

Measuring Local Campaign Effects: Labour Party Constituency Campaigning at the 1987 General Election

CHARLES PATTIE

University of Nottingham

PAUL WHITELEY

College of William and Mary, Virginia

RON JOHNSTON

University of Essex

AND PATRICK SEYD*

University of Sheffield

Thursday 31 March: Polling day. To headquarters at about 9 and from 9.30 am to 6 visiting all the polling stations and committee rooms. We had lunch at the 'Hole-in-the-Wall' and then went out again with our loudspeaker, doing final knocking up. After the polls closed we cleared up the headquarters, went back to the hotel and began watching the BBC Election programme. It was evident that a big Labour victory was coming ...¹

During election campaigns, political parties engage in intense activity aimed at winning over voter support. If they are to win, the parties must both mobilize their existing support and reach out to those who have not yet decided. At the 1987 election, for instance, most voters had made their choice before the start of the campaign (about 70% of respondents to the 1987 British Election Study claimed to have done so over a year before, and 80% had decided before the campaign began): thus a major goal of the campaign effort was to make sure they actually voted. In addition a still substantial minority (around 21% in the 1987 BES) decided during the campaign itself (Miller and his co-workers, using

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¹ T. Benn, *Out of the Wilderness: Diaries 1963–1967* (London, Hutchinson, 1987) p. 399

a different methodology, estimate that up to 38% of voters changed their minds at least once during the 'short campaign' from March to June 1987²); these 'floating voters' were a major target for the campaign.

The resources mobilized by parties during the campaign are very large indeed. At a national level there are few restrictions on how much parties can spend in Britain, and the major parties lay out large amounts of money for advertizing and publicity in the press and on billboards.³ Television and radio campaigns also pay an important role, though, unlike the print media, access to the electronic media is carefully monitored to ensure fairness.⁴ The effects of this national campaign have been widely discussed.⁵ Less attention has been given, however, to constituency campaigns. But there is controversy over whether these local campaigns really affect the result of an election. Furthermore, quite *how* they might affect results is a matter of debate. The paper picks up these controversies and discusses whether, and how, local campaigns affect local results, with particular reference at Labour's 1987 campaign.

The Constituency Campaign

For most commentators, local campaigns make no difference to modern British elections. In a mass media age, voters get their main political news from the national television, radio and press. Few attend campaign meetings in their constituencies (only 2.7% of respondents to the 1987 BES said they had done so). Thus, it is argued, 'the local campaign is indeed much of a ritual', having 'little success in changing political attitudes'.⁶

Local Campaign Activism

A number of studies have produced findings which run against the accepted view and suggest an important role for the local campaign. However, many of these studies are one-off investigations of one or two constituencies.⁷ There has been little comparative work on local campaign effects throughout the whole country. Recent research on Labour party members provides an important exception.⁸ Seyd and Whiteley questioned Labour party members throughout

² W. L. Miller, H. D. Clarke, M. Harrop, L. Leduc and P. F. Whiteley, *How Voters Change: the 1987 British Election Campaign in Perspective* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1990).

³ M. Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance 1830-1980* (Washington, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1981); M. Pinto-Duschinsky, 'Trends in British political funding, 1979-83', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 38 (1985), 328-47; M. Pinto-Duschinsky, 'Trends in British political funding, 1983-87' *Parliamentary Affairs*, 42 (1989), 197-212.

⁴ H. F. Rawlings, *Law and the Electoral Process* (London, Sweet and Maxwell, 1988).

⁵ I. Crewe and M. Harrop (eds), *Political Communications: the General Election Campaign of 1983* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986); I. Crewe and M. Harrop (eds), *Political Communications: the General Election Campaign of 1987* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989); Miller *et al.*, *How Voters Change*.

⁶ D. Kavanagh, *Constituency Electioneering in Britain* (Longman, London, 1970), pp. 47, 87.

⁷ R. T. Holt and J. E. Turner, *Political Parties in Action: the Battle of Barons Court* (New York, Free, 1968); J. M. Bochel and D. Denver 'Canvassing, turnout and party support; an experiment' *British Journal of Political Science*, 1 (1971), 257-69; J. M. Bochel and D. Denver 'The impact of the campaign on the results of local government elections' *British Journal of Political Science*, 2 (1972), 239-60.

⁸ P. Seyd and P. Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots: the Politics of Party Membership* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1992).

Britain on their levels of local activism during the 1987 election. Their indicators of activism were: whether the party member displayed a poster during the campaign; whether leaflets were delivered and whether voters were canvassed. These were used to calculate activism scores for individual constituency parties. Information from the 1987 British Election Study (BES) on whether voters had been canvassed during the campaign was also used to estimate how many voters had been canvassed in each of the 191 constituencies sampled in the BES and in Seyd and Whiteley's study.⁹

Seyd and Whiteley demonstrated the efficacy of local campaigning. They found that the more active a constituency Labour party was then: more voters reported being canvassed; Labour's share of the vote was higher; and the greater the swing to Labour between 1983 and 1987. Local activism remained an important correlate of the Labour vote in a multi-variate model which controlled for the effects of constituency marginality, social composition and previous levels of party support.¹⁰ Seyd and Whiteley's results indicate the importance of local campaign effort in an era of mass media politics, and they estimate that 'if every local (Labour) party had recruited an additional 100 members prior to the 1987 election, and each of these increased the activism score by an average of 8.5 points', the party would have won nearly 36% of the vote, rather than the 31% it actually got.¹¹

Local Campaign Spending

There is also a handful of studies which use the amount spent on campaigning by a party in each constituency (to pay for, for instance, the printing of handbills, posters, etc.) to estimate the effects of local campaign effort over a large number of constituencies.¹² Their authors argue that spending has two possible effects on the outcome. Firstly, and directly, the more a party is able to spend locally, the more local votes it is able to 'buy' through advertising.¹³ Secondly, local spending is assumed to be a surrogate for campaign activity: the more a party spends locally, the more active it is assumed to have been during the campaign there, so that if canvassing activity wins votes, the level of spending is indicative of the volume of vote-winning activity.

⁹ Seyd and Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, p. 182. In the constituencies sampled, there were on average 15.3 BES respondents and 10.6 respondents to the Labour party survey.

¹⁰ Seyd and Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, Table 8.7.

¹¹ Seyd and Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, pp. 197-8.

¹² D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Marginality and turnout in British general elections', *British Journal of Political Science*, 4 (1974), 17-35; D. Denver and G. Hands, 'Marginality and turnout in British general elections in the 1970s' *British Journal of Political Science*, 15 (1985), 381-8; R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign spending and votes: a reconsideration', *Public Choice*, 33 (1979), 83-92; R. J. Johnston, 'Party strength, incumbency and campaign spending as influences on voting', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 76 (1985), 82-7; R. J. Johnston, 'A further look at British political finance', *Political Studies*, XXXIV (1986), 466-73; R. J. Johnston, *Money and Votes: Constituency Campaign Spending and Election Results* (London, Croom Helm, 1987); R. J. Johnston, C. J. Pattie and L. C. Johnston, 'The impact of constituency spending on the result of the 1987 British General Election', *Electoral Studies*, 8 (1989), 143-55.

¹³ R. J. Johnston, 'Political advertising and the geography of voting in England at the 1983 General Election', *International Journal of Advertising*, 4 (1985), 1-10.

Parties are limited in their spending on the constituency campaign in British elections. Legislation imposes maximum limits,¹⁴ and in 1987, the maxima were:

in a *county* constituency, £3,370 plus an extra 3.8 pence for every entry in the electoral register used at the election; and
in a *borough* constituency, £3,370 plus an extra 2.9 pence for every entry in the register.

The difference between county and borough constituencies reflects the larger geographical extent of the former, and hence the assumed greater difficulties and expense of campaigning there. Local parties did not spend to the upper limit in many constituencies, however; in 1987, the average constituency Labour party spent only 71% of the allowed amount, with a standard deviation of 24%. (Spending ranged from 16% to 100% of the legal maximum.)

Constituency parties are not always rational in their spending, and the relationship between constituency marginality and spending is not particularly strong. But however irrationally it is used, local campaign spending is related to the constituency vote, particularly where a party is the challenger.¹⁵

For the first time, then, there are three different estimates of the extent of local campaign effort over a large number of constituencies for the Labour party's performance in the 1987 general election: Seyd and Whiteley's direct measurements of local activism in the Labour party; data from the 1987 BES on canvassing; and Johnston *et al.*'s relatively indirect estimates using campaign spending data. In the following analyses, all three types of data are used in analyses of the 191 constituencies for which data are available both from Seyd and Whiteley's study and from the 1987 BES.

Campaign Effort: Measures of the same Thing?

Work on local campaign spending has been criticized. Gordon and Whiteley, in a critique of an earlier paper by Johnston, argue that expenditure data are inaccurate and are thus poor indicators of local campaign effort, since 'in Britain elections at the local level are run almost entirely on voluntary labour and the bulk of election activity does not involve financial transactions at all'.¹⁶

Evaluating the worth of local campaign spending data has important implications for the analysis of voting behaviour. If the local campaign is seen as a potential influence on the vote, then some measure of campaign activity is needed. But gathering data such as those collected by Seyd and Whiteley for all constituencies and for all parties is expensive and time-consuming. Spending data must be published by Parliament, are widely available and inexpensive.

¹⁴ Pinto-Duschinsky, *British Political Finance*; R. J. Johnston and C. J. Pattie 'Great Britain; twentieth century parties operating under nineteenth century regulations' in A. B. Gunlicks (ed.), *Comparative Campaign and Party Finance in North America and Western Europe* (Boulder CO, Westview, 1993).

¹⁵ R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign spending and the efficacy of advertising at the 1974 General Election in England', *Political Studies*, XXVII (1979), 114-9; R. J. Johnston *et al.*, 'The impact of constituency spending'; R. J. Johnston, *Money and Votes*.

¹⁶ I. Gordon and P. Whiteley, 'Comment: Johnston on campaign expenditure and the efficacy of advertising', *Political Studies*, XXVIII (1980), 291; R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign expenditure and the efficacy of advertising'. For a response, see R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign expenditure and the efficacy of advertising: a response', *Political Studies*, XXIX (1981), 113-4.

However, if there is doubt over their meaning, then their value is lost. Some means of assessing the substantive relationship between 'real' campaign activity and spending is needed.

The data employed here fulfil that need. They make possible a test of Johnston's claim that campaign spending can be used as a surrogate for campaign activism. Regression models were fitted to estimate the connections between local party activism, local canvassing and party spending for the Labour party in 1987. Local activism was measured using Seyd and Whiteley's constituency activism score (ACTIVE); the number of voters in each constituency claiming to have been canvassed by Labour in 1987 was derived from the British Election Study (CANVASS); and the amount spent on the campaign by constituency Labour parties was expressed as a percentage of the legal maximum in that constituency (LSP87PC).¹⁷

If campaign activism is related to voters' experience then we should expect that the more active the local party, the more voters who reported being canvassed. A simple bivariate model, with CANVASS as the dependent, confirms the hypothesis:

$$\text{CANVASS} = 11.43 + 0.16(\text{ACTIVE}) \quad R^2 = 0.17 \\ (6.20)$$

Labour's local campaign activity was significantly and positively related to the number of local people reporting being canvassed. However, the relationship is not a strong one.

If reported spending levels are reasonable surrogates of campaign effort, the latter being measured both by self-reported local activism and by the 'output' measure of voters reporting being canvassed, then the more active a local party is, and the more voters who are canvassed by it, the closer to its legal maximum its spending should be. A multivariate model was fitted, with Labour spending as the dependent, and campaign activism and canvassing as the independents:

$$\text{LSP87PC} = 43.83 + 0.45(\text{CANVASS}) + 0.16(\text{ACTIVE}) \quad R^2 = 0.33 \\ (5.40) \quad (4.94)$$

Once again, the regression model confirms expectations. Both CANVASS and ACTIVE were significantly related to LSP87PC and in the expected directions. However, the relationships are once again relatively weak: CANVASS and ACTIVE together account for only a third of the variance in LSP87PC.¹⁸

As a final test of the 'surrogate measure' argument, LSP87PC, ACTIVE and CANVASS were entered into a principal components analysis. This produced a one-component solution which accounted for almost two thirds of the original variance (Table 1). All three measures were strongly and positively

¹⁷ Spending data were taken from *Election Expenses* Cmd. 426 (London, HMSO, 1988).

¹⁸ The amount spent on the local campaign was a better predictor of reported canvassing activity than was local party activism: a bivariate regression of LSP87PC and CANVASS yielded an R^2 of 0.24, rather better than the equivalent values for the bivariate regressions of CANVASS and ACTIVE ($R^2 = 0.17$) and of LSP87PC and ACTIVE ($R^2 = 0.22$). Local campaign spending is no worse an indicator of canvassing than more direct measures of local activism!

TABLE 1. Campaign Effort:
Principal Components Analysis

	Component I
LSP87PC	0.82
CANVASS	0.79
ACTIVE	0.78
Eigen value	1.91
% variance explained	63.8

related to the component, indicating that they are all to a considerable extent measuring the same thing. On the basis of these findings, then, it seems reasonable to argue that local campaign spending is an acceptable measure of campaign effort. This is not to say that spending is an accurate guide to absolute levels of local campaigning: the data are not sufficiently reliable for this. However, as the PCA results show, it is a good guide to relative activity. While there are deviations from the 'true' level of campaigning these are random across constituencies: systematic errors would have reduced the loading of spending on the campaign component.

Measuring the Effectiveness of the Local Campaign

Unless the considerable party resources, in terms both of money and party members' time and enthusiasm, expended in the constituency campaign have a tangible and favourable effect upon the constituency election result, it is largely wasted effort, contributing perhaps to party morale but doing little to change the election outcome. In this section, the effectiveness of campaign effort is estimated. Campaign effort is measured by the standardized component score (CAMPAIGN) derived from the analysis reported in Table 1. Scores of greater than zero on CAMPAIGN indicated above average constituency campaign effort by the local Labour party; scores below zero indicate below average effort.

Conventionally, estimates of the effectiveness of local campaign effort use as dependent variables the percentage share of the vote won by a party and the percentage point change in that share since the previous election.¹⁹ Such analyses obscure important patterns of change. In particular, an emphasis on net change in vote share between elections ignores the even larger gross shifts in party support. For instance, it would be interesting to know not only whether Labour campaign effort was a significant factor in accounting for the party's vote in a constituency but also whether it was more effective in winning over more former centre party supporters than former Conservative voters. In order to allow the examination of the latter possibility, entropy maximizing estimates of the constituency flow of the vote between 1983 and 1987 were used in the analyses reported below.²

¹⁹J. M. Bochel and D. Denver, 'Canvassing, turnout and party support'; R. J. Johnston, 'Campaign expenditure and the efficacy of advertising'; Seyd and Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*.

TABLE 2. Measuring the Effectiveness of the Local Campaign: Regression of Constituency Flow-of-the-vote against Local Campaign Effort

FROM: 1983 TO: 1987	CON LAB	LAB CON	LAB LAB	LAB ALL	LAB RNV	ALL LAB	RNV LAB
CAMPAIGN	0.66	-1.27	6.30	-2.55	-2.48	3.35	3.29
CONST	3.06	5.43	68.85	9.42	16.30	15.91	17.23
R^2	0.13	0.28	0.33	0.23	0.34	0.21	0.28

The vote flows which were of most concern here were to and from the Labour party between 1983 and 1987. Specifically, attention focused on flows from Conservative in 1983 to Labour in 1987; from Labour to Conservative; Labour to Labour; Labour to the Alliance; Labour to other parties and non-voters; the Alliance to Labour; and other parties and non-voters to Labour. These flows were estimated as percentages of the 1983 vote for the party of origin: for instance, the percentage of 1983 Conservative voters who supported Labour in 1987 is the flow from Conservative to Labour. The purpose of Labour's constituency campaigns was both to retain those voters who voted Labour at the last election and to gain the support of those who had previously voted for another party. The hypothesized relationship between flow-of-the-vote and campaign effort in 1987 is, therefore, that the more effort a constituency party put into the local campaign in 1987, the greater should be the flows from all parties to Labour and the lower should be flows from Labour.

Straightforward tests of this hypothesis regressed the flow-of-the-vote estimates against CAMPAIGN for the 191 constituencies. Campaign effort proved to be significantly related to all the flow estimates (Table 2: only those regression coefficients which were significant at the 95% level are reported here). Furthermore, the relationships were all in the expected directions: positive for flows to Labour, and negative for flows away from the party. The greater the effort put into the local campaign by a constituency Labour party, the higher were Labour's gains and the lower its losses.

Local campaigning by the Labour party seems to have had a more pronounced impact on the 1987 votes of those who had voted for Labour, the Alliance or who had supported a minor party or abstained in 1983, than on the votes of those who had voted for the Conservatives at that election. For instance, a one standard deviation increase in CAMPAIGN meant that the flow from Conservative to Labour would rise by 0.66 percentage points. But the same increase in campaign effort would result in a rise of 3.35 percentage points in the flow from the Alliance to Labour, and of 6.30 points in the proportion of 1983 Labour supporters who stayed loyal in 1987. But local campaign efforts did not account for a great deal of the inter-constituency variation in the flow of the vote. Values of R^2 never exceeded 0.35; typically, only between a fifth and a third of the variance was explained.

²⁰ R. J. Johnston, *The Geography of English Politics* (London, Croom Helm, 1985); R. J. Johnston, C. J. Pattie and J. G. Allsopp, *A Nation Dividing? The Electoral Map of Great Britain, 1979-1987* (London, Longman, 1988).

Towards a Fuller Model

Local campaigning is just part of a 'lifetime of learning'²¹ Taking those wider influences on the vote into account requires a more detailed model than that outlined in Table 2. Among the factors which might influence the geography of the flow of the vote, *apart from* local campaign effects, are a number of long- and short-term factors: the class composition of the constituency; the previous state of the parties; the marginality of the seat; its regional context; and so on.²² Most of these factors reflect longer term influences on the local vote and they should be incorporated in a more fully specified model.

That specification was provided by adding the control variables employed by Seyd and Whiteley.²³ The social composition of each constituency was measured by the percentage of workers employed in manual occupations in 1981 (MANUAL) and the percentage of council tenants in the same year (COUNCIL): we expect that flows to Labour would increase (and flows from the party decrease) as the percentages of manual workers and of council tenants in a constituency increased. The local context of the seat may have an independent influence on the flow of the vote. We control for the percentage of agricultural workers in the seat in 1981 (AGRIC): Labour tends to do worse in rural seats, *ceteris paribus*, than elsewhere.²⁴ The more marginal a constituency, the more an individual voter's actions might influence the result. We include a measure of the marginality of each constituency for the Labour candidate (MARG): where Labour won the seat, MARG is measured by the absolute difference between the Labour vote and the party in second place; where Labour did not win, it is the absolute difference between Labour and the winning party. Furthermore, increases in turnout from one election to another can influence the flow of the vote, especially where differential turnout takes place. We include a measure of the change in turnout between 1983 and 1987 (TURNCH). Finally, we also control for the regional context. During the 1980s, several commentators identified a widening north-south divide, in which Labour gained ground in the north and lost ground in the south.²⁵ A dummy variable (REGION) is included in the model to take account of this: constituencies in Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire, the North-West or the north, REGION were coded as 1 and the remainder were coded zero.

Adding these controls to the models reported in Table 2 increased R^2 values by 45% on average, such that most of the models had R^2 values over 70% (Table 3). In general, then, the controls provided a better guide to the flow of the vote than did campaign effort. The local campaign appears to have influenced voters 'at the margin'. However, in particular contexts, and especially in closely fought contests, this 'marginal' influence might mean the difference between winning and losing a seat.

²¹ R. Rose and I. McAllister, *The Loyalties of Voters: a Lifetime Learning Model* (London, Sage, 1990).

²² W. L. Miller, *Electoral Dynamics* (London, Macmillan, 1977); R. J. Johnston *et al.*, *A Nation Dividing?*

²³ Seyd and Whiteley, *Labour's Grass Roots*, pp. 190-3.

²⁴ I. Crewe and C. Payne, 'Another game with nature: an ecological regression model of the British two-party vote ratio in 1970', *British Journal of Political Science*, 6 (1976), 43-81.

²⁵ J. Curtice and M. Steed, 'Analysis' in D. Butler and D. Kavanagh (eds), *The British General Election of 1987* (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988); R. J. Johnston *et al.*, *A Nation Dividing?*

Broadly speaking, the 'long term' factors behaved as expected. Flows to Labour were higher in more working class seats and in seats with a large proportion of council tenants. Furthermore, the party was less successful in winning and keeping support in highly rural areas than in more urban places, but did better in northern than in southern constituencies. Measures of the political context in each seat provided more ambiguous results, however. Changes in turnout had a negligible influence on most flows (the exceptions are the flow from Labour to the Alliance – increasing turnout increased the flow; and the flow from Labour to minor parties and abstention – increased turnout, not surprisingly, decreased the flow). Labour loyalty was greatest in the party's safest seats, and in its most hopeless ones but there was more turmoil in the Labour vote as the competition between Labour and other parties in a constituency became more intense.

Encouragingly, even with extra controls in the equations, the relationships between campaign effort and the flow of the vote were again significant and in the expected directions. Where Labour put relatively large resources into the local campaign, it enjoyed above average flows in its favour, and below average flows away from it. An increase of one standard deviation in CAMPAIGN meant: a fall of 0.29 percentage points in the flow from Labour to the Conservatives; a fall of 0.88 percentage points in flows from Labour to minor parties and to abstention; a rise of 1.72 in Labour loyalty; rises of 1.04 points in flows from the Alliance and from 'other parties and non-voting' to Labour; and a rise of 0.39 percentage points in flows from the Conservatives to Labour. While these effects were not large, they could have been decisive in closely fought constituency competitions.

The Effects of Campaigning by Other Parties

The above analyses establish the importance of Labour's local campaigns in 1987. However, the party does not campaign in a vacuum. A Labour constituency party's efforts could have been offset by the similar efforts of its Conservative and Alliance rivals. To take this into account, the models reported in Table 3 were rerun, adding measures of campaign effort for the Conservatives and the Alliance as well as for Labour (Table 4). In the absence of direct measures of activism by local Conservative and Alliance party members, these

TABLE 3. Local Campaign Effects: a Fuller Regression Model

FROM: 1983 TO: 1987	CON LAB	LAB CON	LAB LAB	LAB ALL	LAB RNV	ALL LAB	RNV LAB
MANUAL	0.07	-0.08	0.44	-0.16	-0.20	0.33	0.28
COUNCIL	0.03	-0.04		-0.05		0.09	
TURNCH				0.62	-0.43		
MARG	0.02	0.03	-0.16	0.07	0.06		
AGRIC	-0.09	0.08	-0.67	0.42	0.17	-0.51	-0.34
REGION	1.66	-1.98	6.02	-1.72	-2.31	4.32	4.91
CAMPAIGN	0.29	-0.29	1.72		-0.88	1.04	1.04
CONST	-2.24	9.89	49.62	15.18	25.30	-2.44	2.33
R ²	0.74	0.76	0.71	0.56	0.67	0.70	0.74

TABLE 4. Local Campaign Effects: Accounting for the Effects of Campaigns by Other Parties

FROM: 1983 TO: 1987	CON LAB	LAB CON	LAB LAB	LAB ALL	LAB RNV	ALL LAB	RNV LAB
MANUAL	0.04	-0.03			-0.14	0.12	0.14
COUNCIL	0.03	-0.02		-0.06		0.09	
TURNCH		0.10		0.46	-0.48		
MARG	0.02	0.03	-0.22	0.11	0.08		-0.07
AGRIC	-0.05					-0.21	
REGION	1.58	-1.75	5.12	-1.05	-2.32	3.84	4.58
SDP			-2.28	1.44		-1.72	-1.19
CSP87PC	-0.01	0.03	-0.06				-0.04
LSP87PC	0.02	-0.02	0.08	-0.04	-0.03	0.05	0.04
ASP87PC			-0.10	0.08	0.02	-0.08	-0.04
CONST	-0.42	5.68	72.88	-0.26	21.68	11.54	13.10
R ²	0.76	0.82	0.77	0.70	0.67	0.77	0.78

used party spending only, on the assumption that for Conservative and Alliance this bears a similar relationship to their local activism as spending does for Labour. Spending by each party is expressed as a percentage of the legally allowed maximum in each constituency: CSP87PC reports Conservative spending and ASP87PC Alliance spending.

The analysis is further complicated by the fact that the Alliance vote in 1987 was really a vote for two parties: the Liberals and the Social Democratic party (SDP). They entered into an electoral pact prior to the 1983 election, dividing the seats between themselves. The pact was still in force in 1987. However, the local resources available to each party differed. The Liberals, with their much longer tradition and their relatively strong grassroots, tended to be relatively well organized in their constituencies, whereas the SDP, which was formed only in 1981 and which had a far larger national than local profile, was comparatively weak in constituencies. Furthermore, the SDP had formed largely as a result of defections from Labour. As a result, the two Alliance parties might reasonably be expected to have had different impacts on flows to and from Labour in 1987. To take account of this possibility, a dummy variable controlling for which party contested the seat for the Alliance was also added to the regression model: the variable (SDP) took a value of 1 where the Liberals fought the seat, and zero where the candidate was from the SDP.

In the results, the dummy variable for which Alliance party fought in a seat was significant for four out of seven flows (Table 4). Where the Alliance candidate was a Liberal, flows from Labour to the Alliance were on average 1.44 percentage points higher than where the SDP stood. However, with a Liberal candidate in place, Labour loyalty was 2.28 percentage points lower than where the SDP fought the seat, and flows from the Alliance and from minor parties and abstention to Labour were also reduced. Facing a Liberal rather than an SDP candidate meant that Labour lost more votes to, and gained fewer votes from, the centre party but it also had impacts on Labour loyalty and on the party's ability to win over previous non-voters.

Labour campaign spending was significant in all the regression models and was always in the expected direction. The efforts made by the other parties also had an effect upon flows to and from Labour. The more the Conservatives spent, for instance, the lower the rate of defections from Conservative and from 'rest/non-voters' to Labour, the greater the defections from Labour to Conservative and the lower Labour's loyalty rate. Conservative campaigning did not affect flows between Labour and the Alliance, however. Equally, Alliance spending had no impact upon flows between Labour and the Conservatives. But higher spending by the centre party reduced Labour loyalty rates, increased flows from Labour to the Alliance (and decreased flows in the reverse direction), and adversely affected Labour's ability to 'compete' with minor parties and abstention.

The evidence seems clear. Not only does Labour party constituency campaigning have a significant impact upon the party's performance but campaigns mounted by the other parties can also do so. In particular, campaigning by a party can reduce its losses to and increase its gains from Labour. But the efforts of *all* parties have an effect upon Labour loyalty and upon the ability of Labour to win over past abstainers. The local campaign is a genuine contest with real consequences for vote shifts.

Conclusions

The analyses reported here reveal that campaign spending is indeed a useful surrogate for campaign effort. The finding opens up avenues for future research. Analysis of the effectiveness of constituency campaigning need not be constrained by the absence of survey data for a large number of seats. By law, every party must report how much it spent on its constituency battles. This provides a ready, and apparently fruitful, source of data for psephologists. More substantively, such data demonstrate the continued importance of the local campaign. The efforts of party members in each constituency at election time are far from being a mere 'ritual'.²⁶ They do have real though small consequences for election outcomes. Elections are not simply lost and won on the national campaign. Particularly in close-fought contests, an effective and energetic local campaign can make the difference between winning and losing. Political parties ignore the work of their local members at their electoral peril.

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²⁶ D. Kavanagh, *Constituency Electioneering*, p. 47.