Enfranchisement, malapportionment, and electoral responsiveness in Great Britain, 1832-1868

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Abstract

This paper examines why after 35 years of repeatedly rejecting the secret ballot, the British House of Commons enacted it with the Ballot Act of 1872. Drawing on roll call votes, I show that parliamentary opposition to the secret ballot was almost invariant between 1832 and 1867. In 1867, however, the Second Reform Act effected both a significant extension of the franchise and a substantial redistribution of parliamentary seats; the House elected immediately following these changes then passed the Ballot Act of 1872. I show that a key reason for the change in the House’s attitude toward the secret ballot was that anti-ballot MPs were disproportionately likely to retire in anticipation of losing their seats at the 1868 election, especially in constituencies where the redistribution promised to intensify electoral competition. The results not only show how politicians strategically anticipate and respond to electoral pressure, but also how malapportionment can distort these electoral pressures in a way that undermines electoral responsiveness.

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1 Introduction

Historically speaking, the extension of the franchise and the secret ballot traveled together, the latter tending to follow on the heels of the former (Rokkan 1961, 139-140; Bendix 1977), but why this is so is not altogether clear. A theoretical and causal argument can be made that this sequential relationship is due to the changed nature of electoral politics under an expanded franchise. Initial waves of enfranchisement were commonly achieved by lowering the property qualification for voting (Przeworski 2009). The newly enfranchised median voter in the expanded electorate was therefore a poorer-than-average citizen who was vulnerable to intimidation by old-guard elites, and who in consequence had an interest in securing the secret ballot to protect himself. Politicians who depended on the electoral support of the newly enfranchised poor had parallel incentives to provide a secret ballot to protect their supporters’ independence and thus lock-in their own electoral success. This line of argument, in which enfranchisement effects a sudden shift in the identity and preferences of the median voter and consequent policy outcomes, underpins many political economy models of enfranchisement and economic redistribution (e.g., Conley & Temimi 2001; Boix 2003; Llavador & Oxoby 2005; Acemoglu & Robinson 2006) and it accords with the spirit if not the letter of Acemoglu and Robinson’s argument that democratic reforms are used by the poor as a hedge against the possibility that the rich will renge on promises of redistribution.

However, there is no empirical evidence of a causal link between the extension of the franchise and subsequent democratic reforms. Aidt & Jensen (2011) examine the relationship between franchise extensions, secret ballot adoptions and economic development across a wide range of countries and periods and find no evidence that franchise extensions trigger secret ballot adoptions. Instead, what they find is that economic development is a good predictor of the timing of secret ballot adoptions but not franchise extensions. Thus two fundamental pillars of modern electoral democracy, a universal franchise and the secret ballot, appear to have developed quite independently.

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1 Rokkan (1961, 142) argued that the sequence followed the logic of national political integration, with central elites using the secret ballot to isolate the voter from local hierarchial influences.

2 Indeed, it is possible (and Rokkan (1961, 142) mentions this possibility) that old-guard elites use the secret ballot to isolate the poorer voter from his peers so that he might vote for a traditional conservative or clerical party without fear of retribution for betraying his class. In this fashion, old-guard elites could use the ballot to dilute the force of enfranchisement. This argument seems overly complicated: it requires an assumption that poor voters are somehow able to police their collective solidarity (in the absence of a secret ballot) or an explanation how old-guard elites, who are presumably a minority after enfranchisement, retain the political power to impose a secret ballot.

3 This line of argument also has an empirical basis with a range of papers demonstrating that a de jure or de facto extension of the franchise leads to increased governmental and especially social spending (e.g., Husted & Kenney 1997; Aidt et al. 2006; Fujiwara 2011).
It is a common criticism that large-N statistical analyses like Aidt and Jensen’s study are blind to the subtle causal mechanisms that only a detailed case-study can reveal. Consider, then, one of the most celebrated cases of enfranchisement more closely, the United Kingdom’s (Second) Reform Act of 1867.4 Himmelfarb (1966) described the Second Reform Act as “the most decisive event in modern English history”; it effected both a significant expansion of the British electorate, increasing it from 1.35 million voters in 1865 to 2.48 million in 1868 (Craig, 1977, 623), and a significant redistribution of parliamentary seats, generally reducing the parliamentary representation of smaller southern boroughs in favor of the larger northwestern cities and counties (Seymour, 1915, 345). The first House elected on the new franchise and new distribution of seats then passed the Ballot Act of 1872,5 which mandated the use of the secret ballot at parliamentary and municipal elections in the United Kingdom. Yet Berlinski & Dewan (2011) show that the franchise extension of 1867 had little electoral impact in the short run. If the general effect of the Second Reform Act was to bring into the electorate a large bloc of relatively poor, urban voters who tended to favor the Liberals over the Conservatives (and the Liberals won a large majority at the 1868 election), it was nevertheless the case that Liberal support in a district was largely independent of how many voters had been added to the district’s electorate. In other words, whilst the Ballot Act was passed on the strength of the Liberals’ 1868 majority, their parliamentary majority was not itself a direct product of the enfranchisement of 1867.

There is an obvious tension here between our sense of the historical record and our theories of democratic development on the one hand, and what the data appear to tell us, on the other. I resolve this tension by pointing to the critical role of the redistribution of parliamentary seats that accompanied the enfranchisement of 1867. My argument is as follows. Prior to 1868, many MPs won their seats by acclamation and without an electoral contest (Lloyd 1965); many more confronted only token opposition, especially in the smaller boroughs. The redistribution of parliamentary seats and redrawing of parliamentary boundaries threatened to force many more MPs to wage difficult and costly re-election campaigns on what promised to be a more radical and competitive electoral battlefield.6 Anti-ballot MPs could not have expected to do well under these conditions because their position on the ballot would have been an electoral liability. I argue that many of these anti-ballot MPs preemptively retired rather than seek re-election. The disproportionate retirement of anti-ballot MPs goes some distance in explaining the fundamental change in the House’s attitude toward the secret ballot immediately following the 1868 election.

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4The Act was formally titled The Representation of the People Act 1867.
5The Act was formally titled An Act to amend the Law relating to Procedure at Parliamentary and Municipal Elections 1872.
6Indeed, one unambiguous effect of the Second Reform Act was to increase the level of electoral competition, i.e., more candidates contested elections and many fewer districts went uncontested (Berlinski & Dewan 2011).
The argument exploits the fact that between 1832 and 1872 the House of Commons voted almost annually on motions to adopt the secret ballot. In effect, this series of divisions provides panel data on MPs’ positions on the secret ballot from 1832 until the final passage of the Ballot Act in 1872. An analysis of the divisions on these motions establishes two key results. First, the balance of opinion in the House on the ballot was essentially “frozen” in opposition to the ballot right up to 1867. Second, the stability in the House’s opinion on the ballot was not merely an aggregate phenomenon, that is, aggregate vote counts did not conceal individual-level volatility on the matter. In fact, only 110 of the 2,375 MPs who voted in these divisions changed their minds on the issue. These results rule out the alternative hypothesis that a change in the House’s opinion on the ballot was underway in advance of 1867, and show that a change in the parliamentary balance of opinion on the ballot came about only after the 1868 election. Crucially, the high degree of individual-level stability in MPs positions on the ballot allows me to identify and classify MPs as invariant pro- or anti-ballot types who did not alter their positions. It is on the basis of this classification that I show that anti-ballot MPs were disproportionately likely to retire just prior to the 1868 election and were more likely to do so the greater the impact of the redistribution on their existing constituencies. A key assumption in my argument is opposition to the secret ballot was unpopular at the 1868 election. Consistent with this assumption, I also show that the vote shares of pro-ballot Liberals were an average of two percent higher than anti-ballot Liberal incumbents who nevertheless chose to contest the 1868 election. What makes this comparison compelling is that it is based on the relative performance of Liberal candidates who ran for election in the same districts. Thus the comparison addresses the concern the redistribution simply forced anti-ballot Liberals to run in districts where Liberal support was weaker than average. All of these results are consistent with the thesis that incumbent MPs who opposed the ballot anticipated being displaced by more radical candidates, especially in constituencies where the redistribution promised to intensify the competition for seats.

These results are important for three reasons. Firstly, they serve as an historical counterweight to Kinzer’s (1982) interpretation of the Ballot Act’s passage. Kinzer downplays the importance of the ballot as a political issue in the run-up to the 1868 election, but that interpretation sits uneasily with the fact that MPs’ stances on the ballot contributed to their decision to contest the 1868 election and how they fared at the 1868 election. Secondly, the paper’s results offer a lesson in the development and nature of electoral responsiveness. If politicians are invariant types who never change their positions on issues, the responsiveness of the political system to changes in public opinion hinges on the extent to which the electoral system permits voters to replace incumbents who hold positions that diverge from their own with candidates who hold positions that are closer to their own, and to do so on a scale sufficient to ensure that balance of types in the legislature coincides with the balance of opinion in the electorate. The extent and nature of the electoral franchise
obviously matters a great deal in this regard because the more limited the franchise the greater the divergence between the identity and preferences of the median voter and the identity and preferences of the median citizen. The manner in which voters and seats are distributed across districts matters also matters a great deal, however. In a system where representatives do not or cannot change their policy positions, malapportionment can entirely undercut the political system's capacity to respond to shifts in public opinion. Hence, we observe the opposition to the secret ballot in the House of Commons dissolving only once the franchise was extended and the severe malapportionment of the extant electoral system partially redressed. Indeed, anti-ballot MPs retired mainly from those districts that were most heavily over-represented under the old system and which were wholly or partly disenfranchised under the new system. Finally, these results provide a concrete example of strategic anticipation: MPs did not react to changing electoral conditions, they anticipated them. This may partly explain why recent work has found so little evidence of the Second Reform Act's electoral and political impact despite the sweeping nature of the Act.

2 Historical background

The intellectual campaign for the secret ballot began in 1819 when Bentham included it alongside other democratic measures in his Radical Reform Bill (Park 1931). The consequent parliamentary campaign began in 1831 with proposals to incorporate the secret ballot into the Great Reform Act of 1832, but these were subsequently dropped.\(^7\) The ballot's advocates then adopted the twin tactics of tabling public petitions and private motions to adopt the ballot at parliamentary election. Between 1833 and 1870, the ballot's advocates (chiefly George Grote and F.H.F. Berkeley, but also fellow Radicals like Joseph Hume) introduced 35 private motions on the adoption of the secret ballot. Most of these motions (25 of the 35) were free-standing requests for leave to introduce legislation to require the use of the secret ballot at parliamentary elections. That is, they were neither amendments to larger bills nor themselves subject to amendment. In effect, these motions offered MPs a straightforward choice over two alternatives, i.e., to initiate legislation mandating the secret ballot or to maintain the status quo of public voting.

The medium-term results of these motions (see Figure 1 below) ranged from middling to disappointing. Twice (1848, 1851) a majority came out in favor of the ballot, but these majorities were achieved when the chamber was nearly empty; both bills were subsequently defeated at second reading by a fuller House. The aggregate figures

\(^7\) The ballot had actually been mentioned in the House some ten years earlier. In 1821, for example, David Ricardo argued for the ballot’s inclusion in any reform measure that the House consider, and that it was a more desirable and necessary reform than the extension of the franchise (HC Deb 18 April 1821 vol 5 cc441-56).
suggest no monotonic increase in parliamentary support for the ballot prior to 1868. Indeed, support for the secret ballot peaked in the late 1830s at the height of the Chartist agitation, and amounted to just over 200 MPs. Now whether the aggregate figure of 200 MPs reflected the full extent of parliamentary support for the ballot or whether the irregular attendance at Private Members Business concealed a much larger number of pro-ballot MPs is an open question. One would have to think that the former was more likely the case because surges in the number of votes cast in the support for the ballot tended to be matched by corresponding surges in the number of votes cast in opposition to the ballot, suggesting that there was no latent reservoir of support in the Commons for the ballot’s advocates to tap.

Figure 1: Support for and Opposition to the Secret Ballot on Recorded Divisions in the House of Commons, 1832-1872.

The Conservatives’ implacable opposition to the ballot certainly put a ceiling on how much support the ballot’s advocates could expect to receive. The practical problem, however, was not with the Conservatives (who were themselves a minority for much of the period) but with the Liberals, who were split on the issue. The democratic Radical section of the party was generally supportive of the ballot, whereas the more aristocratic Whig section was opposed or indifferent to the measure. Grote and Berkeley’s motions thus had the effect of regularly placing the Liberal governments of the period at loggerheads with a section of its own party. Liberal governments customarily responded by claiming no official position on the ballot but functionally siding with the Whigs to defeat these motions. In 1870, however, Leatham (who had taken up the cause after Berkeley’s death in 1869) secured passage of a motion to adopt the ballot “on the voices”, that is, without the ballot’s opponents even
calling for a division. One might interpret this as indicating the House’s utter lack of interest in the issue, save for the fact that Hartington (the Postmaster-General and _de facto_ leader of the Whig section of the Liberal Party) urged Leatham to withdraw his bill on the assurance that the Cabinet would advance the ballot as a government measure (HC Deb 16 March 1870 vol 200 cc10-60 10). What was both significant and ironic about this event was that Gladstone, now the prime minister, was on the record as an established opponent of the ballot.

The key intervening events between the typical ignominious defeat of Berkley’s last motion for the ballot in 1867 and Leatham’s 1870 breakthrough were the passage of the Second Reform Act in 1867 (Berkley’s last motion was, in fact, moved as an amendment to that Act) and the 1868 election, at which the Liberals won a huge majority. As noted above, the Second Reform Act increased the British electorate from 1.35 million to 2.48 million voters. It did this primarily by lowering the value of the property qualification required to vote, a mechanism that admitted into the electorate the lower section of the middle class and upper section of the working class. The Second Reform Act also began the process of correcting the gross malapportionment of the 1832 electoral system. It is difficult to assess and state with precision just how grossly malapportioned the old system was, but a rough sense is conveyed by noting the following facts: In 1865, a total electorate of 1,350,404 million voters was divided among 401 constituencies and 658 seats, for a simple average of 3,367 voters per constituency and 2,052 voters per seat. Only 136 constituencies (34 percent) had more than the average number of voters (i.e., 3,367), and this set of constituencies had a claim on just 266 seats (41 percent) _despite containing a staggering 1,036,472 voters, 75 percent of the entire electorate!_ The remaining 25 percent of the electorate was represented by 392 seats, an average of 800 voters per seat and 1,189 voters per district. The Second Reform Act addressed the situation by redistributing 52 seats away from the smaller boroughs: ten seats were taken from towns with populations under 5,000, leaving these towns without their own parliamentary representation; seven were taken from four corrupt boroughs that were likewise completely disenfranchised; and 35 seats were taken from boroughs with populations under 10,000, leaving them as single-member districts. Thirty of these seats were directed to the counties (mostly to the Conservatives’ benefit), three went to the Universities, and the remainder went to the larger urban centers where radical sentiments ran strong.

The Liberals won a significant majority of 387 seats at the 1868 election, and many of the new Liberal members were (reputedly) more radical than their predecessors. How far to the political left the influx of newcomers shifted the Liberal party’s center of gravity is unclear, however. Kinzer (1982, 103) disputes the notion that the election had left ballot supporters in the majority, and that the ballot’s adoption therefore depended on the Cabinet’s active support of the measure. Indeed, the

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8The following statistics are taken or deduced from Craig (1977) and Craig (1989)
Liberal government’s first attempt at legislation in 1870 failed because of an intra-party dispute over the details of counter-foils on ballots to aid recounts and detect impersonation (Kinzer 1982, 135-141). The government, however, put the issue back on the legislative agenda for the 1871 session. When the Conservatives tried to stall the 1871 bill, Gladstone enjoined his MPs not to exacerbate situation by engaging the Conservatives in extended debate and instead to expeditiously vote down the Conservatives’ dilatory motions (Kinzer 1982, 164-165). Gladstone was largely successful in these efforts, and on 8 August 1871 the House passed Parliamentary and Municipal Elections Bill (1871).

3 The balance of opinion in the House of Commons, 1832-1867

This section offers a detailed analysis of how MPs voted in divisions on motions calling for the adoption of the secret ballot between. The overarching objective is to use these divisions as a means to assess whether a shift in parliamentary opinion on the ballot was underway prior to the 1868 election. The section has three more specific objectives. First, I wish to demonstrate that balance of opinion in the House of Commons was fixed against the ballot throughout this period. This is to underscore two subsidiary points, namely that 1) significant change in the balance of opinion on the ballot arrived only after and immediately after the 1868 election, and 2) that the situation was largely independent of political trends and the parties’ electoral fortunes: neither Chartist pressure and Liberal victories in the 1830s and 1840s nor the Repeal of the Corn Laws and Conservative defeats in the late-1840s and 1850s had any substantial effect on the balance of opinion in the House on the ballot. Second, I want to press home the point that the stability in the House’s opinion was a direct function of the fact that very few MPs changed their minds on the issue. This pattern of behavior closed off one avenue by which the ballot might have been passed, to wit, by MPs altering their positions in the face of electoral pressure. It does, however, present a straightforward way to estimate of the balance

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9 The Lords killed the 1871 instantiation of the Ballot Act, but the Cabinet reintroduced and carried the bill the following session. It is important to emphasize that Gladstone and the Cabinet did not provide or impose party discipline or consider the Ballot bill a matter of confidence. Firstly, such a view is anachronistic. Gladstone was not the leader of a party government in the modern parliamentary sense, but the leader of a ministry that enjoyed the general but not unconditional support of Liberal MPs over whom the Cabinet had little direct control. Secondly, Forster (the minister in charge of the 1871 bill) stressed that the government wished to treat the matter in a non-partisan fashion (Kinzer 1982, 160). Thirdly, when Cardwell (then a cabinet minister) expressed his disagreement on a Cabinet position related to the Ballot Bill by absenting himself from a division, Gladstone refused to accept his resignation. This indicates that the Gladstone himself did not see the issue as meriting collective responsibility or party discipline. Finally, Forster’s remark (HC Deb 03 April 1871 vol 205 cc1050-62) that it was inconceivable for anyone to think that a dissolution hinged on the bill’s fate indicates the government did not consider the bill a matter of confidence.
of opinion in the House at any point in time as one can simply count up the number of MPs who had at any previous time voted in favor of the ballot and compare it to the number of MPs who had at any previous time voted against the ballot. Finally, I want to make clear that Conservatives were steadfast in their opposition to the ballot whereas the Liberals were deeply split on issue. This point is uncontroversial in historical terms, but it worth making precisely.

Data and Methods

The analysis centers on 25 of the 35 motions on the secret ballot that House considered between 1832-1867. The 25 motions that I analyze below were free-standing requests for leave to introduce legislation to require the use of the secret ballot at parliamentary elections. While there were some slight differences in wording, each of these 25 motions effectively offered MPs a straightforward choice over two alternatives, i.e., to initiate legislation mandating the secret ballot or to maintain the status quo of public voting. The House voted on another 10 motions related to the ballot during the same period, but these additional motions were either moved as amendments to other legislation, phrased as confidence motions, or accompanied by additional demands for universal suffrage, triennial parliaments, and for parliamentary seats to be distributed according to the principle of representation by population. Concentrating the analysis on these 25 divisions thus maximizes comparability and limits concerns that MPs were voting strategically or on some basis other than their sincere preferences on the secret ballot. The methodology is not complicated; it consists of a series of straightforward cross-tabulations.

Results

I start by classifying MPs who sat in the House between 1832 and 1867 according to their voting patterns in these 25 divisions. I define seven groups of MPs:

- **Stable Supporters & Opponents** cast a minimum of two votes for (against) the secret ballot and never voted against (for) it.

- **Converted Supporters & Opponents** cast a minimum of two votes and at least one for each side. MPs who cast a strict majority of their votes for the secret ballot are counted as supporters.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\]Here are some examples: 1838: “For leave to bring in a bill, enacting that votes at elections for Members of Parliament shall be taken by way of Ballot”; 1842: “That in all future elections of Members of Parliament the votes should be taken by way of the ballot”; 1852: “That leave be given to bring in a Bill to cause the Votes of Parliamentary Electors to be taken by way of Ballot”; 1857: “That leave be given to bring in a Bill to cause the Votes of the Parliamentary Electors of Great Britain and Ireland to be taken by way of Ballot”; 1863: “That leave be given to bring in a Bill to cause the Votes of Parliamentary Electors to be taken by way of Ballot”.

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• **One-time Supporters & Opponents** cast just a single vote in support or opposition to the ballot.

• **Absentees** cast no votes in these divisions.

Table 1 below cross-tabulates these voting patterns by the number of divisions the MP attended. The table is worth three comments. First, a majority of MPs (50.7%) opposed the ballot at least once as compared to the 29.8% of MPs who voted for the ballot once or more. This is no surprise; it accords with essential message of Figure 1 but brings home the point that ballot supporters were in a distinct minority more precisely. Second, a large percentage of MPs (19.5%) never participated in these divisions despite the fact that they occurred at least once per term between 1832 and 1867. This raises the possibility that there existed a potentially pivotal but unmobilized section of the House of Commons that came into play after the 1868 election and independently of the electoral impact of the Second Reform Act. Third, conversion from opposition to support or the reverse was very rare: Only 110 of the 2,373 MPs who sat in these Parliaments (4.7%) changed their positions on the ballot, and bear in mind that this was over the course of nine Parliaments and 35 years, and that almost as many MPs altered their position to oppose the ballot (51) as to support it (59).

Table 1: VOTING PATTERNS AND PARTICIPATION IN DIVISIONS ON THE SECRET BALLOT, 1832-67.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Divisions in which MP Participated</th>
<th>Stable Opponent</th>
<th>Converted Opponent</th>
<th>One-time Opponent</th>
<th>Absentee</th>
<th>One-time Supporter</th>
<th>Converted Supporter</th>
<th>Stable Supporter</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27 (3.4)</td>
<td>318 (35.1)</td>
<td>462 (50.9)</td>
<td>127 (14.0)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4</td>
<td>479 (59.4)</td>
<td>20 (4.1)</td>
<td>17 (2.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17 (2.1)</td>
<td>283 (35.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>270 (54.8)</td>
<td>87 (2.4)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>462 (50.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>178 (36.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>493</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>87 (52.1)</td>
<td>4 (2.4)</td>
<td>17 (10.2)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>59 (2.5)</td>
<td>59 (21.9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>836 (35.2)</td>
<td>51 (2.2)</td>
<td>318 (13.4)</td>
<td>462 (19.5)</td>
<td>127 (5.4)</td>
<td>59 (2.5)</td>
<td>520 (21.9)</td>
<td>2,373</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parentheses contain column percentages
Table 2 offers a different perspective on these voting data, showing how MPs cast their votes from one division to the next in this series of divisions. In other words, the table shows how MPs, having voted particular a way in a division at \( t \), cast their votes in the subsequent division at \( t+1 \). The row totals in Table 2 provide a sense of the **stock** of MPs in each state whilst the row percentages (in parentheses in each cell) provide a sense of the **flow** of MPs to and from each state. To allow one to judge the growth or decay of the pro- and anti-ballot coalitions, Table 2 is constructed to account for the possibility that an MP might not yet have entered the House at time \( t \) (Yet to Enter) or might have exited the House (e.g., due to death, retirement, defeat, etc.) prior to the next division at \( t+1 \). Let me make three comments on Table 2. Firstly and to re-emphasize a point made just above, direct conversion from support to opposition was exceeding rare; there were just 52 such instances out of 18,592 total votes. Secondly, the large number of MPs who absented themselves from these divisions broke just over 2-1 against the ballot when they returned to vote in subsequent divisions (21.9% to 10.0%), a rate that was roughly consistent with the ratio in the aggregate stock of opposition and support in the House as a whole over this period. Thus in contrast to the possibility suggested by the data in Table 1, these data indicate that there was no unmobilized source of support for the ballot in the pre-1868 House of Commons. Rather, outside of a large set of hard-core absentees were proportionate groups of partly active supporters and opponents. Thirdly, the flow of new entrants into the anti- and pro-ballot camps favored the former by a ratio of 3-2 (29% to 20%) whilst the flow of exiting MPs out of each camp was just about equal (8.1% to 7.9%). These figures indicate that support for the ballot was not gaining ground over time; quite the opposite.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MP's vote at ( t +1 )</th>
<th>MP's vote at ( t )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Yet to Enter</em></td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,338</td>
<td>1,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Absent</em></td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>4,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>949</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parentheses contain row percentages.

The data in Table 2 can be conditioned on party or broken up by time period, but the bulky nature of the table makes it more efficient to present the equilibrium vectors.
and steady state probabilities estimated from the row percentages of a series of conditional variations of Table 2. Table 3 presents equilibrium vectors for the House as a whole for three periods: 1832-1867 (essentially summarizing and recapitulating the information in Table 2 so as to provide a basis of comparison); 1837-1848, a period that marked the height of Chartist agitation; and 1847-57, a period that marked the nadir of Conservative electoral fortunes after the party’s split over the Repeal of the Corn Laws. Additional vectors are computed for Liberal and Conservative MPs, with the latter estimated once with Peelites included in the Conservatives’ ranks, and once with the Peelites excluded. The probabilities contained in these vectors reflect the long-run equilibrium or steady state implicit in MPs’ voting patterns. As such they offer one answer to the counterfactual question of what would have become of the ballot had the Second Reform Act not been passed. Let me make three observations on the basis of the data in Table 3. Firstly, the rate at which MPs supported the ballot failed to increase in the Chartist era and in the period of Conservative weakness. Indeed, the data provide no sense that support for the ballot was gaining momentum or even capable of gaining momentum; regardless of whether external conditions appeared favorable or unfavorable for the ballot’s adoption, the long range equilibrium remained one in which there was more opposition to the ballot than support for it. Secondly, the Conservatives were very united in their opposition to the ballot, and this is true regardless of whether one includes or excludes Peelites from the calculations. That the Peelites who remained in the House after 1847 appeared to have had no more enthusiasm for the ballot than their erstwhile Conservative colleagues helps explain why the rate of support for the ballot did not increase on the Conservative splitting in two. Thirdly, by comparison with the Conservatives the Liberals were deeply divided on the ballot; one can read the table as indicating that Liberal MPs cast one vote against the ballot for every three votes that they cast for it. While Table 3 does not give a sense of the size of Liberals’ base, it suffices to say that the Liberals’ advantage over the Conservatives was never so large that they could squander this much of their voting power and still hope to carry a measure.

Table 3: STEADY STATE PROBABILITIES OF SUPPORT, ABSENTEEISM, OPPOSITION, AND EXIT IN DIVISIONS THE SECRET BALLOT*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Exit</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1832-1867</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837-1848 (Chartist Era)</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847-1857 (Conservative Weakness)</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative MPs (incl. Peelites)</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative MPs (excl. Peelites)</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal MPs</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Probabilities in each row may not add to 1 due to rounding.
In sum, the data suggest that pre-1867 House was stuck in an equilibrium in which ballot supporters were a permanent minority. The situation was rooted in three dynamics: 1) the Liberals were divided on the issue whereas the Conservatives were almost perfectly united against it; 2) the influx of ballot opponents into the Commons at elections exceeded the influx of supporters whereas the outflow of opponents from the House was equal to that of supporters; 3) conversion from opposition to support (or vice versa) was very rare.\footnote{In doggedly clinging to their positions on the secret ballot Victorian MPs were remarkably similar to present-day members of Congress, who (in Poole's descriptive phrase) "die in their ideological boots," rarely if ever altering their ideological positions throughout their careers (Poole 2007, 435).} The ballot could not reasonably be expected to have succeed under these conditions.

4 Strategic Retirement and the 1868 election

Given the situation prior to 1868, and noting especially the rarity with which MPs changed their positions, there was only really one way in which parliamentary support for the ballot could outgrow the opposition to the ballot: the House, and more particularly the Liberal party had to 1) shed anti-ballot MPs and 2) replace them with pro-ballot MPs on a scale sufficient to ensure that the median MP was one who supported the ballot. My argument so far has been that these conditions were simply not achievable prior to 1867. This section demonstrates the impact of the Second Reform Act on first of these conditions, that is the exit of anti-ballot MPs from the House. The claim that I wish to bring home is that the electoral changes contained in Second Reform Act encouraged these MPs to retire in advance of the election. My argument on this front is straightforward, and it is that anti-ballot incumbents who expected their constituencies to be heavily effected by requirements of the Second Reform Act differentially opted to retire in advance of the election. The argument is motivated by the assumption that MPs wished to avoid nomination contests or campaigns that were too uncertain or difficult, and the greater the impact of the Act on the constituency, the more uncertain and difficult the nomination contest and election promised to be.

The thesis that legislators strategically retire rather than fight difficult contests for re-election is both common and uncontroversial in political science (e.g., Hibbing 1982; Jac 1983; Groseclose & Krehbiel 1994; Moore & Hibbing 1998), but given the historical context in which the thesis is advanced some explanation is required of 1) the costs the mid-Victorian MP confronted in running for re-election, and 2) why the MPs' opposition to the ballot could be expected to have been an electoral liability at the 1868 election. The first of these matters is straightforwardly explained. Especially in the more rural and parochial regions, electoral competition was still considered somewhat unseemly and lacking the decorum of an arranged (i.e., uncontested) election among local elites; there was also the stigma of losing (Gash 1953;
Kishlansky 1986; Cox 1987). These customary social reservations were fading, however. The more direct concern was simply the financial cost: elections in Victorian Britain were expensive. Not only were costs of organizing the election and polling voters borne by the candidates themselves, but a semi-competitive campaign required significant expenditure on a variety of goods and services (e.g., a local solicitor to act as an election agent, the printing and advertising of speeches, etc.). There were also quasi-legal and outright illegal expenditures that were part of many (though by no means all) Victorian-era elections, e.g., payment for the transportation of voters to the polls and “refreshments” (i.e., beer and liquor) for supporters. It would not be unreasonable to put the average cost of a contested election at £2,000 (Gash 1953; Hanham 1959; Kam 2011). Candidates bore these expenses personally; the national party organizations (such as they were) only had enough resources to help a handful of candidates (Hanham 1959; Pinto-Dushinsky 1981).

Why, however, would the MP’s position on the ballot have figured into the decision to retire or contest a seat? Firstly, one would expect that the median voter in a district to be more radical after the enfranchisement than before. This is because the enfranchisement operated by lowering the property qualification for voting, and hence it presumably worked to admit to the electorate a set of poorer and more radically inclined voters. The greater the scale of enfranchisement in the constituency, the more radical the newly-enfranchised median voter in the district and the greater the ideological distance between this new median voter and the anti-ballot incumbent. Label this the enfranchisement effect. Secondly, the associated redistribution promised to intensify electoral competition both within and between the parties. Incumbents in districts that lost their parliamentary representation entirely were left adrift. These incumbents could try to move to one of the new seats opened up by the redistribution, but these open seats promised to attract challengers precisely because they did not have to overcome an incumbent who possessed an incumbency advantage. For this reason, one might expect the intra-party competition for each party’s nomination to be intense, and on the Liberal side at least, the candidates’ stances on the ballot might well stand as a signal point of differentiation between them. Likewise, incumbents who represented the constituencies that were left as single-member districts faced the prospect of a zero-sum competition with another sitting incumbent for the lone remaining seat. Finally, even in those districts that were expanded to three seats from two, the application of the minority voting clause (i.e., the limited vote) put a premium on intra-party coordination and raised the specter of intra-party competition. Again, the MP’s position on the ballot could stand as a point of differentiation among candidates of the same party. Label these dynamics competition effects, and note that these effects are generated by the redistribution.

\[12\] To put this in perspective, £2,000 in 1868 would be equivalent to £125,000 in 2010 GDP-deflated terms (http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/).

\[13\] Conservative MPs were uniformly unsupportive of the ballot, but a significant minority could truthfully claim never to have voted against it.
of seats and redrawing of electoral boundaries conditional on the enfranchisement of new voters.

Given these enfranchisement and competition effects, I expect MPs’ retirement decisions to display three patterns:

1. Anti-ballot MPs should be more likely to retire.

2. If the enfranchisement effect dominates, then anti-ballot MPs should be more likely to retire the greater the scale of enfranchisement in the MP’s constituency.

3. If the competition effect dominates, then anti-ballot MPs should be more likely to retire the greater the impact of the redistribution on MP’s constituency. This should especially be the case with respect to changes in the district magnitude as these changes significantly affect the intensity of intra-party and inter-party electoral competition (Cox 1997).

Data and Methods

I test this retirement hypothesis against data on incumbents who were in the the House as of January 1867. MPs who left the House between 1865 and the start of 1867 are excluded from consideration on the grounds that they took their decision before the Second Reform Act was drafted in February 1867. I also exclude from the analysis 38 MPs who died, accepted a government appointment, were expelled from the House (e.g., on losing an election petition), or were raised to the peerage after January 1867 as these circumstances are presumably unrelated to electoral considerations. This leaves the analysis centered on 630 MPs, 501 of whom contested the general election in November 1868 (i.e., who did not retire) and 129 of whom retired at the dissolution or at some point after January 1867 and did not seek re-election. The MP’s decision to retire (1) or to contest the 1868 election (0) is the dependent variable in the logistic regression model shown below. The model contains the following independent variables:

- **Ballot Stance** is based on the coding scheme introduced in Section 3, with solid ballot supporters and opponents coded 3 and -3, respectively; converts to support and opposition, 2 and -2, respectively; one-time supporters and opponents, 1 and -1, respectively; and absentees, 0. Collapsing the variable so that it differentiates between support (1), abstention (0) and opposition (-1) does not substantively alter the results below.

- **Liberal** is a dummy variable that is coded 1 for Liberal MPs. (Source: Stenton (1976); Vincent & Stenton (1971))

\footnote{Coding of retirements was based on the information in Stenton (1976).}
• $\Delta \text{Electors}_{1868-1865}$ is the difference in the number of registered electors in the district at the 1865 and 1868 elections. Two versions are employed, one expressing $\Delta \text{Electors}_{1868-1865}$ as a percentage of the district’s 1865 electorate, the other expressing $\Delta \text{Electors}_{1868-1865}$ in base 10 logs. (Source: Berlinski & Dewan (2011))

• Boundary Change is a dummy variable that is coded 1 for districts that had their boundaries redrawn in the redistribution. (Source: Berlinski & Dewan (2011))

• $\Delta M_{1868-1865}$ is the change in the district magnitude between 1868 and 1865, i.e., a district that lost one seat in the redistribution is coded -1, a district that gained a seat is coded +1. (Source: Craig (1977))

• $M_{1865}$ is the district magnitude of the MP’s constituency in 1865. The variable is included to distinguish the effects of, e.g., having one seat removed from a single-member district (leaving the MP without a seat) and having one seat removed from a double-member district (leaving the MP in a zero-sum electoral competition). (Source: Craig (1977))

• Contested$_{1865}$ is a dummy variable that is coded 1 if the 1865 election in the MP’s district was uncontested. This serves as a control for degree of electoral competition that the MP might expect at the 1868 election. (Source: Craig (1977); Vincent & Stenton (1971))

• $\%\text{Last-First}_{1865}$ is an alternative measure of electoral competition, the difference in the votes of the last winning candidate and the first losing candidate at the 1865 election in the MP’s district expressed as a percentage of registered electors in the district in 1865. It is expressed in this fashion rather than as a percentage of votes cast so that MPs who had uncontested elections in 1865 remain in the sample. $\%\text{Last-First}_{1865}$ is set to 100% for uncontested elections. (Source: Craig (1977); Vincent & Stenton (1971))

• Age is the MP’s age in years. (Source: Stenton (1976))

Results

The results of the model are shown in Table 4. The first specification presents a simple model that serves as a baseline. The unconditional probability of retirement among these incumbents was .186. The first specification informs us that MPs were increasingly likely to retire as they aged and if they had faced a contest at their last election. The marginal effect of Age is such that a 30 year MP retires with a probability of .12 as compared to .25 for a 65 year old MP. Holding age and district magnitude at their means, the probability that an MP who had enjoyed an
uncontested election retires is .16; among MPs who endured electoral competition it is is .21. These marginal effects serve as benchmarks against which to judge the relative impact of MPs’ policy positions on the ballot and the enfranchisement and redistribution of the Second Reform Act.

Let me offer two main comments on Specifications 2-4. Firstly, MPs’ stances on the ballot are statistically significant across all three specifications. Moreover, judged against the variables in the baseline model, the marginal effect of the MP’s ballot stance on retirement is a large one, but interestingly it is also asymmetric: solid ballot supporters (coded +3) had just a .18 probability of retirement, hardly different than the unconditional probability of retirement; solid opponents (coded -3) had a .34 probability of retiring. Secondly, of the three variables measuring the electoral impact of Second Reform Act, it is the two that measure the effect of the redistribution (i.e., Boundary Change and $\Delta M_{1868-1865}$) rather than the two that measure the effect of enfranchisement (i.e., $\% \Delta Electors_{1868-1865}$ and $log \Delta Electors_{1868-1865}$) that are statistically significant. The marginal effect of a constituency losing a seat is to increase the probability of retirement from .13 to .25. Boundary changes have a smaller impact, shifting the probability of retirement from .15 to .21. In contrast, there is no statistical evidence that MPs were more likely to retire the greater impact of the enfranchisement on their districts. This would be consistent with the assessments of both contemporaries and historians that full implications of the enfranchisement were unknowable at the time the Second Reform Act was passed (e.g., Seymour (1915); Davis & Tanner (1996); Davis (1991)) and hence its famous description as a “leap in the dark.” More to the point, it suggests that MPs’ retirement decisions were driven mainly by the competition effects and less by the enfranchisement effect.
Table 4: LOGISTIC REGRESSION OF MPS’ RETIREMENT DECISIONS AT THE 1868 ELECTION

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<td>(se)</td>
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<td>-.38*</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>(.22)</td>
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<td>(.01)</td>
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Cell entries are logistic regression coefficients.
Entries in parentheses are robust standard errors

***p≤.01 **p≤.05 *p≤.10

A Rival Hypothesis

Let me deal with one central objection to these results before concluding the paper, and it is that they might be entirely coincidental. The 52 smaller boroughs that were subject to redistribution were certainly not fertile ground for democratic radicalism. (See, e.g., Gash’s (1953, 285) description of Reading’s pre-1867 electorate as, “too solidly middle class and prosperous to welcome extreme measures,”) - and Reading
was large and cosmopolitan in comparison to many of these boroughs.) To the extent that these constituencies were held by Liberals, they were held by whiggish not radical types. Indeed, 37 Liberal MPs held seats in these boroughs and 23 (62 percent) were actively or passively unsupportive of the ballot, a proportion that was a mirror image of that of Liberal MPs as a whole (among whom 57 percent gave it their active support). The Conservatives held the remainder and a majority of seats in these boroughs (44) and were, of course, uniformly unsupportive of the ballot. This meant that the redistribution necessarily had the effect of dispossessing a disproportionately high number of ballot opponents and “non-supporters” of their seats. The effects that appear in Table 4 might therefore be merely coincidental correlations, and not evidence that anti-ballot MPs retired because they felt their position on the ballot would be a liability in what promised to be a more radical and competitive electoral market.

One response to this objection is to note that many MPs at the 1868 election took the trouble to advertise their position on the ballot in their campaign addresses or speeches. A search of the 48 regional newspapers in British Library’s 19th Century Newspapers recovered 102 statements on the ballot by Liberal candidates. Most addresses and speeches were published on only a local basis and were not regionally publicized, and so I cannot say exactly what proportion of candidates publicized their position on the ballot in this way. However, the fact that at least 102 (approximately 20 percent of Liberal candidates) did so suggests that the practice was common enough. That in turn implies either that candidates wanted voters to know where they stood on the issue or that voters demanded to know where candidates stood on the issue. The potential for MPs’ stances on the ballot to effect the election was therefore a real one; certainly, candidates behaved as if this were the case. At Salisbury, for example, the anti-ballot Liberal MP, Matthew Marsh, retired from the election in mid-campaign saying that he still found the ballot as unnecessary, but he recognized that his views were out-of-step with many of his constituents.

A second rejoinder to the “coincidental correlation” argument begins by noting that it implies the lack of any relationship between candidates’ positions on the ballot and their subsequent electoral performance given that the MP did, in fact, decide to contest the 1868 election. This counter-argument is perhaps best made using the language of selection and treatment. The “coincidental correlation” argument implies that the redistribution disproportionately albeit coincidentally selected MPs into retirement or electoral competition. However, if one were able to hold this selection effect constant, the “coincidental correlation” argument predicts that there should be no treatment effect of MPs’ ballot stances on their electoral performance.

---

15 If one counts as Liberals five MPs who styled themselves “Liberal Conservatives”, then there were 42 Liberals in these boroughs, of whom 28 (67 percent) did not support the ballot.

16 According to the party affiliations listed in Craig (1977), 580 Liberal candidates contested the 1868 election.

i.e., in short, we should observe no difference in the performance of pro- and anti-ballot MPs at the 1868 election. This is a testable proposition, but it must be tested carefully because strategic retirement might also result in a situation where there is no difference in the electoral performance of pro- and anti-ballot MPs. Consider that if anti-ballot MPs judged their position on the ballot would be an electoral liability, then only those anti-ballot MPs who judged that they could win re-election despite their position on the ballot would enter the campaign. Indeed, in equilibrium the anti-ballot MP enters the campaign only when he expects to perform at least as well as the typical pro-ballot opponent he might face. Moreover, anti-ballot MPs might achieve this standard of performance by opting to contest only those districts that were receptive or indifferent to an anti-ballot stance. This type of self-selection confounds any simple comparison of the electoral performance of pro- and anti-ballot candidates across districts, and hence any test of the relative performance of pro- and anti-ballot candidates has to account for their non-random selection into the general election campaign in the first instance, and then into a given constituency in the second instance. The key, then, is to compare the electoral performance of candidates who contested the same constituency but took different positions on the ballot. It makes sense to confine this comparison to Liberal candidates given that the Liberals were openly divided on the ballot in a way that Conservatives were not; doing so also has the further advantage of controlling for party affiliation. Under these conditions, a systematic difference between the two candidates’ vote shares can be taken as evidence of a treatment effect of candidates’ ballot positions on their vote shares. In more substantive terms, such a result would indicate that voters drew a material distinction between the two candidates on the basis of the candidates’ respective positions on the ballot.

Only 16 two-member districts at the 1868 election featured multiple Liberal candidates among whom it was possible to identify a stark difference of opinion on the ballot (i.e., at least one Liberal favored it and at least one opposed it) on the basis

18 One can use similar language to restate my argument, to wit, that it is exactly because incumbent MPs expected their positions on the ballot to exert a strong treatment effect on their re-election prospects that they selected themselves into retirement or into electoral competition based on their position on the ballot.

19 There are two important caveats to this line of argument. First, the test is asymmetric in the sense that the lack of a treatment effect of candidates’ ballot positions on their vote shares is consistent with both the ‘strategic retirement’ and ‘coincidental correlation’ hypotheses. Given this asymmetry, and noting that the ‘coincidental correlation’ hypothesis is the more parsimonious explanation, we should retain it unless there is clear evidence that candidates’ ballot positions affected their vote shares. Second, a comparison of the vote shares of pro- and anti-ballot Liberal candidates who are contesting the same district provides a valid measure of the electoral impact of their positions only to the extent that there is no correlation between the candidates’ positions on the ballot and unobserved personal characteristics that might attract electoral support (e.g., great personal wealth). It is very difficult to measure and control for these sorts of personal qualities because of a lack of information, particularly for losing candidates who never occupied a seat in the House of Commons.
of their campaign addresses or (for incumbents) their voting records. Consequently, I draw on a further 23 districts where difference among the Liberal candidates involved only the extent to which they offered or promised to offer the ballot their active support. In these 23 districts, at least one Liberal was an active or vocal supporter of the ballot whereas the other(s) had never voted for the ballot (if an incumbent) or did not express firm support or opposition to the ballot in their address (if a candidate). The full set of 39 districts (and 86 Liberal candidates) is varied in that it contains three single-member districts and two three-member districts. It also contains several constituencies where three or more Liberals (and sometimes no Conservatives) contested the election. This last feature complicates any straightforward paired test of the mean vote shares of ballot supporters and opponents because votes lost or gained from an anti-ballot candidate may be split between two or more pro-ballot candidates, for example. I therefore restrict the analysis to elections involving just two Liberals, and regress their respective vote shares at the 1868 election on their respective ballot positions (Ballot Position: For = +1, Unstated = 0, Versus = -1), the district magnitude (M), and a set of district fixed effects, i.e.,

\[ \% \text{Vote}_{ik} = \beta \text{Ballot Position}_i + \gamma M_k + \sum \delta_k \text{Fixed Effects} \]

The results of this regression appear in Table 5 below. The statistical significance of the candidates’ ballot positions on their vote shares is consistent with the view that voters drew a distinction between Liberal candidates with differing stances on the ballot. While the effect is a small one, amounting to just a 2 percent swing in favor of the pro-ballot candidates, it nevertheless accords with the overarching thesis that sitting MPs conditioned their retirement decisions on how they thought their position on the ballot would affect their re-election prospects under the new franchise and new electoral boundaries.

Candidates’ campaign addresses were obtained by using candidates’ names and constituencies as search terms in a search of the British Library’s 19th Century Newspapers database. Note that the candidates who “did not express firm support or opposition to the ballot” were not silent on the issue; rather these candidates mentioned the issue but avoided taking a firm stance on the matter (e.g., said they were not enthusiastic about a secret ballot, but understood that it might nevertheless prove necessary, etc.)
Table 5: OLS REGRESSION OF PAIRED LIBERAL CANDIDATES’ VOTE SHARES ON THEIR BALLOT POSITION AT THE 1868 ELECTION

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<th>$b$</th>
<th>$(se)$</th>
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<td><strong>Ballot Position</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>$M$</strong></td>
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<td><strong>District Fixed Effects</strong> Included</td>
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$R^2$ .91
N Candidates 56
N Districts 28

Main cell entries are OLS coefficients
Robust standard errors are in parentheses

$***p \leq .01 \quad **p \leq .05 \quad *p \leq .10$

5 Discussion

These are provocative results given that extant research (e.g., Berlinski & Dewan 2011) suggests that the Second Reform Act had little electoral impact. A finding that the Act’s provisions did, in fact, have an impact, albeit via the anticipatory reactions of sitting MPs is therefore of interest. The same is true of the finding that MPs’ positions on the ballot were related to their retirement decisions given Kinzer’s (1982, 93) emphasis that, “the ballot was not at this time [1866-1868] the focus of a potent agitation in the country,” and that, “...a powerful extra-parliamentary demand for the ballot... did not exist.” It is true that the ballot did not exert a powerful force at the polls in terms of the votes cast for each candidate, but that is because MPs who opposed the ballot disproportionately opted out of the election beforehand. Even granting that, the evidence is that voters did distinguish between candidates on the basis of the candidates’ positions on the ballot, and all else equal cast their votes for pro-ballot candidates.

The disproportionate retirement of anti-ballot MPs contributed to the Ballot Act’s parliamentary advance because it preemptively thinned the ranks of anti-ballot MPs. The retirement of 76 ballot opponents as compared to 26 of ballot supporters carried with it a potential swing of 100 votes in the division lobbies of the new Parliament. Of course, not all anti-ballot retirees were replaced by pro-ballot newcomers as 34 of the anti-ballot retirees were Conservative MPs who were generally replaced by Conservative newcomers just as opposed to the ballot. Still, the sixteen anti-ballot Liberals who retired were in the aggregate completely replaced by pro-ballot new-
comers, and this represented a swing of 32 votes in favor of the ballot. These 32 votes were not irrelevant in that they represented about as many votes as the Cabinet itself controlled, and hence even if it slides into conjecture one can say that it is far from clear that Gladstone and the Cabinet would have been in a pivotal position on the ballot had the anti-ballot Liberals not retired.

Let me close the paper by reflecting on what these results tell us about electoral responsiveness. The older electoral system of 1832 operated on a franchise that was not only very limited but also severely distorted by malapportionment. This resulted in a political system that was by all appearances thoroughly unresponsive to demands for institutional change. Certainly, there are no quantitative measures of variation in the public's demand for the ballot over time, but we can say that balance of opinion in the House of Commons on the ballot was unmoved by extra-parliamentary agitation of the Chartists and the electoral collapse of the Conservatives. The situation was rooted in the overwhelming stability in MPs' positions on the ballot. For all intents and purposes, MPs were invariant pro- or anti-ballot types. There is no possibility of dyadic responsiveness on the part of the representative vis-a-vis their constituents in the period between elections under such conditions. Responsiveness under these conditions comes about only when elections allow voters to send to the legislature a mixture of types that appropriately reflects the electorate's preferences. A restricted franchise certainly limits how well an electoral system functions in this regard because the more restricted the franchise the greater the gap between the median voter in the restricted electorate and the median citizen in the wider population. However, malapportionment also impairs the capacity of the electoral system to translate electors' votes into an appropriate mixture of types in the legislature. Indeed, the results presented here indicate that it was mainly the anti-competitive effects inherent in gross malapportionment of the older system that kept the parliamentary balance of opinion on the balance in statis. Only when the malapportionment was eased by the significant redistribution of seats effected by the Second Reform Act did the parliamentary balance of opinion on the ballot begin to change. This is a useful lesson because while almost all modern democracies operate on a universal adult suffrage, many continue to be marked by significant malapportionment.

Note that the redistribution undercuts any attempt to assess whether there was a 1:1 relationship between the retirements of anti-ballot incumbents and pro-ballot newcomers. Nevertheless, an assessment of a small sample (n=44) of campaign addresses of first-time Liberal candidates indicates that these newcomers were heavily in favor of the ballot; 37 of the 44 (84%) supported a secret ballot, and only one vocally opposed it. An examination of the votes cast at the 3rd Reading of the 1871 Ballot bill likewise indicates that 80 percent of the large cohort newly arrived Liberals voted for the ballot.

The Cabinet itself contained only a dozen MPs (several more ministers sat in the Lords, of course), but they could also count on the support of their undersecretaries and whips. Still the Cabinet's "payroll" was far smaller in 1868 than it is today, and not all ministers were supportive of the secret ballot. Cardwell, for example, ostentiously absented himself from several divisions on the Ballot bill (Kinzer 1982, 160).
References


