

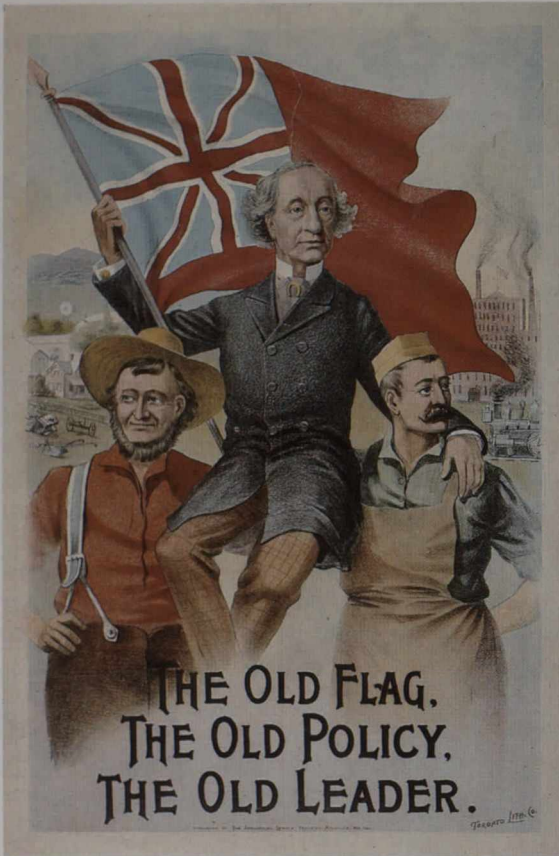
The New Ridings

The Liberal party has been Canada's dominant party since the end of World War I, partly because it could depend on great margins of victory in Quebec. With more than a quarter of the seats in the House of Commons, Quebec can take a party half way to a majority.

The Conservative party has had no comparable bloc. Alberta is Conservative consistently, but it has only 21 seats. Ontario has more seats than Quebec, and though no party ever carries it totally, it has been the foundation on which the Conservative party builds its hopes for victory.

The ridings, the home districts from which the members of Parliament come, are redrawn after each decennial census. In 1976 all but 16 were altered, and 18 new ones were created. Quebec gained 1 seat (it now has 75); Ontario gained 7 (for a new total of 95); British Columbia gained 5; and the Prairies increased their total by 4. The result is that the basic strength of the Quebec vote, and therefore the basic strength of the Liberal party, has been slightly lessened.

Since the areas of greatest future growth will probably continue to be outside Quebec, probably in the West, Quebec's relative political clout may diminish. What effect that will ultimately have on the strength of today's political parties, or on political parties yet unborn, no one knows.



John A. Macdonald, Canada's first prime minister, a Conservative, served for 19 years. The poster above is from his last campaign in 1891.

Three Partisan Views

In the interviews below, we offer the opinions of three prominent members of Canada's major political parties. None of them is the present leader; and each is an unofficial rather than an official spokesman. Though they are not candidates in the election, each plays a significant role in his party.

CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI interview with David Lewis, former New Democratic Party leader, 28 March 1979.

Q. What are the NDP's best issues?

A. Mr. Broadbent is proposing a Fair Prices Commission. He's going into the question of jobs with a detailed industrial strategy, and into the economic field with a strong pitch for Canadian ownership and control, as far as possible, of our own resources and a strong defence of Petro-Canada. There is also the issue of medicare. In some provinces, mainly Ontario and Manitoba, too many doctors are opting out. Mr. Broadbent will demand action by the federal government to prevent the erosion of universal medicare.

Q. What about national unity?

A. I really don't know. National unity is a very elusive concept. If you ask a person anywhere in Canada, "Are you concerned about the country being kept together?", his answer is, "Of course I am." But I don't think there are any votes in it. Everybody wants to keep Canada together, it just isn't an issue among the parties. They all voted for bilingualism. It's being reduced to whether Trudeau or Clark is better fitted to keep the country together. So it's not the issue of national unity but the issue of who can best do the job of keeping the country together. Mr. Broadbent's position is that even if one accepts that the prime minister is not responsible for the fragility of