

## THE QUESTION MAY RETURN

Before too long, the royal commission on aboriginal peoples will be issuing its report. As a comprehensive analysis of the aboriginal question and of the remedies required, how can it possibly avoid major proposals for constitutional change? Aboriginal self-government had, after all, been the one real breakthrough of the Charlottetown accord. Yet it would be difficult to modify the constitution to meet aboriginal concerns without Quebec's participation, which means accommodating Quebec's concerns.

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a chance of winning as do the Liberals. (The PQ's internal surveys predict a clear PQ sweep.) It is difficult to see how the Liberals can improve their fortunes in the coming months. In all likelihood, Robert Bourassa will step down before too long and the party will be forced to select a new leader and then mount an election campaign in short order. None of the mooted successors has the personal stature of Bourassa. In short, the election of a PQ government within a year is a very distinct possibility.

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## FEDERAL RESPONSES TO A RESURGENT QUEBEC

If, then, despite the best of efforts to wish it away, the constitutional question does once again impose itself upon the Canadian polity, how would governments be likely to approach it? In particular, how would they respond to a PQ government? Would they be prepared to develop an alternative to Quebec sovereignty: accommodating Quebec within a renewed federalism?

As far as Ottawa goes, there are, of course, two primary possibilities: a Liberal government or a Progressive Conservative one. Either of these could be a minority government, further complicating the formulation of any kind of coherent position on constitutional change.

The constitutional stance of a Liberal government under Jean Chrétien is easy to predict. It would be closely bound by the parameters of the Trudeau orthodoxy: absolute equality of the provinces, primacy of the Charter, no meaningful recognition of Quebec's distinctiveness. John Turner had no particular investment in the Trudeau legacy and thus sought to lead his party in support of the Meech Lake accord. But much of his party refused to follow. There is no danger that Chrétien would even attempt such heresies, as deeply rooted as he is in the Trudeau years.

A Conservative government is less clear cut, but only slightly so. On the face of it, Kim Campbell would be guided by the kind of openness to Quebec which had been Mulroney's suit. In her pursuit of the Conservative leadership, she looked to such Quebec nationalists as Marcel Masse and Gilles Loiselle for guidance. Masse has deep roots in Quebec nationalism, going back to a Cabinet position in the late 1960s Union nationale government

*Continued, see "Wishing Away the Question" on page 14.*

## KIM'S PROSPECTS

**Campbell will need to create an image of toughness, resiliency and decisiveness that we associate with male leadership, while never relinquishing a strong feminine image**

*by Robert MacDermid*

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As expected, Kim Campbell replaced Brian Mulroney as leader of the federal Progressive Conservative party and prime minister, but in an unexpectedly tight race. She must now lead her party, minus several Cabinet veterans and with many new faces both in Cabinet and as candidates, to a renewed governing majority. Her rapid rise to the top leaves a sketchy record and few clues on how she may perform in future. But beginning with the convention results, there are some known bumps in the road that she must pass over on the way to her own electoral success.

### THE CONVENTION RESULTS

First, there is very little substance to the simple equation that connects winning margins at leadership conventions to subsequent electoral success. The past 11 Liberal and Conservative leadership conventions demonstrate that small (and smaller than average) winning margins at conventions *can* lead to indifferent electoral success, as was the case for Turner, Stanfield, and Clark, but small or even smaller winning margins than Campbell's can also be the start of careers as prime minister, as was the case for King, Trudeau, and Mulroney. Large con-

vention wins are a better predictor of electoral success: St. Laurent, Pearson, and Diefenbaker all had larger than average wins, but so did George Drew.

### THE PARTY AND THE ELECTION

If the convention results cannot tell us much about the new leader's future, what she brings out of the convention may be a better indicator. Campbell was anything but magnanimous in victory, ignoring rather than soothing the feelings of a close loser, she appears to have reconciled Charest and his supporters to her leadership. That said, nothing

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unites a party like power (the Ontario NDP excepted) and the anticipation of future victories. Ignoring poll results for the moment, the Conservative party that Brian Mulroney has handed over is in fighting trim. Over the past 10 years, the Conservatives have raised far more cash than the other parties and they will go into the election with deep pockets, and the ability to spend large sums before the election spending restrictions kick in, ensuring skillful campaign material and the very best opinion research. The Tories may also get a boost from third-party spending now that an Alberta judge has struck down Parliament's attempt to limit the non-party election spending free-for-all that took place in 1988. It would be folly to count the Tories out, and past elections suggest that margins always narrow as the race is joined.

### THE BALANCE OF FORCES

Campbell faces a strategic situation unlike her predecessor and one partly caused by him. The Bloc Québécois believes itself capable of winning up to 40 seats and the Reform party, before its recent swoon, was preparing for a sweep of Alberta. Both of these estimates are optimistic. The Reform party may have a greater impact on the outcome in more populous Ontario by taking votes from Conservative candidates. The Bloc confronts a Quebec electorate that has voted more MPs to opposition than to government only three times in the past 15 elections. How the Quebec electorate will react during the campaign to a party that has no hope of forming the government is an open question. Numbers of seats closer to Créditiste levels, say 15 to 25, seem more likely for the Bloc, but this depends on how unpopular Jean Chrétien really is and how the Conservatives fare during the campaign. Inevitably, the decisive factor in third party outcomes is not the level of national support, but regional concentration and by this measure both Reform and the Bloc are going to win seats, perhaps enough to play a part in the formation of the government.

### MEDIA IMAGES

Since voters learn about politics through the media, and because so-called character issues are conveyed most easily by the media, what reporters say about these issues will be important. Few Canadians know very much about Kim Campbell, how she does things or what she stands for, beyond the obvious oddity of her being the first female PM. She will need to create and have conveyed through the media an image of toughness, resiliency, and decisiveness that we associate with male leadership, while never relinquishing a strong feminine image. Margaret Thatcher played this dual

game brilliantly. Thus far, Campbell seems to have been successful, but leadership campaign slip-ups and a tendency for the media to equate long answers with indecision suggests some problems ahead.

### THE ISSUES

A reprise of the 1988 campaign with NAFTA as the centrepiece now seems unlikely given a US court ruling and presidential and congressional foot-dragging. The Conservatives will paint themselves as rejuvenated and current, led by the first woman PM and a baby boomer. Tory election advisers will have learned and be ready to apply the winning elements of Clinton's "I'm just like you" campaign. Campbell will have an important weakness on family-value issues, the code words

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for right-wing morality issues. With her, the Tories lose something to the Reform party, but she may be able to make good those losses through her appeal to women, where the Tories have been weak in the past. Unlike Clinton, Campbell must deal with the party's record in office, and she will have to make the past fiscal conservatism and deficit reduction strategy seem less like an empty mantra. Many Canadians are asking themselves whether the emperor has no clothes after years of tough statements about deficit reduction but very similar sized budget deficits.

The Liberals should play to this credibility gap, though whether they in turn will be believed will take a leap of faith by many voters. Even now, there is bound to be some Conservative researcher compiling a file of Liberal profligacy from long-gone Trudeau regimes.

#### FATE

Finally, we typically discount the importance of chance in history. Who can foresee the events that might temper the character of the new PM? Will she fashion or be able to seize defining moments such as Trudeau and the October crisis or Margaret Thatcher and the Falklands war? Campbell will probably go into the campaign without a clear leadership image and she will undoubtedly have to deal with the attacks and misstatements all campaigns throw up, in addition to the chance hearing of things said over unexpectedly open microphones or things casually said in the aisles of planes after a punishing day of campaigning. How she deals with these chance events will largely determine the Conservative fate and although that may seem unfair, politics has a way of eating its children.

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## WESTERN REPORT

### THE SUMMER OF OUR CONTENT

by Roger Gibbins

As western Canadians relax in the short (and wet) summer before the fall election, it is interesting to examine the region's political landscape in the light of the recent Alberta election, Kim Campbell's accession as prime minister, and the latest public outrage over the Senate.

#### THE ALBERTA ELECTION

Ralph Klein's victory (and it was Klein's victory, not his party's) suggests a number of portents for the

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federal election to come. It shows that a new leader can shed the burdens of incumbency. There was no incumbent party in the Alberta election because Klein disavowed any responsibility for the financial mismanagement of his predecessors. Instead, the Alberta voters were offered a choice among three opposition parties and they chose the Conservatives.

Incredibly, the leader of a party that had been in power for 22 years ran as the voice of change! If the Alberta Tory snake can successfully shed its skin after such a long time in office, Campbell may have less difficulty than we might suspect in

shedding nine years of Mulroney incumbency.

The Alberta election suggests, in this respect, that public discontent with incumbents, with "the system" and the status quo, is all but negligible. Financial mismanagement and a ballooning provincial debt were greeted with yawns of indifference. The West is awash in complacency, not anger.

#### KIM CAMPBELL AND THE REFORM PARTY

There is no question that the Alberta election provides hope for federal Conservatives in the West and that Campbell's leadership victory further complicates a deteriorating situation for the Reform party. Manning and Reform are running on a platform constructed from four basic planks: populist anger at the institutional and partisan status quo, the quest for better regional representation ("The West wants in"), public concern with the debt and deficits, and social conservatism echoed in more specific concerns with such matters as law and order, immigration, and abortion. The first three of these planks have now been weakened to the point of collapse.

The Alberta election results suggest that there is no tide of populist discontent waiting to sweep Reform candidates into the House. Moreover, Campbell can certainly make the argument that she, and not Manning, provides the best chance for a stronger regional voice in Ottawa. Although I suggested in a past *Canada Watch* contribution that Campbell is unlikely to be a strong regional advocate in the long run, she can be packaged in just such terms for the fall election. Finally, the Alberta results suggest that voters are not particularly concerned about the debt and deficits. To the extent that they do care, the political parties, including Reform, now offer