



THE GLOBE AND MAIL 

September 29, 2011

Meet the new NDP: left-leaning Liberals and hardcore progressives

By JANE TABER
Globe and Mail Update

Polling data reveals changing face of those who voted for New Democrats this spring

The new NDP voting coalition is made up of left-leaning Liberals and core New Democrats, according to new polling data.

This could spell trouble for the Liberals, who are trying to rebuild from the depths of third-party despair. But it could provide some opportunities for NDP leadership hopefuls, Innovative Research Group's Greg Lyle says.

"The good news for New Democrats is both groups (the new NDP and the so-called stable NDP) unite around a 'progressive' agenda that focuses on the environment and the flip side of Harper's crime agenda," said Mr. Lyle, who presented his research at a recent polling conference in Ottawa.

Mr. Lyle looked at what motivates NDP voters now and who they are, especially given the party's huge success in the May federal election that saw them vault to Official Opposition status.

To do this he put together a series of panels - or what he characterizes as five waves - during the federal election and just after the vote on May 2. There were 4,617 panelists, who participated in one or more of the so-called waves.

From that, 27 per cent were NDP voters. Of the 27 per cent, 14 per cent were "stable" NDPers, who identified as New Democrats the first time they were interviewed and said they voted for Jack Layton's team in the election. Thirteen per cent were "new" - respondents who did not identify themselves as New Democrats in the first interviews but nonetheless voted NDP on May 2.

Asked about the economy and the environment, 68 per cent of stable New Democrats said that when it comes to trade-offs between the two issues, the environment is the most important compared to 27 per cent who said the economy trumped all. Of the so-called "new" NDP, Mr. Lyle found that 60 per cent of them supported the environment over the economy.

Asked if people who don't get ahead in life should blame themselves or the system, 34 per cent of "stable" NDP said themselves compared to 31 per cent who said the system should be blamed. The new contingent, however, looked at this differently - 52 per cent said they blame themselves compared to 13 per cent who blame the system.

Given these statistics, Mr. Lyle said the Conservatives and Liberals could make inroads if they were to come up with work-for-welfare programs.

"The concept of work for welfare is that handouts can destroy the work ethic so when you are giving income assistance to people who are employable, you should have them do some form of community service in return," he told The Globe. "While it is now often seen as a right wing American idea, it has a strong Canadian appeal."

And then asked about the role of government, 55 per cent of stable NDPers said that the main role of government was to redistribute wealth "so that the poor and the disadvantaged have more than they would if left on their own." Meanwhile, 58 per cent of the new contingent said government's role is to "create opportunity so that everyone can compete on their own to be the best they can be."

Mr. Lyle noted from his research that Brian Topp, the front-running candidate so far for the NDP leadership, appears to represent the views of the "stable" NDP.

Ottawa Center NDP MP Paul Dewar, who is expected to declare his candidacy for the leadership Sunday, could get real traction as a moderate voice, especially with in the Prairies, Mr. Lyle said..

"The Prairie New Democrats have strong records as good and fiscal managers," he said. "... The new NDPers are more fiscally conservative than the base voters."

The Globe and Mail, Inc.



The Globe and Mail Inc. All Rights Reserved.. Permission granted for up to 5 copies. All rights reserved.

You may forward this article or get additional permissions by typing http://license.icopyright.net/3.8425?icx_id=/icopyright/?artid=2184786 into any web browser. The Globe and Mail, Inc. and The Globe and Mail logos are registered trademarks of The Globe and Mail, Inc. The iCopyright logo is a registered trademark of iCopyright, Inc.