



Election 84

A Page of Explanations

A Prime Minister is not a President (he is the Head of Government, not the Head of State), Liberals (with a capital L) are not Democrats (with a capital D), Progressive Conservatives are neither Republicans nor republicans, and the New Democratic Party is like no other party in North America.

Here are a few Canadian definitions:

Member of Parliament (MP): A member of the Commons. House members are expected to vote with their party except on rare occasions (as in bills on abortion) when they may vote their conscience.

No Poll Vaults

In Canada, like the U.S. a wide country, West Coast polls are still open after those in the East have closed. Under a 1938 law TV and radio cannot report results in any time zone where the polls are still open.

An inattentive Canadian teen-ager might have assumed that Pierre Trudeau was part of the Canadian Constitution.

He became Prime Minister in 1968 and remained in the office – with one nine-month interruption – until early this summer.

In the words of John Turner, who succeeded him, he was “the most extraordinary Canadian of his generation,” a characterization with which both his admirers and critics could agree.

Mr. Trudeau announced his intention to resign as PM on February 29th and he did so on June 30th, after Mr. Turner had been elected Liberal Party leader.

The Liberals have been in control of the government since 1980, and Mr. Turner was required to call an election by early 1985. After due consideration he called one for September 4th.

The Prime Minister likely to head the government through the second half of the 1980s will probably be either Mr. Turner, the incumbent Liberal, or Brian Mulroney, the new Progressive Conservative leader. In either case it will be someone with a political style and a philosophy clearly different from Mr. Trudeau's.

House of Commons: Canada has a parliamentary form of government which normally means the party with the most seats in the House forms the government. The Prime Minister and the majority of Cabinet members are House members.

Senate: Senators are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister, usually in recognition of long and loyal service. The powers of the Senate are severely limited. Senators now serve until death or age 75, whichever comes first.

Governor General: The Governor General is the Queen's representative. The present Governor General, Mme. Jeanne Sauv , the former Speaker of the House and the first woman to serve in both posts, was appointed by Queen Elizabeth II on the advice of Prime Minister Trudeau this spring. Governors General sign legislation into law and could constitutionally veto it, but the post has been largely ceremonial and advisory for most of this century.

Mr. Trudeau's interests were often historical in perspective – he brought Quebecers and the French language into the mainstream of Canadian life and gave Canada its own Constitution – and his economic and political interests ranged worldwide. He was a government activist, an internationalist, an advocate of Third World initiatives, and a disciple of peace through d tente and disarmament. He was also a confrontational debater who did not suffer fools gladly.

The styles of Messrs. Turner and Mulroney are lower-key and their attention focussed closer to home. Both have been practicing lawyers and, by their own pronouncements, are practical, pragmatic businessmen. Both are immediately concerned with Canada's economy – unemployment and the budget deficit are inarguably too high, and both men would like to reduce them.

Both are committed to good relations with Canada's No. 1 trading partner, the U.S. They value Canada's friends and, as Mr. Turner put it, “Our friends are the Americans and our NATO allies.”

In this issue of *Canada Today/d'aujourd'hui* we report on this political season above the border.

Prime Minister: Prime Ministers are party leaders. The leader of the party which wins a majority or a working plurality of the seats in the House of Commons in a federal election becomes the Prime Minister. Even a Prime Minister must run for his own seat, and only the voters in that particular riding have the opportunity to vote directly for or against him.

Riding: Each member of the House of Commons represents a riding. The least populated riding, Nunatsiag in the N.W.T., had 14,913 in 1980; the most, York-Scarborough in Toronto, had 148,286.

Ad Blackout

No political advertising was allowed during the first four weeks of the campaign period this year, and none will be allowed on the day before the election nor on polling day itself.

The duration of the first ban varies slightly depending on the length of the campaign interval. The final two-day blackout is most noticeable on TV – there can be no last-minute ‘ad blitz’.