

and imponderable. More important, the political will to address those issues of economic integration was lacking.

The Charlottetown accord fused the federal government's proposal for economic union with Premier Rae's "social charter." Instead of a common market clause, the result was a list of policy objectives for social and economic union that established aspirational goals for the future.

Restrictive barriers such as Quebec's should not exist in a federation, and it should not be necessary for provinces like New Brunswick and Ontario to invoke retaliatory measures. Yet the rise of provincial trade disputes demonstrates that the dynamics currently shaping our political landscape have implications for our economic union as well. The political will to address Canada's economic union is at present absent. That will must be found before the destructive power of protectionism further weakens us.

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*Canada Watch* welcomes submissions on issues of current national interest. Submissions should be a maximum of 1,000 words. The deadline for consideration in our November issue is Monday, November 8. Write or fax us at:

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## THE CAMPAIGN IN ATLANTIC CANADA

### Surface Politics and Sub-Surface Problematics

by David Johnson

Contrary to popular perception, the campaign in Atlantic Canada is not straightforward. Although the Liberals show no indication of relinquishing their dominant position in the parliamentary representation of Atlantic Canada, this does not mean that the campaign down east is a simple event.

In reality there are two reflective processes under way throughout this region this fall, with the lesser-seen process posing difficult questions for whichever party forms the government following October 25.

#### THE CAMPAIGN: SURFACE POLITICS

The first process is the actual campaign itself; and here, Liberal strength throughout the region is palpable. According to the CBC poll of September 26, the Liberals have the support of 50 percent of electors in the region, compared to 35 percent for the Conservatives, 9 percent for the NDP, and 3 percent for the Reform party. Although various poll results suggest that Atlantic Canadians find Kim Campbell to be a better, more modern leader than Jean Chrétien, this general support for the leader does not translate into support for the party. When asked which party offers the best approach to dealing with the issues of economic development, job creation and the protection of social policies, plurality support shifts appreciably to the Liberals. This suggests that the Liberal party is in no danger of losing its bastion of support in Atlantic Canada.

The Liberals held 20 of the region's 32 seats at dissolution. Given the current polling data it is safe to

say the party can maintain — and very likely increase — its level of representation in the next House. With the prospect of a hung Parliament looming over this country, every seat gained or lost by the parties will be important; for the Liberals to make significant gains in Atlantic Canada may mean the difference between their winning a majority or a minority government.

Certainly the dynamic of the campaign has supported Liberal interests. The key issue in Atlantic Canada can be identified by one word: jobs. Conservative pronouncements on deficit reduction, the downsizing of government programs and services, and the need to be prepared for tough times lasting into the next century are hardly the types of statements designed to attract widespread support from people long hammered by the twin blows of economic depression and regional under-development.

In contrast, Liberal commitments to immediate job creation through investment in the industrial infrastructure strike a receptive chord. Although one can seriously question the amount of permanent employment that will be created through such a scheme and whether it is sufficient even to begin to alleviate the problem of regional unemployment, it is undeniable that in Atlantic Canada such doubts are placed in the background. The Liberal commitments to job creation, coupled with their professed support of social welfare and regional development programs such as Enterprise

*Continued, see "Atlantic Canada" on page 36.*

*“Atlantic Canada,”  
continued from page 35.*

Cape Breton, place the Liberals in a commanding lead in this part of the country.

**THE DEEPER REALITY:  
POLITICAL ECONOMY  
PROBLEMATICS**

But issues placed in the background do not cease to exist for that reason. As the campaign unfolds in the foreground, a deeper process of reflection is alive among Atlantic Canadians. The focus of attention here is on problems that no current party and no past federal government — Conservative or Liberal — have proven competent to address and resolve. This background process also revolves around jobs, yet in this instance the concerns are structural, not electorally temporal.

How can we better manage regional development in this part of the country? Does the federal government have a role to play in promoting industrial development and diversification in Atlantic Canada? If so, how should it fulfill this role? Is reinvestment in the economic infrastructure sufficient as an industrial policy, or need an industrial policy be more comprehensive and strategic, akin to Quebec Inc.? Should industrial policy here be geared to support traditional yet problem-plagued industries, such as steel, coal, and pulp and paper, or should economic development planning be refocused on newer technologies — computer software, telecommunications, marine and environmental sciences — and related tertiary service support?

As a component to industrial strategy, how can we better manage the Atlantic fishery for it once again to become a viable, renewable natural resource industry? Should the problem of foreign overfishing be ad-

ressed by extending Canada's regulatory sphere of authority beyond 200 miles offshore? Or should we tighten the regulatory controls on our domestic fishing industry to curtail abusive fishing habits by Canadians themselves? Or must the federal government do both?

**THE PROBLEMATIC OF  
DEFENCE**

Concern about the environment offshore leads to concern about the role and future of the Canadian military. Should Canadian defence policy be reconceptualized to include defence of the biological ecosystem in Canada's offshore? Should

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the military be mandated the task of policing the offshore? If so, what type of equipment does it need to fulfill this task? Do we need high tech anti-submarine helicopters, or many more “lower” tech patrol boats, corvettes, and search aircraft?

And finally, with respect to defence, concern in Atlantic Canada is directed to this country's international commitments. As we witness a “new world disorder” requiring much more U.N.-sponsored peace-keeping and possibility “peace-making” initiatives, should the federal government devote more attention to the specialized training of Canadian and other nations' military forces for such demanding tasks? If so, should such training facilities be established within the Maritimes? Can Maritime military bases and universities be used as centres of excellence for the education and training of personnel destined for U.N. service?

**THE CAMPAIGN AND THE DAY  
AFTER**

All of the foregoing are deep questions very much on the minds of Canadians in this region; and yet, because of the difficulties in providing rigorous answers, they are matters that have been largely ignored by the parties as they campaign in Atlantic Canada. Such ignorance may persist throughout this election. It will not be the first time that such questions have proven too awesome to be addressed by parties in the heat of campaigns.

Whichever party forms the government after October 25 will have to deal with these matters; they exist and will not disappear. The new government will be called on to provide leadership for, to influence and guide, the economic and social future of Atlantic Canada. It is a challenge fraught with difficulties, yet also a challenge for which governments are elected to meet. For the winning party, getting through the campaign is the easy part; the real difficulties begin once power is attained.

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