

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

by David Johnson

PRIME MINISTER MULRONEY RESIGNS

On February 24 Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced his intention to step down from the Conservative leadership and resign the office of prime minister. His announcement, nearly nine years to the day from a similar announcement by then prime minister Pierre Trudeau, caught official Ottawa by surprise. The prime minister had dampened the rumours of his pending resignation by statements over the previous month indicating that he intended to fight a third national election.

In his resignation statement, Mulroney indicated that he had originally intended to resign in the fall of 1990 but that political developments such as the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and the battle over the GST had forced him to delay a final decision.

The Conservatives are expected to choose a new leader at a convention that is tentatively scheduled for early June. The early front runner in

the race to succeed Mulroney is Defence Minister Kim Campbell, who is seen as being the candidate who is best able to distance herself from the Mulroney legacy. Other ministers rumoured to be contemplating a run at the leadership include: Environment Minister Jean Charest, External Affairs Minister Barbara McDougall, International Trade Minister Michael Wilson, Employment and Immigration Minister Bernard Valcourt, and Communications Minister Perrin Beatty.

NEW CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

In a historic decision on February 1, the House of Commons voted 219 to 2 to give approval to a bilateral constitutional amendment, co-sponsored by the government of New Brunswick, which recognizes that the English- and French-speaking communities in New Brunswick "have equality of status and equal rights and privileges." Among these rights is "the right to distinct educational institutions and such distinct cultural institutions as are necessary for the preservation and promotion of those communities." The amendment is strongly supported by leaders of the Acadian community, who view the initiative as a means of ensuring the place of the French fact in the development of New Brunswick.

The amendment has already received endorsement by the New Brunswick legislature and the Canadian Senate. Royal assent is expected soon, at which time the amendment may become the subject of constitutional litigation. Deborah Coyne has announced that she will spearhead a constitutional challenge to the amendment on the grounds that it privileges group over individual rights, while giving special legislative status to the province of New Brunswick.

PEI'S NEW PREMIER CALLS ELECTION FOR MARCH 29

PEI Premier Catherine Callbeck has called a provincial election just six weeks after being chosen leader and premier. The former Liberal MP for the federal riding of Malpeque selected March 29 as the date for the general election. Callbeck was selected as premier at the Liberal party convention on January 23, where she secured 79 percent of the vote on the first ballot. In the 1989 election, the Liberals under then premier Joe Ghiz won 30 of the 32 seats in the Legislature. Callbeck will be opposed by the Conservatives, led by former high school teacher Pat Mella, and the NDP, led by former reporter Larry Duchesne.

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