

## Parties, Big and Small

### Progressive Conservatives

To American ears Progressive Conservative may seem a contradiction in terms. To many, 'progressive' means left, 'conservative' right. In Canada (and in Webster's dictionary) they are not mutually exclusive.

The PCs began as the Conservatives or Tories, and under Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and his Quebec lieutenant, Sir George-Etienne Cartier, they dominated Canadian politics through the 19th century.

Their vigorous support of a military draft during World War I initiated a long-lasting alienation of Quebec, and they became the second party after Prime Minister Richard Bennett, who had the misfortune to be in office during the Great Depression, lost to William Lyon Mackenzie King in 1935. King and his Liberal successors would control the government for forty-two of the next forty-nine years.

PC John Diefenbaker was Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, and PC Joe Clark held office for nine months in 1979 and 1980. In recent years the party, strong in the Western provinces, has been almost powerless in Quebec. This year, with the election of Brian Mulroney, a native, as party leader, membership has increased impressively in Quebec and engendered hopes that the Liberal hold on the province might be significantly loosened.

### Liberals

The Liberals or Grits began slowly, gaining control of the Commons between 1873 and 1878 and not again until 1896.

Sir Wilfrid Laurier was the party's first great leader, and by standing firm against the World War I draft he gave the Liberals a Quebec foundation that would serve them well. Since 1935 they have placed



four Prime Ministers in power: Mackenzie King, who became almost the personification of Canada during World War II; Louis St. Laurent, who succeeded him in 1948 for nine years; Lester B. Pearson, who served from 1963 to 1968; and Pierre Trudeau, who served from 1968 to 1984 (with a nine-month interruption), longer than any contemporary Western head of government.

In recent years Liberal power has been concentrated in the East, in Quebec where it has had almost unrivaled sway, and in Ontario and the Maritimes where it has been engaged in an endless and fairly evenhanded struggle with the PCs.

The western provinces have been resolutely non-Liberal since the mid-1970s, and there are now no Liberal members of the House of Commons from British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan and only two from Manitoba.

### The New Democratic Party

The NDPs are social democrats, strongly allied with the Canadian Labour Congress and loosely with the interests of farmers. The party's predecessor, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, began in Saskatchewan in 1933, and its famous Regina Manifesto said, "No CCF government will rest content until it has eradicated capitalism and put into operation a full program of socialized planning." The CCF flourished for over twenty years in the West, but by 1958 its Ottawa representation was down to eight seats. Three years later the NDP emerged as an intended alliance of labour and farmers. Instead, the national NDP has become primarily a stronghold of labour and urban leftists. It held the balance of power during Joe Clark's brief time as Prime Minister and had the support of 26 per cent of the voters in 1982. It has since faded nationally (though it still controls the government of Manitoba). Polls this March and July showed

the party with the support of only 11 per cent of the decided voters nationally and evoked some gallows humour.

Pauline Jewett, the NDP's external affairs critic, said, "Maybe they got the digits reversed," and Ed Broadbent, the party leader, said, "We don't want to peak too early!"

The party must hold at least twelve of its present thirty-one seats if it is to keep its status as a major party, and some party strategists say it will be fortunate if it can hold twenty.

### Smaller Parties

The Parti Nationaliste, a new party which, like Quebec's ruling provincial Parti Québécois, calls for the peaceful separation of the province, will field candidates in most Quebec ridings.

The Social Credit Party (Ralliement Créditiste in Quebec), a neo-conservative party with unique fiscal theories, was founded during the Depression and has had many an up and down. It controlled Alberta for thirty-six years, before losing to Progressive Conservatives in 1971, and it has been strong in British Columbia since the fifties and is currently in power there. Its Quebec branch was a force in the sixties and seventies. It now holds no seats in the federal House of Commons.

Canada has a dozen other small parties, none of which hold a seat in the House, but all of which aspire to national power. One is the Green, founded in 1983, which, in the words of a spokesman, sees "economic growth as a problem, not as a solution." It had an estimated 4,000 members last fall but has since dwindled to a hard core of 1,500, half in British Columbia.

Other hopeful contenders are the Marxist-Leninists, the Communist Party of Canada, le Parti Rhinocéros, Union Nationale (once a power in Quebec) and the Libertarians.

## VOTE LIBERAL



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