favour of the Conservatives.

The Scottish Conservative party is relatively independent of Central Office but made a series of agreements with London in relation to finance, the provision of literature, printing and so on. Nonetheless, the Scottish campaign was largely organised from Edinburgh under Simon Turner, Scottish campaigns director. There were 13 Scottish seats on the original target list but efforts were directed to only seven or eight of them including Edinburgh Pentlands, Ayr, Perth, and Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. Eastwood was certainly on the original list but Scottish Conservative officials quickly came to the conclusion that it could not be regained.

Traditionally, local Conservative Associations are left to get on with campaigning without too much direction or interference from party headquarters and there is no doubt that in some of the target seats there were very impressive campaigns. In Edinburgh Pentlands, for example, a leaflet

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went out about once a fortnight from January 2001 and in the first 48 hours after the election was called a letter from the candidate (Malcolm Rifkind) was delivered to every household. On the other hand, there is not very much that Scottish headquarters itself can do, apart from offering advice and encouragement. A small telephone bank was installed in the Edinburgh office in October 2000, however, and local associations were encouraged to set up their own telephone banks where possible. There was also an attempt to persuade volunteers to work in key seats on the first day of the campaign, the weekend before the poll and on polling day itself. In the past, the Conservatives have found it difficult to flood key seats in this way but officials believed that some progress was made in this respect in 2001. For the most part, however, direct extra assistance for target seats, in the form of centrally-designed, high quality leaflets and posters (with a distinctively Scottish message) and direct mail, came from Central Office in London rather than Edinburgh. In part this simply reflects the parlous electoral and organisational position of the party in Scotland which counteracts its autonomy in the overall party structure.

Liberal Democrats

Of the three British-wide parties, the Liberal Democrats formally have the most devolved structure. In most matters the Scottish Liberal Democrats are virtually an independent party. For the 2001 election, however, there was close liaison between the Scottish campaigns director, Derek Barrie, who was in charge of target seats, and the London campaigns department. In addition, central funding for the constituency campaigns came from the federal party. As well as being the most devolved, however, they are also the poorest party and have only a small headquarters staff.

The Liberal Democrats are past masters in the art of targeting. That is how they have gradually built up their representation in Parliament. In 2001, however, they faced problems in this respect. Their successes in 1997 meant that they had more seats (46) to defend than ever before and, since most Liberal Democrat seats had originally been won by highly effective campaigning, almost all of them could be conceived of as target constituencies. In addition, party officials had come to realise that targeting only seats that are winnable in the short term is a limited strategy, given that there are relatively few of these. In the longer term it is important to boost support elsewhere so that in time more and more seats become winnable. Accordingly, the Liberal Democrats adopted a system of 'layered targeting'

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which involved, as it were, a 'premier league' and a 'first division' of constituencies.

At UK level, the Liberal Democrats are the least open of the parties when it comes to providing information about their targeting strategy, but in Scotland it seems clear that nine of the seats held (all except Orkney and Shetland) were regarded as targets together with Aberdeen South (which the party had won in the Scottish Parliament election), Edinburgh South (a hope for the future), and Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber.

Once again resources severely limit what Liberal Democrat Scottish headquarters can do with respect to constituency campaigning beyond training, routine servicing and disseminating best practice. In a new development for the party, however, a small telephone bank was installed in the party's Edinburgh headquarters staffed by paid employees who started work around three months before the election. All telephone canvassing was focused on the most marginal constituencies. Extra financial help for targets came from London rather than Edinburgh, however.

The advent of the Scottish Parliament provided a new context for constituency campaigning in the general election. As we have seen, this initially created difficulties for the SNP but Labour took advantage of the fact that it had another layer of ministers to visit constituencies. In addition, however, there was a potential boon for all parties which was mentioned in interviews by some party officials but not all. This arises from the fact that members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) have been able to appoint staff to work for them. In the general election these employees could be diverted (whether on paid leave or not) to work in the campaign. Since most would be experienced full-timers, this could have had an impact on the quality and effectiveness of at least some constituency campaigns.

CONSTITUENCY CAMPAIGNING IN 2001

On the basis of surveys of election agents at the last three general elections, Denver and Hands have developed various indexes measuring the intensity of the campaigns fought by the parties in constituencies (see Denver et al., 2002). When the most recent index (for details see Appendix) is computed for the 2001 election, on the basis of all responses across Britain, the mean scores for each party in Scotland, as compared with England and Wales, were

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as shown in Table 1. On this index, a campaign of average intensity scores 100.

The overall scores for each nation show that the strongest constituency campaigns were fought in England (with a score of 102) while the average scores for Scotland (91) and Wales (89) were considerably below the mean of 100 for Great Britain as a whole. As suggested above, relatively weak campaigning in Scotland may be a function of geography and also the fact that proportionately there are many more safe Labour seats in Scotland. In England there were simply more potential gains to be made from strong campaigning. The strongest campaigns of all were fought by the Conservatives in England (a score of 119) but in Scotland the strongest campaigns were mounted by Labour (104) with the SNP in second place (91) although still well below the British average. The Scottish Conservatives had relatively weak campaigns (88) while the Liberal Democrats had, on average, the weakest of all (70).

Table 1
Mean Overall Campaign Intensity by Party and Nation

	Scotland	England	Wales	Great Britain
Conservative	88	119	88	114
Labour	104	109	111	108
Liberal Democrats	70	82	69	80
SNP	91	-	-	91
Plaid Cymru	-	-	88	88
Overall	91	102	89	100

Note: for the numbers of cases on which these figures are based see Appendix.

For the purposes of this article, however, we have recalculated the index of campaign intensity on the basis of responses from Scottish constituencies only. Of the 72 Scottish seats, responses were obtained from 42 Conservative agents, 46 Labour, 48 Liberal Democrat and 52 SNP, giving an overall

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response rate of 65.7 per cent. Subsequent analysis is based on these responses.

A simple indicator of the amount of campaigning going on in a constituency is the number of party workers during the campaign and on polling day. Although campaigning has been modernised through the use of computers and telephones, parties still need volunteers on the ground to deliver leaflets, canvass, check off people as they vote and knock up the tally. Table 2 shows the mean numbers of party workers involved on a typical campaign day and on polling day in constituencies categorised on the basis of their target status for each party.

Considering campaign workers first, all parties had most in their target seats and (with the exception of the Liberal Democrats) the smallest number in their weakest seats (not held, not targeted). The Conservatives had by far the most campaign volunteers in target seats (and overall), which suggests that their organisational weakness should not be exaggerated. The SNP only just managed to field more workers in their targets than in seats that they held whereas the Liberal Democrats, while having fewest workers overall, managed to concentrate them where it mattered. The same is true of Liberal Democrat polling day workers. In this case, however, the SNP had more volunteers in their safe seats than in targets. Overall, Labour had most people on the ground on polling day but the Conservatives had most in their target seats.

Table 2
Mean Number of Campaign and Polling Day Workers

	Non-Target Held	Target	Non-Target Not Held	All
<i>Campaign Workers</i>				
Conservative	-	236	25	50
Labour	26	79	15	30
Lib Dem	6	42	9	14
SNP	33	35	15	18

Polling Day Workers

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Conservative	-	190	24	44
Labour	61	131	17	60
Lib Dem	2	65	10	19
SNP	103	60	31	38

Note: The numbers on which the figures here and in the relevant part of Table 3 are based are: for non-target held, Labour 32, Liberal Democrats 1, SNP 4; for targets Conservative 5, Labour 5, Liberal Democrats 8 and SNP 3; for non-targets not held Conservative 37, Labour 9, Liberal Democrats 39 and SNP 45.

We asked election agents in our survey whether they received volunteers from other constituencies on polling day or sent volunteers to work in other seats. Of the five Conservative target seats in our survey, four reported that activists from other constituencies helped on polling day. The equivalent figures for the other parties were: three of Labour's five targets; two out of eight Liberal Democrat targets and none of the SNP targets. From the other perspective, 13 of 37 Conservative non-target constituencies sent volunteers to key seats, as did 10 of 40 Labour non-targets and 10 of 40 Liberal Democrat non-targets. Only two of 47 SNP non-targets sent volunteers elsewhere, however. The Conservatives, it appears, were the most successful party in moving workers to key constituencies, which is something of a feat given the traditional reluctance of Conservative activists to work outside their own area. On the other hand, this is an aspect of constituency campaigning where the SNP appears to have a lot to learn.

There is much more to constituency campaigning than having workers on the ground, of course. The numbers of workers tell us nothing, for example, about the extent of telephone canvassing, now considered a key campaign technique. For a fuller measure of campaign intensity and effort we return to the index of campaigning mentioned above but this time present the results which are obtained when only Scottish constituencies are analysed. In Table 3 we show figures for overall campaign strength for each party in different types of seat.

The first row shows the scores for all constituencies and it can be seen that, overall, Labour had the strongest constituency campaigns in Scotland in 2001, closely followed by the SNP. Conservative campaigns were just below average for the country as a whole but the Liberal Democrats' campaigns were weak. The second part of the table shows that, despite the undoubted

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difficulties created by geography, Scottish campaigns tended, on the whole, to be stronger in rural areas. Labour was strongest in very urban areas – although above average everywhere – whereas the Conservatives clearly fought their strongest campaigns in rural areas and the SNP were somewhat stronger in rural constituencies than in other types of seats. Also shown in the table are campaign strength scores in constituencies won by the different parties in 1997. Unsurprisingly, Labour had its strongest campaigns – and stronger than those of any other party – in seats that it already held. In contrast, Liberal Democrat seats witnessed keen three-way battles involving the Liberal Democrats themselves, the Conservatives and the SNP. In SNP seats, however, it appears that the greatest efforts were put in by the Conservatives and the SNP (although we have only one Conservative response from an SNP-held seat).

The most important part of the table relates to the target status of constituencies. As we have already seen, targeting is the name of the game as far as modern constituency campaigns are concerned. All parties attempt to target effort and resources into a relatively small number of key seats which they think they have a chance of winning or, indeed, losing. Most seats are either safe or hopeless for one party or another (mostly Labour in Scotland) and there is, therefore, little to be gained from campaigning strongly in these seats. The aim is to mount the best possible campaigns in the constituencies where this might make a difference to the outcome.

Table 3
Campaign intensity scores (Scotland)

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP	All
All	97	114	78	110	100
Very urban	86	128	68	114	103
Mainly urban	70	102	73	105	88
Mixed	96	116	88	102	97
Rural	116	114	78	118	106
<i>Winner 1997</i>					
Labour	91	123	69	105	98

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Liberal Democrat	122	84	118	115	112
SNP	129	70	74	142	99
<i>Target status</i>					
Held not target	-	116	88	140	118
Target	173	168	118	147	145
Not held not target	87	78	69	105	87

Note: for the numbers on which figures for the urban-rural and 1997 winner categorisations are based see Appendix.

This aim was achieved by the Conservatives, Labour and the Liberal Democrats whose campaigns in target seats were clearly stronger, on average, than in others. Indeed, the Conservatives' campaigns in their target seats were the strongest of all – another reminder that while they may be organisationally weak across much of the country they can mount very powerful campaigns in particular seats. On the other hand, although Liberal Democrat campaigns were well targeted, they were not particularly strong. The SNP also had their weakest campaigns in their poorest prospects, but their target seat campaigns were not very much stronger than those in seats that they held but were in little danger of losing. It should be noted, however, that in five of the six SNP-held seats incumbent MPs stood down and it may have been thought that this made some apparently safe constituencies more vulnerable. Nonetheless, while the SNP could be commended for fighting above-average campaigns in all types of seat and were reasonably strong in their targets, a more rational approach, given the realities of first-past-the-post, would seek to divert further resources from poor prospects and strongholds into critical seats. This is easier said than done. Local SNP activists and candidates perhaps need to be persuaded that more focused campaigning is necessary and desirable.

THE ELECTORAL IMPACT OF CONSTITUENCY CAMPAIGNING IN SCOTLAND

It is clear, then, that the intensity or strength of campaigning varies sharply across constituencies. Across individual Scottish constituencies the index of campaigning for the Conservatives ranged from 52 to 193 (the strongest campaign of all). For Labour the range was from 61 to 191, for the Liberal Democrats 47 (the weakest of all) to 149 and for the SNP from 55 to 160. The question to be considered is whether these sorts of variations are associated with variations in the electoral performance of the party concerned. Across British constituencies as a whole in 2001, for all three British-wide parties, variations in campaign strength were significantly associated with variations in electoral performance (see Denver et al., 2002). The better the constituency campaign, the better the party's performance. Here we consider the question in relation to variations within Scotland and include the SNP in the analysis.

Analysing the electoral impact of variations in campaigning is not straightforward. Indeed, it involves some quite complicated statistics. Without going into technical details, we have undertaken a series of regression analyses in which the share of the electorate obtained in 2001 by the relevant party is the dependent variable with share obtained in 1997, personal incumbency and score on the campaigning index as the independent variables. The results tell us what difference campaigning made to the share of the electorate obtained once share in 1997 and the effects of candidates being incumbent MPs are taken into account. The coefficients for the campaigning index are shown in Table 4.

It should be said that the level of statistical significance found in analyses of this kind depends partly on the numbers of cases involved and, with only 42 to 52 cases here, statistically significant effects in Scotland alone will inevitably be rarer than in analyses involving all British constituencies, for which our numbers vary between 374 and 442. Nonetheless, the regression results show that in Scotland the level of campaigning undertaken by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats was positively and significantly associated with variations in their electoral performance. The better their campaigns, the better was their performance. The effects of Labour and SNP campaigning were much less marked (and not statistically significant) but

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were nonetheless in the expected direction – stronger campaigns were associated with better results.

Table 4
Campaign Intensity (Scottish) and party performance

	Con	Lab	Lib Dem	SNP
Campaign Intensity Index	3.29	0.51	3.32	1.37

Notes: The figures shown are unstandardised regression coefficients. Statistically significant coefficients ($p < 0.05$) are printed in bold. For ease of presentation the coefficients have been multiplied by 100. Numbers of cases are 42 Conservative, 46 Labour, 48 Liberal Democrat and 52 SNP

To give some more straightforward idea of the size of the effects that we are talking about, the coefficient for Conservative campaigning implies that, having taken account of their performance in 1997, a campaign typical of their weakest fifth would have increased their share of the electorate in 2001 by 1.8 percentage points while one typical of their strongest fifth would have increased their share by 5.3 percentage points. The respective figures for the Liberal Democrats (having also taken account of incumbency) are 1.7 points and 4.0 points. Given that they refer to shares of the electorate (rather than of votes) these figures suggest that campaigning by these two parties importantly affected their relative performance in Scottish constituencies.

Why did variations in Labour and SNP campaigning strength make no significant difference to their performances? It should be emphasised, first, that constituency campaigning is only one of many factors affecting election results. Voters are obviously influenced by the broader context of elections – party leaders, issues, party images and so on. There are national trends and tides, and constituency campaigning can usually only serve to stem or accentuate them in particular instances. Labour's strategy in 2001 was defensive – simply to hold what they had gained in 1997 and this they did. It could be that their performance in 1997 (itself aided by highly targeted constituency campaigning) was such that it was difficult to make further progress. The fact that variations in constituency campaigning in 2001 did not make for variations in performance as compared with 1997 may itself be

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seen as something of a triumph. The success of 1997 was simply repeated. On the other hand, the national tide was clearly against the SNP in the 2001 election and we might have expected effective campaigning at local level to stem the tide significantly in particular areas. As we have seen, however, the SNP campaign was not very effectively targeted. It is striking that the two parties whose campaigning appeared to pay off did not campaign on a broad front. In many constituencies the Liberal Democrats put up what are effectively 'paper' candidates – they submit nomination papers and then disappear to campaign elsewhere, returning (if at all) only for the declaration of the result. Similarly, the Conservatives are almost non-existent in a large number of constituencies. What both parties do is pour resources into a small number of seats. The pay-off for the Liberal Democrats is clear – they hold ten Scottish seats with 16.3 per cent of the vote. The pay-off for the Conservatives is less obvious – they won only one seat. Our analysis suggests, however, that they kept themselves more in contention in the other seats where they campaigned strongly than would have been the case otherwise.

CONCLUSION

The different context in which elections in Scotland are fought does make a difference to the pattern of constituency campaigning. Targeting strategies reflected both the constituency results of the first Scottish Parliament elections in 1999 and the plans of the parties for the next round due in 2003. Unsurprisingly, Labour and the SNP have the strongest campaigns overall but, because there are relatively few seats where they have a hope of winning (proportionately much fewer than in England), the Conservatives campaigned very strongly (outscoring Labour) in their targets. Liberal Democrat campaigning in Scotland is similar to the pattern in the rest of Britain, however, again being heavily concentrated in a few seats and very weak elsewhere. In all cases, however, stronger campaigning was associated with stronger electoral performances (albeit not significantly in the case of Labour and the SNP) and this is further evidence that constituency campaigning makes a difference – in Scotland as elsewhere.

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APPENDIX

Index of Campaign Intensity

The index of campaign intensity is derived from a principal components analysis of data from our survey of election agents relating to nine dimensions of campaigning – preparation, organisation, manpower, canvassing, leafleting, direct mail, use of computers, use of telephones and the polling day operation. Factor scores generated by the analysis for each case are used as a standardised campaign strength score with an overall mean of zero. In Tables 1 and 3 index scores have been converted to a mean of 100.

Numbers of Cases in Tables

The numbers on which the figures in Table 1 are based are as follows:

Scotland: Conservative 42; Labour 46; Liberal Democrat 48; SNP 52.

England: Conservative 315; Labour 368; Liberal Democrat 359.

Wales: Conservative 18; Labour 29; Liberal Democrat 25; Plaid Cymru 27.

In Table 3 the numbers involved in the urban-rural and 1997 winner categorisations are:

Very urban: Conservative 6; Labour 10; Liberal Democrat 7; SNP 9.

Mainly urban: Conservative 6; Labour 6; Liberal Democrat 4; SNP 7.

Mixed: Conservative 17; Labour 16; Liberal Democrat 17; SNP 17.

Rural: Conservative 13; Labour 14; Liberal Democrat 20; SNP 19.

Labour held: Conservative 34; Labour 37; Liberal Democrat 35; SNP 38.

Liberal Democrat held: Conservative 7; Labour 5; Liberal Democrat 8; SNP 9.

SNP held: Conservative 1; Labour 4; Liberal Democrat 5; SNP 5.

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