

festos vetoed by sudden shifts in the economy. Then they stand accused not of bad timing or inadequate research, but of hypocrisy and deception. Good people run for public office, only to find that we are ready to think the worst of them if they run afoul of irate interest groups, are found to have committed youthful indiscretions, or experience domestic discord. Life is long, but credibility is fleeting.

Power, then, seems to rest on not much more than mastery of the technology of politics: media relations, sophisticated polling, patronage, the ability to excite or mollify important constituencies, fundraising, dirty tricks. And Mr. Mulroney survived for 10 years against sometimes fearsome odds precisely because he was a brilliant political technologist. Whoever seeks to succeed him must apparently imitate him. But to what end? With what prospects?

We hear a lot about the new politics today. I hope that indeed we can invent a new politics. But the new politics often look a lot like the old politics played by new people, adept at the new political technology. In our half-dozen political parties, in a hundred assertive communities, in a thousand advocacy groups, we find spin doctors and polling experts, fundraisers and networkers, media people and tacticians. But in few of these, alas, do we find a coherent and plausible vision of Canada as a national political community. It is not Mr. Mulroney alone who failed us during the eighties. But it is he alone who was prime minister for almost 10 years, so it will be his failure to propose a national vision that will be remembered longest.

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THE MULRONEY LEGACY

by James Gilles

If one is inclined to evaluate the performance of political leaders by their current standings in the polls, one may well conclude that Prime Minister Mulroney is leaving the office as one of the most ineffective and unpopular persons ever to be prime minister. If, however, one believes, as did John Diefenbaker, that polls are for dogs, and that something more than the fickle affection of the public should be considered when evaluating the work of political leaders, one might well conclude

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that history may judge Brian Mulroney as one of the stronger and more effective 20th-century Canadian leaders.

It has been Mulroney's fate to be prime minister during a period of incredible economic and institutional change. Whether we like it or not, during the eight and a half years of his leadership, the technological developments in communications and transportation have in fact made it possible for the world to be a single market for the production and distribution of goods and services. For consumers throughout the world to obtain the benefits of these great technological changes, there has had to be equally dramatic elimination of the institutional barriers to trade and commerce and a lowering of all types of

tariff barriers, which, through GATT and other measures, has been inexorably taking place. Mulroney realized better than most political leaders, who reflected local and regional fears of change, that Canada's future as a trading nation was dependent on the capacity of the country to respond to, not hide from, the consequences of these changes. He knew that the restructuring of the world economy was not going to go away and so he led the country into the bilateral trade agreement with the United States, which although causing painful adjustments, is forcing the changes that will give Canadian firms a fighting chance to trade and prosper in the global markets of the 21st century.

Similarly, he recognized that it would be impossible to maintain the rich and generous social programs in the nation without substantial increases in tax revenues. In a free trade world, a manufacturers' tax made no sense and so its replacement with a value-added tax of some sort — a tax that is used in every western industrial country in the world with the exception of the United States — was inevitable. Enacting any tax makes a leader unpopular; enacting a consumer-oriented tax only makes the unpopularity greater.

Prime Minister Mulroney also knew that the changes in the demographic structure and distribution of income in the nation called for revisions in the social security programs. And he led his government in making these unpopular but essential changes so that more support could be directed to those that needed it most.

Years ago Robert Stanfield constantly made the point that, if governments were to do things efficiently,

they would have to do less—that they were stretched in many respects beyond their capabilities. Mulroney recognized this and was instrumental in moving certain functions from the public to the private sector where they could be operated more efficiently and without a drain on the taxpayer.

When it comes to assessing truly significant actions, it is difficult to arrange them in any order of priority. It is certainly a feasible hypothesis that forcing adjustments in the Canadian economy through moving toward freer trade may be the most important action, in terms of ensuring a high standard of living for most Canadians, taken by any prime minister in the 20th century. At the same time, it cannot be considered more important than the role played by the prime minister in keeping the country together in a period of rising regional nationalism all over the world. Mulroney's deep and abiding faith in, and understanding of, Quebec has been critical in maintaining national unity during very arduous times. Although he failed to gain his constitutional goals during his years in office, the federalists did hold off the attacks of the separatists in every direct encounter.

A democratic nation works best when there are strong national political parties with representation from all parts of the country. Although the Liberal party from time to time in the 20th century was less than national because of its inability to elect members from western Canada, the Progressive Conservative party was always less than national because of its lack of support from Quebec. Even

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the most ardent Progressive Conservative never argued that Diefenbaker's success in Quebec represented any deep-rooted development of the party in that province. However, Mulroney, a son of the province, brought people to the party and gave Quebecers a choice when voting in a federal election. While he was prime minister, Canada had two truly national parties—not an insignificant achievement.

Finally, Mulroney was a winner. He led the Progressive Conservative party to two majority governments with representation from all

parts of the nation. And, in politics, being a winner is one of the most important of all considerations—you cannot do much in opposition.

There is a view that Mulroney had no ideas, was too much the pedestrian politician, was too loyal to his friends, was too partisan, was not willing to stay the course of tough policies—in short, that he embodied all the characteristics that make politicians unattractive. And, indeed, Mulroney had many of the well-known characteristics of the traditional political stereotypes—he was loyal to friends long after the time when it might have been to his own personal benefit to drop them; he did believe that you "danced with the girl that brung you"; he did enjoy the perks of office and the friends in high places that came with the office. But to stress these things is to quibble. On the tough issues—free trade, taxation, Quebec—he held the course and history will treat him very well for doing so.

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THE DEMISE OF ANGLO-AMERICAN NEOCONSERVATISM

by Mel Watkins

Ronald Reagan is out of office and, say the polls, is remembered by the American public even less fondly than the failed Jimmy Carter, while his successor, George Bush, has joined Carter on the short list of presidents denied a second term. Margaret Thatcher is removed from office by her own party to avoid its defeat in an election; the ploy works, but now John Major looks like a minor leaguer in major trouble. Finally, with too long a lag, to widespread public acclaim and vast relief, Brian Mulroney concedes the

hopelessness of his situation and goes; a Tory defeat at the hands of the electorate, had he chosen to stay, is as certain as anything can ever be in politics. The last pillar in the North Atlantic triangle of neoconservatism has crumbled.

Reagan and Thatcher were, of course, its points of strength. As befits Canada, Mulroney was mostly the sycophant. (Val Sears writes in the *Toronto Star* about how Mulroney rushed off to Washington "as fast as his knees could carry him.") His originality consisted in smuggling

neoconservatism into Canada through the back door via the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement; that, too, is consistent with Canada's dependent status. That agreement, in its turn, wilfully ties the hands of Canadian governments and promotes the integration of the two economies and the harmonization of the two societies to the obvious detriment of the distinctiveness of the smaller. It risks making fatal that fundamental flaw of dependency.

The good news here, however, is that Mulroney's passing marks the