

A PRIMER ON CANADIAN GOVERNMENT

Canada, like the United States, is a federal union, but its national government wields power in fundamentally different ways.

Although comparisons are sometimes made, Canadian political parties are not the ideological counterparts of American ones. (Progressive Conservatives are not Canadian Republicans, Liberals are not the same as Democrats, and Preston Manning is not the Canadian Ross Perot.) The electoral process also differs significantly in the two countries.

Canada's parliamentary system is modelled after that of Great Britain. The executive branch is composed of the monarch, represented in Canada by the Governor General, and the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The legislative

body, the Parliament, is made up of two houses, an elected House of Commons and a less powerful, appointed Senate. The distinction between the executive and legislative branches is blurred since the Prime Minister and Cabinet are Members of Parliament and are answerable to the House of Commons.

Most legislation is introduced by the government. Party discipline is tight and members are expected to vote with their party, except on rare occasions when bills are deemed to be matters of personal conscience. Disagreements within the party are ironed out during caucus meetings. As a result, a government with a majority in the House of Commons is almost assured of seeing its legislation pass. Legislation must be passed by the

Senate as well as the House. The Senate rarely vetoes legislation although it can hold it up.

Canadian elections must be held at least every five years but are sometimes called earlier in a government's mandate. Federal elections are conducted by Elections Canada, an independent non-partisan agency. The process is launched when the Governor General, on the advice of the Prime Minister, dissolves Parliament and directs the Chief Electoral Officer to "issue the writs."

One striking difference between Canadian and American electoral campaigns is the relative briefness of the Canadian ones. By law, the electoral period must last at least 47 days, from the issuing of the writs to the "return of the

PARTY PLATFORMS

JOB CREATION

DEFICIT REDUCTION



PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Kim Campbell

Campbell has said there is no quick fix for unemployment, which currently stands at more than 11 per cent nationally. The Tory strategy to create jobs and economic opportunity is based on lowering interest rates and taxes by reducing the deficit, pursuing new export markets, building a more highly skilled and more flexible workforce and aiding small business. Campbell has said that her government would not propose job creation programs that would increase the deficit.

The Conservatives have made eliminating the deficit (\$35.5 billion for 1992-93) their top priority and have pledged to do so over five years, with details of a national debt management plan to be worked out with the provinces after the election. They have said they would cut government operations, business subsidies, foreign aid and defence. Campbell has promised not to raise taxes.



LIBERAL PARTY

Jean Chrétien

The Liberals have said their primary objective is putting Canadians back to work, and they have pledged to create a total of 1.6 million jobs directly and indirectly over four years. Their investment plan includes a public works program, increased R&D spending and a youth corps. They would stimulate private sector job creation through a venture capital fund and measures to encourage banks to ease credit for small business.

The Liberals have pledged to reduce the deficit to 3% of GDP from the current rate of 5.2% within three years. New spending of \$5.3 billion would be offset by \$7.1 billion in spending cuts. A Liberal government would replace the Goods and Services tax with an unspecified new consumption tax. It would redirect the focus of monetary policy from fighting inflation to lowering interest rates and promoting economic growth.



NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Audrey McLaughlin

The NDP has made full-employment its top economic priority and has promised to create 500,000 jobs over five years. Its plan includes creation of a national investment fund to make capital available to new companies and community development enterprises, a doubling of investment in R&D, a public works program, a training levy on employers and elimination of the Goods and Services tax.

The NDP has said it would reduce the deficit by creating jobs which would generate higher tax revenues. It would gradually replace the Goods and Services Tax over five years with a 14% minimum corporate tax and higher taxes on individuals earning more than \$100,000.



REFORM PARTY

Preston Manning

The Reform Party's job creation strategy is based on lowering the cost of doing business in Canada through deficit and tax reduction so that the private sector can create jobs. The party would not spend government funds on job-creation programs and would cut subsidies to business and to Crown corporations. It would emphasize making Canadian goods more competitive through job training and investment in R&D.

The Reform Party has a "zero in three" plan to eliminate the budget deficit over three years by cutting \$19 billion in federal spending. The remaining shortfall would be eliminated through economic growth. The Reform Party advocates legislation to require the federal government to balance the budget in each three-year period or call an election.



BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS

Lucien Bouchard

The goal of the Bloc Québécois is the separation of Quebec from the Canadian federation, which it has said would benefit the economies of both Quebec and the rest of Canada. In the meantime, its \$5-billion job creation strategy includes a program to stimulate investment by municipalities, investment credits to encourage hiring and a fund for industrial restructuring.

Leader Lucien Bouchard has said the Bloc would save an estimated \$10 billion by "cutting the fat" in federal spending, with half the savings going to job creation and half to reducing the deficit. The party would cut \$3 billion from the defence budget, save another billion by transferring complete authority for manpower training to Quebec, and make \$6 billion in other, unspecified spending cuts.