

## CW UPDATE

### THE MONTH IN REVIEW

by Jonathan Batty

#### FEDERAL ELECTION CALLED

Ending weeks of speculation, Prime Minister **Kim Campbell** visited the governor general on September 8 to request that Parliament be dissolved and that a general election be held on October 25. Current major party standings in the 295-seat Parliament before the writ was issued were: Progressive Conservatives 153, Liberals 79, New Democrats 43, Bloc québécois 8, Reform Party 1, and one independent.

#### LEADERS DEBATE FINALIZED

On September 4, the major political parties and television networks settled on a format for the leadership debates. Two debates will be held in the week of October 4, one in English and one in French, between the leaders of the Progressive Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats, Reform party, and the Bloc québécois. In the French debate, **Preston Manning**, who is not bilingual, will participate in a limited way through the use of a translator. The fledgling National Party, led by **Mel Hurtig**, announced that it will bring a legal challenge to its exclusion from the debates.

#### NATIONAL DEFENCE HELICOPTER PURCHASE TRIMMED

On September 2, Prime Minister **Kim Campbell** retreated from her decision, as minister of defence, to purchase 50 EH-101 helicopters. 43 will now be purchased, reducing the

original cost of \$5.8 billion by \$ 1 billion.

#### ONTARIO RETALIATES AGAINST QUEBEC'S EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Ontario's minister of economic development and trade, **Frances Lankin**, announced on September 1 that her province would consider raising barriers to prevent Quebec tradespeople from being employed in Ontario. Lankin's announcement declared that Ontario's restrictions would be similar to the ones erected by Quebec against Ontario workers. In the last week of August, New Brunswick and Quebec negotiated an agreement on procurement policy and reached a compromise on the employment of construction workers.

#### SOCIAL CONTRACT ARBITRATOR OVERRULES SHUTDOWN

On September 1, arbitrator **Owen Shine** ruled that the Ontario government could not require its employees to take unpaid leave days, without first exploring other cost reduction measures, as agreed to under Ontario's social contract legislation that took effect August 2. The ruling, the result of a challenge instituted by the **Ontario Public Service Employees Union**, effectively prevented the government from closing its operations on September 3. The Ontario government's aim is to realize \$195.6 million in savings by March 31, 1994. It is estimated that a shut down of government operations saves \$12 million a day.

#### FISHERIES CLOSURE

The federal fisheries minister, **Ross Reid**, announced a further moratorium on the cod fishery to take effect August 31. An additional 12,000 fishery workers will be affected, bringing lay offs in the entire industry over the last three years to 40,000.

#### INQUIRY REPORT ON CANADIAN AIRBORNE REGIMENT RELEASED

The chief of the defence staff, Admiral **John Anderson**, released the report of a special board of inquiry into the **Canadian Airborne Regiment** on August 31, nearly six weeks after it was completed. The report noted there were serious disciplinary problems prior to the unit's deployment to Somalia, but could not definitively link the deaths of Somalis to these failings. Further investigations will be made following the outcome of criminal proceedings against several of the regiment's soldiers.

#### CRTC DENIES BELL INCREASE

On August 30, the **Canadian Radio-Television Telecommunications Commission** rejected an application from **Bell Canada** to raise telephone rates by an estimated 10 percent and expand local calling areas in Ontario and Quebec. The CRTC rejected the application, which would have raised Bell Canada's revenue by \$835 million for the next two years, because the commission felt the company had underestimated its revenues and overestimated its projected expenses for 1994.

#### COURT CHALLENGES REVIVED

Prime Minister **Kim Campbell** announced in the last week of August that the federal government would once again fund legal challenges under the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Last year's budget cancelled the court challenges program. The announcement stated that the program would be revived as the Charter Law Development Program. Before its cancellation in 1992, the federal government in 1990 had earmarked \$9 million over a five-year period for the program.

## ANNUAL PREMIERS CONFERENCE

Canada's 10 premiers and 2 territorial leaders met for the annual premiers conference in Baddeck, Nova Scotia on August 26 and 27. Premier **Robert Bourassa** of Quebec attended the conference for the first time since 1990. The premiers called for a federal-provincial first ministers meeting on the economy, and also agreed to encourage the federal government to negotiate self-government agreements with aboriginal peoples.

## CANADIAN BAR ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE REPORT

A task force, chaired by former Supreme Court Justice **Bertha Wilson**, reported on August 22, on gender barriers within the legal profession. Examining the bar from the start of legal training to the pinnacle of life on the bench, the report makes over 200 recommendations to remove constructive and systemic biases against women in the system.

## ROYAL COMMISSION REPORT

On August 17, the **Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples** released its report, *Partners in Confederation*. The report found that a native right to self-government has never been extinguished. This is significant because, if true, recognition of the inherent right to self-government would not have to be explicitly acknowledged by constitutional amendment.

## NAFTA UPDATE

"Side deal" agreements were reached regarding the **North American Free Trade Agreement** on August 12. The Canadian government won the concession that in the event of trade disputes, tariffs would not be raised against Canadian exports, but Ottawa would pay fines instead. With the conclusion of these agreements, the package can now proceed for consideration in the U.S. Congress in the Fall, and for fast track ratification by January 1994.

## MANITOBA BY-ELECTIONS

Premier **Gary Filmon** called by-elections for September 21 in five vacant seats in the Manitoba legislature. At present the Progressive Conservative government has 29 seats (including that of the speaker) in the 57-seat house. There are 18 New Democrats and 5 Liberals. Without a victory in any of the races, government representation will be on par with that of the opposition.

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Liberals, stronger in Ontario and in many Quebec ridings, can best use this second strategy.

Obviously, the game is a complex one. With shallow partisan roots and unprecedented choices, many arguments or events can sway voters. Apparently, the leadership of the Quebec Liberal party is already sending messages telling Liberals to support the strongest federalist candidate in their riding. For the Bloc québécois, the worst scenario would be to see this "Holy Alliance" work with the help of a perceived country-wide sweep in favour of one party (most likely Liberals). The best scenario for the Bloc would be a repetition of last fall's referendum when dissatisfied federalists joined sovereigntists in the No camp. More probable, in my opinion, is an intermediate scenario whereby the Bloc québécois would win strong representation in Ottawa, roughly in line with its current standing in the polls.

As the 1993 campaign starts, it is important to keep in mind that the electorate is not unstructured. Cleavages exist that lend some predictability to the election. At the same time, these structures and cleavages are fluid and can be transformed. This fall, in a particularly complex and volatile context, the parties' arguments and strategies are likely to play a decisive role.

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*"Electoral Agenda,"  
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debate over precisely how unemployment might be reduced, they too may become much more caught up with defining and defending policies than they had originally intended — and fending off criticisms that they would repeat the economic errors of the Trudeau regime with which Chrétien is so intimately associated.

In short, as the campaign gets into full swing it may acquire a dynamic of its own, in the process becoming much more interesting than either of the old-line parties would have wanted.

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