

The Tory convention: new leader, old challenge

By DAVID SALTmarsh

At the convention hailed as a turning point in Canadian politics, the Progressive Conservative Party chose a bilingual Albertan journalist to lead it into the future. At 36, Joseph Clark is the youngest person ever to lead a national political party in Canada. If he wins the next federal election, he'll also be the country's youngest Prime Minister.

AMID VAST SWARMS

The convention was kicked off on Wednesday night amid vast swarms of banners, pamphlets and cash bars (one of the rules of this convention was no free booze). There were 12 candidates in the race, most of whom were trying to outdo each other for hoopla. Montreal lawyer Brian Mulroney had the most extravagant campaign, complete with pink, blue and white scarfs, skirts and shirts for the faithful. Clark, MacDonald, Wagner, Hellyer, and Stevens were also well represented. All candidates save Dr. Richard Quittenton (President of St. Clair College, where he is referred to as "Dr. Q") had hospitality suites open where uncommitted delegates were wooed to cast their ballots for the candidate who was paying for the suite. Several of the candidates had their own campaign bands on hand.

Thursday saw more of the same with the candidates swooping from place to place, escorted by entourages of varying sizes and compositions, trying to see as many delegates as possible. The downtown Ottawa hotels had taken on a circus-like appearance for the duration.

DIEFENBAKER HONOURED

The main activities on Thursday were registration and a meeting at the Civic Centre honouring former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker. An opening speech was made by party president Michael Meighen. Meighen reminded the delegates what they should be looking for in a Party leader. He spoke glowingly of the way this convention represented Canada: "We mirror Canada because we are Canada!"

HAPPY IN BED

Several others spoke briefly concerning their roles in the convention, with such accomplishments as "6,000 Tories happily in bed tonight."

Finally, the Chief, showing his 80 years, got up to the podium, and delivered a speech that sent the audience into waves of thunderous applause. The Diefenbaker magic still can hold sway over a crowd. Most appreciated in the speech were three words that could heal old wounds from the last convention: "Stanfield was right!"

A NEW ERA

One topic reiterated by virtually all who spoke, is that this is the start of a new era in Canadian politics. They could be right. The Tories were convinced it was of vital importance to Canada that Pierre Trudeau and the "Trudeau Party" (as Diefenbaker called it) be removed from office. It is this feeling that was to weigh heavily upon the minds of the delegates as they looked for their new leader.

Friday was spent at policy sessions, each candidate trying to explain why he or she was the person to lead the party.

Friday night the convention honoured outgoing leader, Robert Lorne Stanfield. Again, when Stanfield spoke he laid great emphasis on the importance of turning out the Trudeau Liberals.

Saturday. Caucus meeting with speeches from each of the 12 candidates in the morning and a general meeting at the Civic Cen-

tre where the candidates spoke to the entire convention, complete with floor demonstrations (bands, parades of the faithful and nomination speeches. Each explained why he or she was the person to beat Trudeau. The Liberal government was attacked by virtually all of them, labeled as dangerous by most. Delegates were reminded that "our future is in our hands. Do not shirk that responsibility."

HELLYER DESTROYED

The most significant single event of the day was Paul Hellyer who, in about 15 seconds, destroyed his political career. He started out his speech by justifying his presence, then he made derogatory comments about the "red Tories" in the Party. This brought on a low but distinct booping from across the arena.

On Sunday, the candidates held breakfasts ranging from coffee and doughnuts to elaborate affairs in last minute attempts to woo uncommitted voters, and to work up the faithful for this all important day.

WAGNER IN FRONT

Voting began in the Civic Centre arena at 12 noon. It took 40 minutes to cast the ballots, then a two hour wait until the final tally was known. Largely because the

Quebec delegation was solidly behind him, Wagner was far out in front. Mulroney's slick, American-style campaign had netted him second place, while Joe Clark grabbed third. Meanwhile the rest of the candidates were deciding whether to throw their support behind someone else or hang on for the next ballot.

Stevens, Gillies and Graffey all withdrew, in favour of Joe Clark.

CLARK CLOSES IN

The second ballot didn't take as long to come up with the results. Around 5:20 the results were known. Clark had overtaken Mulroney and closed in on Wagner. Horner, Hellyer and Nowlan then withdrew and favoured Wagner. MacDonald and Fraser supported Clark. By now it was obvious that Mulroney couldn't win; however, he stayed in for the third ballot, the results of which dropped him.

Brian Mulroney now held the results of the convention in his hands. The vote between Clark and Wagner was very close, only 34 votes separating them. If he had told his supporters to vote for one or the other he would practically have ensured that candidate's victory.

Instead, he released his supporters to a free vote, which



A great deal of hoopla, but no free booze.

resulted in a tension-filled fourth ballot. It was anybody's game, although, Clark was given a slight edge as his ideology was closer to Mulroney's than Wagner's was. The supporters of Clark and

Wagner kept themselves occupied during the process of voting and counting with repeated cheers and cries of "we want Clark!" or "we want Wagner!"

THE FINALL TALLY

It was nearly 9 p.m. when the final tally was in: Clark, 1,187; Wagner 1,122.

In his address after the voting, Wagner requested that the decision be made unanimous, which drew rounds of applause. Wagner has now lost twice to obtain leadership of a party. (He lost to Robert Bourassa in the Quebec Liberal convention of 1969.) It was a difficult thing for him to do to take defeat so well after coming so close.

Joe Clark called for party unity in the years ahead. The Progressive Conservative Party has hard work ahead of itself to oust the Trudeau government, he said.



Thirty-six year old Joe Clark, a bilingual Albertan and a former journalist, was chosen as the new Tory leader.

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