An Election to be Remembered: Canada 1993

ALAN C. CAIRNS*
Department of Political Science
University of British Columbia

Ce texte analyse l'élection fédérale de 1993 à partir de trois perspectives différentes; (1) le sens de la campagne; (2) la contribution de variables institutionnelles (en particulier, le système électoral) au résultat; et, de façon plus importante, (3) l'élection en tant qu'un véhicule pour un changement de paradigme par rapport à, (i) une nouvelle relation entre le système de partis et la question constitutionnelle, (ii) le reniement de plusieurs hypothèses constitutionnelles de la dernière décennie, (iii) le retrait de l'état interventionniste, (iv) un désir d'éliminer l'élitisme dans le système de partis et au parlement, et (v) l'émergence du style de vie et de questions culturelles comme thèmes de la politique partisane.

This paper analyses the 1993 Canadian federal election from three perspectives; (1) the significance of the campaign; (2) the contribution of institutional variables, especially the electoral system, to the outcome; (3) and most important, the election as the vehicle for a paradigm shift with respect to, (i) a new relationship of the party system to the constitutional issue, (ii) a repudiation of several basic constitutional assumptions of the last decade, (iii) the retreat of the interventionist expenditure state, (iv) a strong challenge to elitism in the party system and in parliament, and (v) the overt emergence of lifestyle, cultural issues into partisan politics.

Occasionally an election provides an enormously revealing glimpse of a democratic people desperately struggling for a place to stand in turbulent times when past answers no longer carry conviction. Further, the election results may significantly reposition a people as it confronts its future. The election itself should not be thought of as a neutral process through which citizens simply register pre-established party identities and political understandings. On the contrary, not only may the campaign decisively redistribute party support, but an election to some extent always changes the people who experience it. For a brief period, they are reminded of their sovereignty, induced to think and act like citizens, are at least minimally informed of the great issues of the day, and are made aware of where their fellow citizens stand. After the votes are counted they are provided with a new cadre of elected representatives who will transmit modified cues as to who they are and how they are faring as a people.

If the above observations are accepted, the interpretation of such a many-sided phenomenon as an election is not a straightforward task to be undertaken according to established rules that admit of no deviation. Rather, both in process and outcome an election is a riddle to be deciphered, a mystery only some of whose secrets may be unveiled by a mix of empir-

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icism and intuition.

Two inescapable facts guarantee that the ambiguities and uncertainties of election interpretations will never be entirely vanquished. Such interpretations are always contested, for it is in the self-interest of political actors to affix the most useful interpretation they can to elections in which they have been participants. Yesterday's elections are readily available fodder for politicians looking for a usable past. Second, the long-run interpretation of an election's meaning and significance depends on the future events or non-events, possibly decades hence, that can be linked to it. Did an election blind a people to emerging unpalatable realities, or were they prepared for them and provided with leaders who could fashion appropriate responses? Now, only weeks after the dust has settled, such questions can inspire only speculative not definitive answers. The answers that future generations will give will also depend, in the Canadian case, on whether a Canadian people survives or is divided among two or more successor states.

In this essay, I propose to (1) outline cryptically the more salient features of the election; (2) identify and discuss four different vantage points from which the election can be interpreted – the election campaign as the decisive factor influencing the outcome; the significance of institutional variables, particularly the biased manner in which the electoral system translates votes into seats; most important from my perspective, a view of the election as a prism through which the rise and fall of social forces and of paradigms of governance can be seen; and, very briefly, a view of the election as a catalytic transforming event that redistributes political resources for the next round. Finally, a brief conclusion draws the threads together and portrays the Canadian people, both citizens and politicians, as struggling to respond to domestic and international pressures that have eroded the utility of many of yesterday's answers.

The 1993 Election: Basic Factors

As a simple narrative, the 1993 election was fairly straightforward. A deeply unpopular government party, nearing the end of its term in office, chose a new leader in the hope of transforming its image and snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. The new party leader, Kim Campbell, with limited federal political experience and an underdeveloped network among the party's establishment, was selected after a surprisingly close contest with Jean Charest, a young fluently bilingual Quebec MP from Sherbrooke.

Following an initial honeymoon period in which the new Prime Minister's popularity soared to extraordinary heights, raising the governing Conservative party to a competitive level with its main Liberal party rival, Prime Minister Campbell called the election. The normal unpredictability of an election was compounded by several factors. Although Campbell's popularity was initially high, the Conservative party she led had been mired at extremely low levels of support in the polls for years. Former Prime Minister Mulroney had aroused a visceral negative reaction among many Canadians. The new Prime Minister had very little time to distance herself from the Tory past by policy changes. Hence, the image of a refreshingly candid, witty woman party leader had to do yeoman duty to compensate for the relative lack of a detailed change of policy direction.

Uncertainty was fostered by the fact that five serious parties – Conservatives, Liberals, New Democratic Party, Reform and the Bloc Québécois – campaigned for representation. This greatly heightened the election's unpredictability as the normal vagaries of the first-past-the-post electoral system were exacerbated by the large number of serious contenders and by the regional/provincial focus of three of the parties – the Bloc by choice, the NDP because of its non-existence in Quebec and the dangerously low level of its support that

threatened its disappearance outside of western Canada, and Reform because its natural constituency did not include Quebec and its relative voting strength was concentrated in the two most westerly provinces of British Columbia and Alberta.

The Bloc was new to federal politics and thus had no track record from which a crude estimate of its probable future performance could be constructed. History was of only minimal assistance in assessing Reform's prospects. Although it had fielded a strong slate in the four western provinces in 1988, its candidates seldom crept into double figures with the exception of Alberta, and thus gave little anticipation of Reform's 1993 breakthrough.

The fact that only one of the five major party leaders, Reform's Preston Manning, had previously led a party in a federal campaign added to the unpredictability. Although Chrétien was a seasoned politician, albeit never a party leader, this was turned into an epithet by his partisan opponents, and was considered a liability until well into the campaign by most media analysts. Their inexperience as party leaders in election campaigns increased the likelihood that political gaffes, exaggerated reactions to the ups-and-downs of poll results or floundering in public by one or more leaders could change the dynamics of interparty competition.

Should such missteps occur, the overwhelming media emphasis on the leaders would magnify their significance. The gladiatorial nature of the leaders' TV debates in French and English on separate evenings underlined the extraordinary degree of personalizing of the electoral contest. With the important exceptions of the TV townhall debates, second tier party figures had low campaign profiles. Presumably, the extensive media attention focused on the leaders contributed to voter volatility as the voter's relationship to a leader is, by its nature, much less rooted than is a traditional party allegiance.

Two of the party leaders were the first women to lead their parties, NDP and Conservatives, and the latter was the first woman Prime Minister. The potential effect of this on their party's support was unknown. Although McLaughlin suggested there was an anti-feminist backlash, this was discounted by most observers.

These indeterminacies fed into another striking feature of the election campaign. Although the election was clearly 'national' in its objective, the selection of a new federal government, it was simultaneously profoundly regional in the sense that the voters in different parts of the country confronted different party choices. Only Quebec voters had the Bloc Québécois on their ballots, and Reform campaigned in all provinces except Quebec. Although there were five major parties, they did not appear on the same ballot anywhere in the country. Even when four parties appeared on the ballot, the real contest was often restricted to two or three parties, particularly in Atlantic Canada where the NDP and Reform presence was largely nominal.[1]

The regionalization/provincialization of electoral competition complicated campaign strategy for the two major national parties, Liberals and Conservatives. Their history as nation builders and their goal of winning a majority government forced them to speak to and for all Canadians, an obligation that did not apply to their Bloc Québécois rival in Quebec nor to the Reform Party west of Quebec, especially in western Canada. This pincer movement put intense pressure on the Conservatives for it bared the fragility of Mulroney's achievement in incorporating Quebec nationalists and western regionalists with little empathy for Quebec in the same party.

The preceding catalogue of uncertainties ensured the electoral campaign would significantly affect the final results. In fact, the campaign dramatically modified the distribution of party preferences that existed when the election was called – with the Conservatives and Liberals tied for the lead.

The election results were astounding. The Conservative party that had governed since 1984 and had won a second impressive victory in 1988 (169 seats and 43% of the vote) experienced a humiliation unparallelled in Canadian federal elections, dropping to 16 per cent of the vote and winning only two seats. Both the Bloc Québécois and Reform made impressive breakthroughs, with 14 per cent of the votes and 54 seats (Bloc), and 19 per cent of the votes and 52 seats (Reform). In a delicious irony, the Bloc is Her Majesty's official Loyal opposition party, with the task of keeping the government of a country it wishes to leave sensitive to the concerns of voters in nine provinces and two territories where it, by choice, has no representation. The regionalized representation of the two major opposition parties, neither of which has a foothold in the area of the other's strength, will inject a competitive, probably bitter regional cost-benefit calculus into any parliamentary debate of policies where the spatial distribution of advantages and disadvantages cannot be obfuscated.

The final surprise of the election was the comfortable Liberal majority of 179 seats, based on 41 per cent of the votes, and with the party leader, Jean Chrétien, winning a seat in Quebec that he was expected to lose. The Liberal majority, however, is based on a regionally erratic seat distribution, with 55 per cent of its seats coming from Ontario.

Interpreting the Election

The variety of ways in which the election can be analysed, interpreted and given meaning is not as numerous as the number of political scientists who will undertake the task. The possible approaches, however, are nevertheless extensive, depending on the methodological assumptions, and the purpose the analysis is to serve. To simplify this presentation, I will employ four different vantage points, without making any claim that I have come close to exhausting the subject.

The Campaign

With the distribution of party support taken as a given at the time the election was called,[2] the movement of public opinion in the campaign, culminating in the voters' decisions on October 25th, can be attributed to the campaign itself. This is the horse race view in which the election call becomes the starter's gun, voting day is the finish line, and leaders and their parties are as jockeys and their horses. This perspective focuses on the condition of the track, the riding skill of the jockey, and the stamina of the horse. What was the context in terms of economic conditions, war and peace in the international environment, etc.? Was the leader competent and self-confident in public? Were the party's organization and finances in good shape? How shrewd were the parties' strategies, how effectively were they implemented, and what was the evolving reaction of the electorate to the daily parade of events for 47 days?

This approach has obvious face-value validity, for the campaign was of unquestionable importance.

The Liberals in general, and Jean Chrétien in particular, ran a near flawless campaign. Chrétien adopted a statesman image, did not stoop to the gutter, and by the end of the campaign turned his experience into an asset connoting reliability and dependability. Further, the famous red policy book *Creating Opportunity*, while giving little more than a sense of direction, was effectively employed to suggest that the Liberals were well prepared to govern.

Both Reform and the Bloc ran impressive campaigns. Reform communicated the impression of a no-nonsense party that would level with the voters, that would retain grass roots connections, and that had worked out the tough policies necessary to overcome the deficit and lift the dead weight of government from the economy and taxpayers. Reform effectively exploited the message that it was not a party like the others. Lucien Bouchard and the Bloc Québécois worked closely with their provincial

Parti Québécois counterparts, played on the sentiment that Quebec was not a province like the others, and reminded the Quebecois of past constitutional humiliations and the consequent need for new approaches. Bouchard, a politically uncomfortable wooden orator when he was brought into the Conservative party by Mulroney, was now a polished orator orchestrating the nationalist emotions of his audiences.

The New Democratic Party, low in the polls when the campaign began, failed to attract the degree of attention necessary to escape from marginal status. In effect, the party was sidelined throughout the campaign. While Audrey McLaughlin, the party leader, made no major gaffes, she never developed a commanding presence. The NDP, which once prided itself on its newness and its vanguard role, had difficulty making effective contact with globalization, the stress on markets, and the diminished interventionist leverage available to debt- and deficit-ridden governments. Further, the existence of three NDP provincial governments in Saskatchewan, British Columbia and Ontario, especially the unpopular latter two, was a burden that could not be shed.

The Conservative campaign was universally viewed as a nightmare in which one miscue followed another.[3] Kim Campbell was unable to sustain a prime ministerial image throughout the campaign. Compared to the Liberals and Reform, the party appeared much weaker in policy preparation. The strategy of depending almost exclusively on the image of a new Prime Minister to attract and retain popular support was very high risk. The extent of the focus on Campbell was graphically revealed in the party's basic policy document, *Making Government Work for Canada*, which referred to a Kim Campbell government 24 times in 36 pages, and failed to mention the Conservative party once (Campbell, 1993b). Campbell was relatively inexperienced, but was sufficiently self-confident that she appears to have paid inadequate attention to her advisors. On the other hand, the albatross she and the party tried to shed, the memory of the Mulroney years, was kept alive by the other parties. For the Conservative party and its new leader to have effectively distanced themselves in a few months from a government record and a party leader that were widely, if unfairly, in deep disrepute would have been a miraculous recovery.

Finally, after the honeymoon of Campbell's pre-election weeks as Prime Minister, the media unquestionably subjected her to more rigorous scrutiny and held her to higher standards than they applied to her Liberal rival, Jean Chrétien.[4] Hence, the campaign was a disaster for the Conservatives, a vehicle to barely forestall elimination for the NDP, a major contributor to a stunning breakthrough for Reform, a reassuring confirmation of the Bloc's pre-election strength, and a seized opportunity for the Liberals to exceed even their own ambitious hopes.

The Institutional Context

Elections do not take place in a state of nature. They occur within a network of institutions and sets of rules, all of which inform the calculations of voters, parties and leaders as they interact with each other. The possibility of minority government, whether it would be better or worse than majority government, the question of whether it was proper for the Bloc to be the official opposition, the Reform argument that a minority government constrained by a strong Reform contingent would keep the government honest, the slightly different appeal to the voters to give the balance of parliamentary power to Reform federalists not Bloc separatists, the plea of Conservatives early in the campaign to Quebeckers, and of Liberals later, to send representatives to the government side of the House where influence and power are located – all of these issues and political arguments were driven by the logic of parliamentary government.

Less obtrusively perhaps, the constitutional variable of federalism was a ubiqui-

tous contextual influence on the way the competing party actors sought power, or as voters decided whom to support. The Tories were hampered in Atlantic Canada by the exhaustion of their supporters, profoundly dispirited after losses in three provincial elections in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. As already noted, the NDP was damaged by two unpopular provincial governments in British Columbia and Ontario. Reform, which has consciously stayed out of provincial politics, avoided the positive/negative entanglements that accompany a dual existence, and thus had a degree of freedom and manoeuvrability enjoyed by no other major party, a freedom to which the absence of a past also contributed.

The theory and practice of federalism were central policy issues for both the Bloc and Reform. The former saw federalism as a dead end from which escape was necessary; the latter viewed equality of the provinces as a fundamental principle from which no deviation was permissible, a doctrinal rigidity they also applied to the constitutional principle of equality of citizens. The Bloc, of course, operated exclusively within and with respect to a province whose territory, powers and the divided allegiance of its citizens were all attributes of federalism. Further, the Bloc derived organizational assistance from the provincial Parti Québécois, and indeed was a nationalist team player with the Parti Québécois in the three stage strategy aiming at independence – (1) a strong Bloc showing in the federal election, (2) a Parti Québécois victory in the coming Quebec provincial election, (3) a nationalist victory in a Quebec referendum on independence. In sum, the nationalist strategy to escape from federalism required one last resort to both the federal and provincial arenas to generate momentum for independence.

Unquestionably, however, the most salient institutional variable in electoral politics is the electoral system, the set of rules which transforms votes into seats. The inherited first-past-the-post British system lived up to its well-earned reputation for distributing its favours and disfavours with less than complete regard for equity. The electoral system savagely punished the Conservative party, one of the two effectively pan-Canadian country-wide parties to contest the election, with the derisory 'success' of only two seats for its 16 per cent of the vote. The contrast with the Bloc (14% of the vote, and 54 seats) and Reform (19% of the vote, 52 seats) was dramatic.

The first-past-the-post arrangement was somewhat kinder to the New Democrats than to the Conservatives, as they received nine seats from 7 per cent of the vote. Their relatively more lenient punishment reflected the greater clustering of their support in one province, Saskatchewan. NDP strategy was dramatically affected by the electoral system. As the campaign unfolded, and the NDP faced elimination, the party desperately focused on a handful of seats in Western Canada where individual victories were still possible, a strategy whose rationale derived exclusively from the first-past-the-post system with its powerful message that not all votes are equal if the goal is to win seats.

At the level of representation, the electoral system made Reform into a British Columbia/Alberta party (46 of its 52 seats), although it got about 50 per cent more votes in Ontario than in either British Columbia or Alberta, for which it was awarded one seat. To put it differently, Reform received 46 per cent of its seats from the 23 per cent of its votes it received in British Columbia, and 2 per cent of its seats from the 38 per cent of its total votes that came from Ontario.

Again repeating its typical but not universal practice, the electoral system gave the party with the most (albeit a minority of the) votes – 41 per cent, a sizeable majority of seats. This reward was won at the price of a Liberal caucus excessively skewed towards Ontario where it won, but did not earn, 98 of the 99 seats with 53 per cent of the provincial vote.

While the biased manner in which the

electoral system translates votes into seats has long been known to students of Canadian politics, its impact has rarely been so pronounced and so potentially destabilizing for a country whose constitutional angst shows no sign of ending. While the first-past-the-post rules did manufacture a broadly-based majority government out of a minority of voters, the opposition side of the House displayed a strengthened regionalism, courtesy of the electoral system. In fact, by exaggerating the Bloc's Quebec representation, making Reform more regional than its votes required, giving Ontario excessive weight in the governing Liberal party, and contributing to the annihilation of the country-wide Conservative party, the electoral system strengthened a two nations view of Canadian federalism, and thus hinders the compromising brokerage politics that historically has been the classic instrument of federal governments to moderate Quebec/Rest of Canada (ROC) tensions.

Paradigm Change

Elections share with the beginning of a new year the practice of reassessing the recent past and encouraging new departures. For opposition parties in particular, repudiation of the immediate past and promises of new beginnings are practically job descriptions. On occasion, when the rhetoric has substance, an election may be the occasion for a conflict between old paradigms and emerging socio-political forces struggling for recognition. Such elections – Franklin Delano Roosevelt's victory in 1932, the Parti Québécois 1976 victory in Quebec, Aberhart and Social Credit in Alberta in 1935, and perhaps Diefenbaker and the Conservatives in the paired elections of 1957–58 – ratify the political triumph of new social forces, document the perceived bankruptcy of some of the traditional ways of doing public business, and may signify the declining hegemony of one political-intellectual regime and its pending displacement.

The Canadian federal election of 1993 belongs to the category of elections that signal a major shift in the constellation of public pressures that shape the public business. Such transformations are untidy, and their long-run impact cannot be discerned at the precise moment when the cake of received custom is crumbling. Further, the transformation is never total, as in this case, for after all the winner, the governing party once again, is the Liberal party, headed by a seasoned politician, which has governed Canada for most of this century. Then, too, the contemporary challengers to the traditional ways speak with discordant voices and do not share the same focus of attention, although there are overlaps. The 1993 election does not, therefore, signify the arrival of an agreed-on or majority understanding of how our public business should be conducted, but rather suggests that Canadians are in a transition period wherein a sorting out process of rejection, modification and acceptance will take place for the foreseeable future.

The Rhetoric of the New

Before identifying the challenges to past theory and practice, the surprising extent to which the antagonists in the recent election sought to portray themselves as harbingers of the new should be noted. If the thesis that the electorate repudiated 'old style' politics is correct, they were closely attuned to the rhetoric of the politicians who led the attack on their former elitist practices and espoused accountability, participatory practices and a House of Commons with party discipline greatly weakened.

All parties, it should initially be noted, tried to distance themselves from the image of Mulroney-type politics. Further, escape from the past was implicit in the constant criticism of Chrétien by the other four parties as 'yesterday's man,' simply as if a significant connection with past politics was itself enough of a disability to disqualify him from office.

Bouchard campaigned on the explicit premise that the old constitutional order, after the consecutive failures of Meech

Lake and Charlottetown, was dead. Consequently, the Canada-wide brokerage federal parties, the instruments of past failures, should be rejected and cast into the dustbin of history. The appropriate analogy for existing federalism and the mainline parties inextricably linked to it, he pointedly asserted, was dinosaurs, fated to die because they couldn't adapt (Picard, 1993).

Kim Campbell reiterated in speech after speech that she was the standardbearer of a new, inclusive politics. She blamed the media for its failure to understand and report sympathetically the new politics she was practising. She went out of her way, overtly, to distance herself from the lack of candour in the old-style Mulroney politics. In a major pre-election speech laying out changes in the operation of government, and moves toward a more open government, she stated: 'We need a new type of Canadian politics, a new type of Canadian government for a new Canadian century' (Campbell, 1993a:2). The basic Conservative policy document, *Making Government Work for Canada*, provided a litany of assertions about government incompetence, leading the reader to the surprising conclusion that Campbell was running not only against the past in general, but against the very Mulroney government in which she had been a minister (Campbell, 1993b: esp. p.4).

Manning worked assiduously to contrast Reform, with its claimed accountability to the grass roots, to the traditional old style federalist parties and politicians that had brought Canada, Reform argued, virtually to its knees. Manning constantly referred to the new federalism espoused by Reform. Pre-election literature stressed the contrast between the discredited 'old' and the attainable 'new' Canada with rhetorical flourishes normally restricted to fundamentalist sermons. To Manning, 'Old Canada' was dying, and a '"New Canada" [was] ... struggling to be born' (Reform Party, 1991a:iv). Canadians were rejecting 'traditional political alternatives ... [and] seeking a new political vehicle, ... new political alternatives, and a new breed of political representation' (Manning and Pantazopoulos, 1993:1). '[T]ime and the future are running against the old parties ... [and] are on the side of the forces of REFORM' (Manning, 1993:5–6). Reform candidates were instructed to tell the voters that 'we are different in almost every way' from the three old-line parties (Flanagan, 1992:2).

The New Democratic Party made no claims to newness, but instead tried to present itself as the guardian and protector of the welfare legacy its CCF/NDP predecessors had helped to create. On the other hand, as if to confirm the point that the past was something to be escaped from, and that new questions required new answers, there was a pervasive sense in which the NDP was viewed as out of touch, as irrelevant, or more positively if quixotically as left-wing conservatives, nostalgically, but nevertheless helpfully, defending social policies against the new market-oriented, deficit-obsessed barbarians. Medicare, in particular, was sacrosanct.

The Liberal attitude to the past was ambivalent, necessarily so given Chrétien's age and long political life. Further, the role of government and much of the constitutional order that was attacked by Reform and the Bloc were the products of past Liberal governments. Hence Chrétien refused to repudiate the Trudeau government's constitutional legacy. He did, however, downplay the constitutional issue, in part because his own role in fashioning the 1982 *Constitution Act* was so controversial in Quebec. Equally, in contrast to Reform, the Liberals were much less willing publicly to challenge aspects of the welfare state for budget-cutting reasons.

Although the Liberals won the election, the election's overall symbolic message was of an old order tottering, of its possible replacement by one knew not what, and thus that Canadians, haltingly and apprehensively, were beginning a new era.

Seen from a political perspective, the old order is not an integrated whole. Further, only selective aspects of it were under as-

sault. The criticisms of traditional ways discussed below do not add up to a revolutionary desire to write on a clean slate. Nevertheless, they reveal major stresses whose new prominence is the most significant message of the election. Although alternative categorizations are possible, I have grouped the challenges to the way we have been under five major themes – the new relationship of the party system to the constitutional issue; the attack on the 1982 constitutional paradigm and on the formal amendment process of constitutional change; the retreat of the interventionist expenditure state; the decline of deference and the challenge to elitism in the party system and parliament; and the overt emergence of lifestyle, cultural issues into partisan politics.

The Party System and the Constitutional Issue

The political philosophies of the Bloc and Reform, in conjunction with their striking election success, challenge the role of political parties in constitutional reform that developed in previous decades. The Bloc, the first direct expression of a Quebec sovereigntist option in a federal election, emerged as a reaction to the successive failures of Meech Lake and Charlottetown that confirmed the incapacity of Canadians to generate reform within federalism. Indeed its main objective in parliament will be to underline the inability of federalism to meet Quebec's needs. The Bloc explicitly, and Reform inferentially because it did not run candidates in Quebec, repudiated the previous working assumption that comprehensive, inclusive parties, bringing the two historic national antagonists together, French and English (or Quebec and ROC), were the appropriate instruments at the federal level for generating and managing constitutional reform. From Bouchard's nationalist perspective, Liberal and Conservative MPs were 'sheep,' restricted by party discipline to making only 'eminently antiseptic' statements about federalism's failures, in contrast to Bloc MPs whose mandate to speak for the Quebec nation would be undiluted (Picard, 1993).

In various pre-election statements, Reform clearly indicated that it saw itself as the constitutional voice of ROC, and that it had no interest in running candidates in Quebec until the constitutional agenda had been settled in accordance with Reform's equal provinces, no special status philosophy (Manning, 1991:9, 13–15; Reform Party, 1991b:1–2; Reform Party, 1992:4). 'In the meantime, we can serve as the voice for the rest of Canada. We can speak for ordinary Canadians in an honest dialogue with Quebec' (Reform Party, 1992:4). During and subsequent to the recent election campaign, however, Reform clearly indicated that it would run candidates in Quebec in the next federal election (Mackie, 1993; York, 1993). (Presumably, the purpose of this effort is to attach a handful of sympathetic Quebec federalists to Reform's ROC-based constitutional philosophy.)

Although neither the Bloc nor Reform ran candidates in each other's territory, and thus did not confront each other directly, they fed on each other's growing strength in the polls throughout the campaign. All reports of growing Bloc strength were ammunition for the Reform thesis of the need for a strong uncompromising counter-presence of a take-it-or-leave-it voice from ROC in the House of Commons. For the Bloc, each increase in Reform support confirmed Bouchard's thesis that renewed federalism sympathetic to Quebec was unattainable. More generally, there is a sense in which Bloc and Reform were lining up to speak for the two national communities, untidily defined as Quebec and ROC, which lie behind the federal division of Canada into ten provinces and two territories. If the Canadian constitutional struggle is viewed as a competition among three constitutional equalities – of provinces, of citizens, and of two nations – Reform aligns itself behind the first two, as the potential constitutional voice of ROC, and the Bloc behind the third. Since the three equalities cannot be simultaneously satisfied, the

Bloc and the Reform party are natural foes.

The coexistence of Bloc and Reform as the two main opposition parties in the House, with roughly similar numbers, means that the two non-aboriginal national communities will confront each other openly for the first time in parliament. Indeed, the emergence of Reform is of special importance because ROC, or English Canada, will now have a voice of its own, not of a government admittedly, but of a major federal party. This profoundly transforms the constitutional debate. Hitherto, English Canada has been voiceless and headless, either fragmented into its provincial components whose leaders speak for provincial, not English Canadian interests, or induced by its membership in pan-Canadian parties to respond to constitutional issues wearing a Canadian rather than an English-Canadian identity.

The emergence of Reform, therefore, greatly complicates future federal government constitutional strategy, for that government now faces potential opposition not only from the other provincial governments, but also from a political party that can make claims to speak for Canada outside Quebec. The fact that Reform is the only explicit ROC presence in the House of Commons also gives ROC's constitutional voice a particular partisan complexion, and a hard line towards Quebec's constitutional goals. This may stimulate competition, most probably from the NDP, to Reform's monopoly of the voice of ROC, which would further strengthen the perception of Canada as a country of two nations rather than ten provinces.

The Reform/Bloc national polarization leaves out the aboriginal peoples, whose presence played such a significant role in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown constitutional rounds. Their electoral invisibility is a direct consequence of their numerical weakness, combined with an electoral system that is unsympathetic to dispersed minorities. Aboriginal issues were virtually ignored throughout the campaign. The arrival of Reform as a constitutional advocate for ROC heightens the contrast between aboriginal electoral weakness and their direct influence in formal constitutional politics.

In general, the paradoxical fact that ROC is now directly represented in the party system, but not in formal constitutional politics, while the reverse is true for aboriginal peoples, exacerbates the difficulty of constructing and getting agreement on constitutional packages to keep Canada together.

The Constitutional Paradigm

In Peter Russell's evocative phrase, Canadians have been engaged in a constitutional odyssey for three decades. The central objective of constitutional reform, in response to Quebec's leading role as an advocate of change, has been to accommodate Quebec, although Trudeau sought to challenge rather than accommodate Quebec nationalism. The accommodative response always involved some degree of differential treatment for Quebec. Further, the premise has been that an effective response should take the form of formal constitutional change, as indicated by the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. Further, the Canadian practice has generally been to keep constitutional issues out of federal elections.

The 1993 election results challenged all the above major assumptions of the constitutional politics of recent decades, although both Liberals and Conservatives, as on previous occasions, tried to keep the constitutional issue out of the election. They 'appear gagged on the issue of constitutional reform,' according to one journalist (Séguin, 1993a). First, as already noted, constitutional agendas have been explicitly introduced into federal elections by both the Bloc and Reform. The federal party system and the House of Commons are now arenas in which sectional constitutional objectives are explicitly pursued. It can no longer be assumed that federal parties have Canada-wide constitutional objectives. Second, the Bloc rejects the thesis that constitutional reform within federalism, employ-

ing the amending formula, is possible. The successive failures of Meech Lake and Charlottetown confirm, from the Bloc's perspective, federalism's inability to renew itself from within.[5] The Bloc's parliamentary role is transitional, stage one of a process that it is hoped will culminate in a successful Quebec referendum on independence. Consequently, for the Bloc the choice is either status quo federalism, possibly modified around the edges, or breaking out of the existing structure into independence. Reform essentially comes to the same conclusion, given its constitutional position that Quebec both is and should continue to be a province like the others. Reform's motto of equal provinces and equal citizens precludes any formal allocation of constitutional space to Quebec that gives it a different status than the other nine provinces. 'There must be equal rights for all citizens, and special privileges for none. There must be equal status for all provinces, and special powers for none' (Flanagan, 1992:2–3). Reform also opposes state support for multiculturalism and proposes that language policy should be left to provincial discretion (Reform Party, 1991a: 32–35). In sum, both the second and third parties in the House of Commons, representing sizeable electorates, reject the constitutional status quo. Further, the equal provinces-equal citizens aspect of Reform's constitutional position strengthens the Bloc's conviction that the existing system is unacceptably inflexible.

The Retreat of the Federal Expenditure State

The 1993 election officially signalled the decisive weakening, if not the demise, of the paradigm of the state's ever-expanding social role sustained by a cornucopia of taxes. For the first time, the deficit and the debt were treated as fundamental problems that could no longer be ignored. They were at the top of the Reform and Conservative policy agenda. The other parties did not deny these unpleasant budgetary realities, although they were less enthusiastic in embracing them. The retreat of the federal state in policy areas involving heavy expenditures is rapidly becoming the new conventional wisdom. The adaptation of the NDP to the new reality will be particularly difficult as its redistributive agenda rested on the now invalid assumption that the economy and hence state revenues could take care of themselves.

The painful digestion of this message is likely to be accompanied by an orgy of blaming of the past governments and citizens, including our former selves, that brought about such a sorry state of our finances. In the long run, however, without a return to fiscal prudence, we risk a serious decline in our sense of efficacy, in our collective capacity for effective self-government.

Citizens, Subjects and Rulers

The election confirmed the changed relations between citizens and governing (or would-be governing) elites that surfaced with and were stimulated by the successive defeats of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords. In both of the latter high profile constitutional reform efforts, a majority of the citizenry repudiated delicate constitutional compromises that had been hammered out and unanimously agreed to by the governments of Canadian federalism. The resort to a referendum to reject or support the Charlottetown Accord symbolized the relative displacement of elites by the mass citizenry, while the results underlined the psychological autonomy of the latter. According to Courchene, the referendum confirmed that Canadians now have a people's constitution that can only be amended with the people's consent (Courchene, 1992).

The attack on the constitutional accords was, among other things, an attack on brokerage politics, especially of the kind that takes place behind closed doors. Both Reform and the Bloc are hostile to inclusive, department store parties and the brokerage politics they practice. The Bloc stresses the virtues of a party speaking directly and only for Quebec. Reform, like

western agrarian revolts of the past, stresses the accountability of MPs to their constituents and their recall if they ignore constituents' demands. Reform's populist goals include citizens' initiatives and referenda on legislation which will 'significantly affect the vast majority of Canadian society' (Manning and Pantazopoulos, 1993:4), as well as on constitutional amendment. The populist base of the Bloc is inherent in the fundamental principle that the people of Quebec will decide on their own future in a referendum in the next few years.

From the perspective of governments, the electorate now appears as a smouldering volcano capable of unpredictable eruptions. This changed citizen-state relation is particularly threatening to the stability of governments in an era when retrenchments and cutbacks are inescapable, and governments can no longer spend their way to easy popularity, let alone legitimacy. The restructuring of the party system along populist lines also constrains constitutional policies in such areas as language, ethnicity, aboriginal concerns, and Quebec-ROC relations where, in the past, political elites have been relatively insulated from the unsympathetic opinions of the mass citizenry.

Cultural Conflict

The dramatic breakthrough of the Reform Party, getting 19 per cent of the overall vote, and 26 per cent of the vote outside Quebec, is an early warning sign of a pending Canadian version of what James D. Hunter has called 'Culture Wars' in the United States (Hunter, 1991). Typically, they involve clashes over abortion, gay and lesbian rights, feminism, the constitution of the family, pornography, the role of religion, gun control, law and order, and the treatment of criminals. In the Canadian case, these concerns are supplemented by a debate over language policy, immigration and state support of multiculturalism. At the extremes, the combatants are fundamentalist Christians versus secular rationalists.

There is clearly an influential fundamentalist streak in the Reform Party, whose leader, following in his father's footsteps, is an evangelical politician. Many Reform candidates had evangelical backgrounds.[6] Manning explicitly refused to be intimidated by 'political correctness' (when discussing immigration), as did several Reform candidates. Press accounts suggested that the views and sentiments associated with fundamentalist positions were clearly evident at Reform meetings; and several Reform candidates or officials uttered extreme statements that Manning had to (and did) repudiate.[7] The visceral antipathy to Reform from the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, from ethnic groups, and from French language minority organizations outside Quebec underlines the extent to which cultural conflict over contending life styles now has explicitly entered partisan federal politics, a decade after entering courtrooms via the Charter.

These cultural, life-style policy areas are not new to politics. What is new is that explicit opposition to the direction of recent state policy is now expressed with a degree of ideological consistency and coherence by a major party that appears to speak for a sizeable, hitherto relatively underrepresented constituency. The issues at stake ensure that the resulting political debates will be emotional and passionate, rather than bureaucratic and calculating.

Setting the Stage for the Next Round of Party Competition

Election results are not analogous to judicial decisions buttressed by enforcement mechanisms. Even when they rearrange the political landscape, as in 1993, they decide not only who is in and who is not in government; they also, and more importantly, redistribute political resources among the contending actors who will do battle in the political conflicts of the future. The 1993 election results dictate not only the need for organizational revitalization for the Conservatives and the NDP, but perhaps more fundamentally the need to

rethink their rationales for being, to find a justification for survival that is grounded in an intimate encounter with the different political world revealed by the 1993 election. This necessary rethinking and organizational refitting will have to be done without the benefit of official party status in the House of Commons and the perquisites that accompany it. Their long-run recovery may depend on the provincial arenas where they already have or may gain footholds in the future.

The Bloc, of course, is in the anomalous position of not wishing a federal future for itself. If it survives in federal politics beyond the time required to hold the next Quebec provincial election and (should the Parti Québécois win) a subsequent referendum, that will signify its failure, the inability of the nationalist movement to triumph in all three stages.

The uncertain futures for the Conservatives, the NDP and the Bloc, underline the overall instability of the post-election federal party system. The future of Reform, with most of its members new to legislative careers, and with seemingly unresolved ambiguities in its projected relation to Quebec, adds to that instability.

Perhaps surprisingly, however, the basic fragility of the overall party system results from the fact that only one national party with country-wide support survived the election. Should the governing Liberals flounder when tackling the most difficult governing agenda since the depression of the thirties, there is no country-wide party, with potential strength in both Quebec and the Rest of Canada, waiting to replace it. The Conservatives have few resources to work towards recovery. The NDP must find a modified identity and rationale before it can hope to be even a serious third party player on the national stage again. While Reform has possibilities for expansion, it is more likely to end up consolidating its position outside of Quebec than gaining a serious foothold within that province. The Liberals, accordingly, at the moment, are the only defence against an even more serious fragmentation of the party system in the next election.

The election results have both repositioned and redefined who the major party players are, and what the major issues are. As the parties are involved in a never-ending game in which each party has to respond to all of its competitors, all parties have to adapt to the new party realities and the electoral forces behind them. How the parties perform will heavily influence not only their own futures, but the party system as a whole, and the country for which it is a democratic instrument.

Conclusion

The recent election reveals, imperfectly, a heterogeneous people trying to come to grips with the uncertainties of its condition at a time when traditional answers have lost their capacity to convince. The convulsive impact of the depression of the thirties on the federal party system is the most appropriate historical analogy. In the 1935 federal election, three new parties emerged – the Reconstruction Party, Social Credit, and the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the latter two of which proved to have considerable staying power. Transformations in the depression party system were responses to the crisis of capitalism, the threats to democracy, and the ominous sounds of armies marching in Europe in the service of nascent dictatorships.

The 1993 election underlined the gravity of our continuing constitutional uncertainty; it gives a stimulus to the still reluctant recognition that the party is over, that the era of the expansionist state blessed with resources and imbued with self-confidence is in retreat; it confirms that our cultural conflict over lifestyles, broadly defined, already evident in post-1982 Charter battles before judges, has established a strong foothold in partisan politics.

The election strikingly underlined the increasingly pervasive impact of the international environment on states and

peoples. The helicopter debate was caught up in the new post-Cold War reality, following on the demise of the Soviet Union. The debate over Canada-United States and NAFTA free trade (surprisingly muted) was indirectly a debate over how to respond to globalization. Similarly, the immigration debate, led by Reform, focused simultaneously on how Canadians should relate to peoples and cultures outside their borders, and on the interdependent linkage between immigration, the domestic racial and cultural heterogeneity resulting from past immigration, and the official policy and constitutional recognition of multiculturalism developed as a response.

These indicators of the transformed domestic and international environment within which the Canadian state and its peoples manoeuvre reveal the forces to which a party system, tinged with obsolescence, is convulsively responding in an effort to recover relevance.

The party system that Canadians are leaving behind was shaped in the aftermath of World War II and the depression that preceded it. The postwar era was dominated by the fashioning of the welfare state, by progressive disentanglement from the imperial embrace, by attempts to fashion a Canadian identity and by efforts to manage French-English duality by brokerage politics, by legislation and by constitutional reform. These implemented and attempted changes were directed to the essence of our existence as a people. The present counter-reaction, as evidenced by the transformed party system of the 1993 election, is selective, not total. In general, the rethinking reflects the understanding that the conditions of statehood and citizenship have been altered by changes in social, economic, political and psychological environments. The emergence of the Bloc, of course, is a response to Canadians' inability to modify federalism to the satisfaction of Quebec nationalists. The emergence of Reform is in part a reaction to the attempts to respond to Quebec, responses which threatened to depart from the principles of equality of provinces and citizens that are central to Reform's view of the constitutional order. The backdrop to these challenges is the inexorable growth of the deficit and the debt. To the Bloc, this confirmation of federal mismanagement reinforces the irrationality of remaining in Canada. To Reform, as to the Campbell-led Conservatives, the debt and annual deficits threaten to undermine the welfare state, one of the pillars of the identity of Canadians as a statist people.

That the process of change and the immediate results are somewhat untidy, chaotic and unanticipated by even the shrewdest students of elections is, in retrospect, only to be expected. Usually volcanoes do not erupt, and thus we are conditioned to anticipate continuity. When social volcanoes erupt in the party system they do so against the resistance of inertia and the momentum of the past. Thus we tend to be unprepared for changes that defy the bureaucratic decorum of orderly change. Canada is not a command system run from the top in which violent changes of direction result from ex cathedra fiats solemnly announced from above, or a fragile democracy in a recent colony in which the displacement of leaders by an army coup is followed by the execution of the old rulers, announced by a sergeant over a recently liberated TV station. We are, fortunately, stuck with the messiness of democracy.

Notes

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1 Early in the campaign, a *Globe and Mail* (1993b) editorial detected four separate elections – in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Central Canada (atypically defined as Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan) and the far West – a campaign

regionalization that mocked 'any appeal to the national interest'.

2 A poll by the ComQuest Research Group from September 8–14, the first week of the campaign, gave the Conservatives a lead of 36% of decided and leaning voters over 33% for the Liberals, a lead largely attributable to Campbell's popularity (*Globe and Mail*, 1993a).

3 Two fairly typical judgments, of many that could be provided, were delivered by the *Globe and Mail*, a staunch supporter of the Conservatives, and the pollster Angus Reid. Early in the campaign, an editorial in the former (1993d) described the campaign as 'shaping up to be the most incompetent ... in modern political history'. According to Reid, 'The Kim Campbell campaign went off the rails two weeks into the campaign and it's been a free-fall ever since ... This is probably the worst campaign of any major political party in Canadian history in terms of the leader's performance, having no policies or the wrong policies and the type of advertising campaign that was used' (Beltrame, 1993).

4 This bias was observed by several media commentators, and bitterly deplored by Campbell (Cobb, 1993; Makin, 1993; Lee, 1993).

5 'Renewed federalism is dead' according to Bouchard (Séguin, 1993b).

6 'Up to one third of Reform's candidates ... [were] evangelical Christians ...' according to one estimate (Todd, 1993b). See Todd (1993a) for more on Reform's fundamentalist streak, and Todd (1993c) for a comparison with the role of evangelicals in American politics.

7 See the *Globe and Mail* (1993c) for Manning's willingness to break taboos on discussing policies relating to language, culture, immigration and affirmative action. See also Winsor (1993). Manning's hostility to 'political correctness' in Parliament which seeks to prevent discussion of issues central to Reform's agenda is viscerally expressed in his 'Reformer's Guide to Parliament Hill' (Manning, 1993).

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