

ment of financial support programs generally available to all producers in a particular economic sector will escape countervail action, hence certain Canadian victories in the pork export cases in which agricultural support programs such as the national tripartite stabilization plan and Quebec's farm income stabilization insurance program were upheld as legitimate subsidization policies.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Given the existence of the concept of legitimate subsidization under American law and free trade jurisprudence, those concerned with the ability of Canadian governments to deal with the new economic order established by the FTA should devote attention to the ways and means by which governments can operate within the agreement.

Clearly, there is much scope for governments to develop creative industrial policies, such as: promoting educational and skills training; developing a high-tech communications infrastructure for the Canadian economy; establishing research and development centres capable of innovative educational work in the technologies of value-added manufacturing and services; establishing investment capital pools for use by Canadian-based firms; promoting joint public-private ventures in manufacturing and services; and recognizing the role to be played by Crown corporations in the development and sale of specialized R & D and managerial services to private sector firms.

As we enter another free trade debate, this time involving NAFTA, it is hoped that this debate will be more refined, intelligent, and progressive. But given the experience of the rhetoric coming from all sides over the past few years, such hope may well be misplaced.

David Johnson is Adjunct Professor of Political Science, Brock University.



WESTERN REPORT

THE REFORM PARTY AS A REGIONAL WEATHER VANE

by Roger Gibbins

A recent poll by Angus Reid shows a precipitous drop in support for the Reform party. National support has fallen to 7 from 13 percent a year ago and support in the Alberta heartland has fallen from 44 to 21 percent. In British Columbia, support stands at only 14 percent and in Saskatchewan and Manitoba it is a negligible 4 percent.

How do we explain this drop in support? Can RPC support rebound in time for the federal election and what does the current drop suggest about the more general political temper in western Canada?

THE RPC COALITION

Support for the RPC is an amalgam of at least four different elements. The first and core element is regional discontent or western alienation. The second stems from the RPC's perceived role as an English Canadian counterweight to the influence of Quebec within the national government and political parties. Third, the RPC provides an expressive vehicle for generalized discontent with the "system," broadly defined. Fourth, the RPC offers an ideological vehicle for those on the conservative right.

Only the first element confines the party's appeal to the west; the other three have potential appeal across English Canada and have been emphasized by Preston Manning in attempts to establish a beachhead in Ontario and Atlantic Canada. (Manning's more recent attempt to establish a beachhead in Quebec

defies explanation.) However, support for the party has waned across all four elements.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE

The winds of change are currently working against the RPC. Western alienation is at a low ebb across the region, perhaps because regional frustration was vented during the referendum debate. In the two provinces most critical to RPC success, voters are preoccupied with political debates closer to home. In Alberta, Premier Ralph Klein's efforts to rebuild the Progressive Conservatives in the run up to a provincial election dominate the political stage, while in British Columbia the domestic relationships among Liberal caucus members and the driving records of NDP ministers and appointees provide an all-engrossing political soap opera.

The need for an English Canadian counterweight to Quebec has been reduced in the short term by the quiescence of the nationalist movement in Quebec and by the end of the constitutional debate. Although it is unlikely that general-

"... the basic problem facing the RPC may be too many rats fighting over a shrinking piece of ideological cheese."

ized discontent with the political system has evaporated, it, too, may have been vented by the referendum experience. Voters who want to lash out at the incumbent government, but who are also guided by rational calculus, will be directed by public opinion polls to vote Liberal. For those who might be inclined to vote Liberal but cannot stomach Jean Chrétien's policy vacillation, Mel Hurtig's National party may provide a more ideologically hospitable protest vehicle.

Support for a neoconservative social and economic platform has not disappeared, but it has suffered a major setback with the re-emergence of Clinton liberalism south of the border. To the extent that support remains in Canada, it is also being courted by the Conservatives and Liberals. Hence, the basic problem facing the RPC may be too many rats fighting over a shrinking piece of ideological cheese.

THE PROSPECT FOR A SHIFT IN THE WEATHER

It is, therefore, by no means surprising that the air has gone out of the RPC balloon. But what are the prospects that conditions might change in time for the upcoming federal election?

At best, the forecast is mixed. The ideological agenda is likely to be dominated by events in the United

"... Quebec provides the most likely source of change for RPC fortunes."

States and it is unlikely that Clinton's liberal agenda will disintegrate before the Canadian election. It is also unlikely that there will be any dramatic resurgence of western alienation or at least that there will be so without some major precipitating event taking place from outside the region. The most likely event would be a resurgence of Quebec nationalism and the reopening of the constitutional debate. This in turn could heighten more generalized discontent with the political system.

Thus, Quebec provides the most likely source of change for RPC fortunes. If Bourassa's cancer treatment is unsuccessful, if his retirement were to touch off a resurgence of nationalism, and if the federal election campaign were to feature two Quebec party leaders, Jean Charest and Jean Chrétien, battling

for the hearts and minds of Quebecers, then the stage could well be set for an RPC resurgence in English Canada. The currency of the counterweight argument could be quickly restored. This is the ideal RPC scenario, but it is also one that the party itself cannot bring into play. Conversely, the worst scenario is Bourassa's survival, continued quiescence among Quebec nationalists, and a change of leadership in the federal Progressive Conservative party that would bring a non-Quebecker to lead the party.

At present, the RPC is becalmed. If its sails are to fill again, the fresh winds are more likely to come from Quebec than from the west.

Roger Gibbins is Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, University of Calgary. Western Report is a regular feature of Canada Watch.



QUEBEC REPORT

BEYOND HONOUR AND ENTHUSIASM

by Guy Laforest

The Mulroney era in Canadian politics will soon be over. Joe Clark and Brian Mulroney announced almost simultaneously their respective intention to leave to others the direction of the ship of state. Beyond the pettinesses of personal feuding, I see in this no mere coincidence. Clark and Mulroney had come to represent the Old Canada, the country steeped in the political culture of 1867: a pragmatic approach to constitution making, elite accommodation, the value of ambiguity, and compromise over matters such as the definition of the political community. The

word "nation" is nowhere to be found in the 1867 *British North America Act*. Had they insisted on the necessity of a consensus on this symbolically central issue, the founders would probably have miserably failed. Their successors in the 20th century were not as wise.

I take it that Clark and Mulroney never really understood what occurred in 1982. In retrospect, we are beginning to realize that Pierre Trudeau achieved something of greater magnitude than Lincoln's realizations in the United States. Lincoln, for the United States, is the last founder. He modernized the work of his predecessors, but I would argue that he worked in continuation with them.

Trudeau did much more than that. He gave us a radically different political culture from the one we inherited from the founders in 1867. The new political culture feeds on popular sovereignty (although it was never ratified by the "people"), on individual advocacy of rights and group status. It seeks to establish a pan-Canadian code of values. Trudeau, like Rousseau's great lawgiver, sought to foster a new civil religion for the nation. For it should have become clear to all of us by now, after Meech Lake and Charlottetown, that Canadian nationalism, rather than liberalism, was the overarching principle behind the 1981-82 patriation efforts.

Although not inimical to Canadian nationalism, Clark and Mulroney were first and foremost federalists. The two of them understood, more or less explicitly, that the one-nation dream of Canada would never sell in Quebec. Thus, in their constitutional efforts, they strove to restore the spirit of the federation, the principles of 1867. But if my intuitions concerning the meaning of 1982 are correct, this was an impossible task. Charles Taylor sent exactly the same mes-