

## Leadership Selection and Party Renewal

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Political parties choose their candidates for a country's highest office through a variety of different mechanisms. One of the oldest, simplest, and most straightforward of such processes is the selection of a party's leader by the members of its parliamentary caucus. This method is still used by Britain's Conservative party, by some other European parties, and by both major parties in Australia and New Zealand. When British Conservatives chose William Hague as their leader in 1997, the "selectorate" which made that decision consisted solely of the 165 Conservative Members of Parliament. In contrast the Labour party, which until 1981 chose its leaders by the same method, now employs an "electoral college", in which the parliamentary caucus, the constituency associations, and the affiliated trade unions each hold one third of the votes required to elect a leader.<sup>i</sup> This arrangement, when first adopted, represented an uneasy compromise between those in the party who would have preferred to maintain the caucus method of selection and those who sought to open up the process to a much wider "one member, one vote" (hereafter OMOV) selectorate. The implication of this modern day variation from the more traditional British practice forms one of the topics to be examined in this paper.

Other countries, including some still located generally within the British parliamentary tradition, have evolved new and quite different mechanisms for the selection of party leaders. Canada, for example, began to use more broadly representative party conventions for this purpose in the early part of this century, and has gradually extended this practice to the point where it can truly be said that the parliamentary party has relatively little voice in the selection of its leader.<sup>ii</sup> More recently, some Canadian parties have begun to experiment with other devices that look and function more like American style primaries. The Progressive-Conservative party, which in 1998 utilized for the first time a direct vote of constituency party members to select its new leader, is one of the three cases to be examined in more detail in this paper.

American political parties have of course been among the most innovative in inventing new ways to "democratize" party nominations. Although presidential candidates in a few early elections in the United States were selected by Congressional party caucuses, by the 1840's the national party convention had become established as the institution through which the major parties chose their national tickets. In such conventions, delegates generally represented the interests of the state party organizations rather than those of their party's Congressional caucus. By the early part of this century however, the growth of populist sentiment had begun to promote the idea of primaries as an alternative to conventions. In particular, the divisive battle for the Republican nomination in 1912 pitted the challenger Theodore Roosevelt against President Taft in a series of "preference" primaries. Although Roosevelt won nine of the ten primaries held in that year, Taft's control of the party machinery assured him of the nomination. The stage was nevertheless set for further evolution of the presidential primary as a device by which the preferences of party members and voters might be asserted over those of the party establishment.

Primaries remained a part, but only a part, of the structure of intra-party presidential

politics for the next half century. But the 1952 battles for their respective party nominations between Republicans Dwight Eisenhower and Robert Taft and Democrats Adlai Stevenson and Estes Kefauver saw primaries become a central battleground between competing party factions. When John F. Kennedy won the Democratic nomination for president in 1960, he did so largely through successes in the primaries, even though only 16 of the 50 states chose their convention delegates by that method at the time. The divisive Democratic convention of 1968 set the stage for a new set of party reforms which in turn led to a rapid increase in the use of presidential primaries. Hubert Humphrey, the 1968 Democratic nominee for president, was the last candidate of either major party to win his party's nomination without competing directly for delegate support in primaries. By 1992, when Bill Clinton won the Democratic presidential nomination, no fewer than 35 states held primaries.<sup>iii</sup> Within this relatively short span of time, the landscape of American presidential politics had been forever changed.

As this brief synopsis of party leadership selection processes in three countries suggests, such institutional variations can have significant consequences for party democracy. Leaders chosen by the parliamentary caucus are likely to be recruited from within those circles, and will often have served long legislative apprenticeships. Modern day Canadian leaders such as Pierre Trudeau or Joe Clark in contrast had only the shortest of parliamentary careers before becoming party leader (and subsequently Prime Minister), and Brian Mulroney had never held *any* elective office when he was chosen as leader of the Progressive-Conservative party by a national party convention in 1983.<sup>iv</sup> In short, different selectorates might reasonably be expected to produce different types of leaders. The widespread use of primaries in American presidential politics has certainly shifted the balance toward candidates from state political arenas rather than Congress. Three of the last four U.S. presidents had been state governors prior to winning their party's nomination, and of these only Ronald Reagan had any real national stature or public recognition in the years prior to winning the nomination. Perhaps more importantly, the present system of wide open primary competition has created opportunities for figures from outside the traditional arenas of elective office. Candidates such as Pat Robertson (1988), Jesse Jackson (1984, 1988), Pat Buchanan (1992, 1996), or Steve Forbes (1996) have clearly pushed the boundaries of party politics in America in new directions. It is most likely only a matter of time before a candidate from such a non-traditional background secures a major party nomination. In retrospect, it is perhaps surprising that Ross Perot did not choose this route in 1992 rather than that of a third party candidacy. Had he deployed his considerable resources to seek the Democratic party nomination instead, the outcome of both the primaries and election of that year might well have been very different.

This raises what I will call in this paper the issue of unintended consequences (see Hazan & Rahat, 1998). In seeking to open their internal processes of leadership selection to wider participation by the electorate, political parties create opportunities for internal factions to make such processes their battleground of choice. Even further, such reforms can sometimes open the door to groups or individuals from outside the party entirely, who may wish to use these arenas as fertile ground on which to promote a particular issue, candidate, or cause. In the Canadian Progressive-Conservative leadership contest of 1998 — one of the cases to be examined in greater detail in this paper — a candidate with no discernible party credentials entered the contest

specifically in order to campaign against the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (which had been

negotiated by a previous Conservative government). Similarly, an anti-abortion candidate (Gary Bauer) is already actively campaigning for the 2000 Republican presidential nomination in the U.S., hoping to use the primaries as a device for demonstrating the strength of the pro-life vote and thereby bringing pressure to bear on the party's eventual nominee. It is doubtful that the architects of change had these types of scenarios in mind at the time that the reforms were initiated. Yet such unintended consequences have often proven to be as important or more important in their effects than the resolution of the problems that the reforms were originally intended to solve.

In this paper, I propose to examine three specific cases of party reform, and to consider the consequences — unintended and otherwise — of reform in each of these. The three cases are the U.S. Democratic party and its adoption of the McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms in 1970, the British Labour party and its adoption of an “electoral college” formula in 1980, and the Canadian Progressive-Conservative party's change from a convention system to an American-style local caucus method of electing the party leader in 1998.<sup>v</sup> In the first two of these cases, the changes have been in place for a sufficiently long period of time so as to provide some opportunity to assess the consequences of the reforms for party democracy and leadership recruitment. In the third case, although the reform is a very recent one, the contest for the leadership which took place under the new rules in 1998 provided some striking contrasts with previous leadership contests. These three cases, while each very different both in the existing institutions which were reformed and the changes which were eventually adopted, share one important characteristic in common. In all three cases, parties which had been in government had recently suffered a crushing election defeat. That defeat led to considerable tension within the respective parties, and in turn to a quest for party “renewal” which might lay the foundations for the party's return to power. In each instance, an important component of the argument was the need for greater “democratization” — to open the party up to new ideas, new groups, and broader participation. But in doing so, the parties themselves changed in a number of significant ways. As Mair (1993) has argued, electoral change has brought about adaptation by established parties to new political forces at least as often as it has led to the upheaval of existing party systems. Parties adapt, and survive. But in doing so, they invariably change. The cases to be examined here will hopefully help to show how this happens.

### **The McGovern-Fraser reforms**

Between 1968 and 1972, the Democratic party adopted a series of changes in the processes by which delegates to its national nominating conventions are chosen. The McGovern-Fraser Commission, which had been appointed in the aftermath of the party's disastrous 1968 convention in Chicago, delivered its report, *Mandate for Reform*, to the Democratic National Committee in 1970. Party reform was a cause which enjoyed wide support at the time. This atmosphere was partly attributable to the aftermath of the 1968 convention, but was also affected by the loss of the presidency to Richard Nixon. The party was looking for ways not only to clean up its act, but also to broaden its appeal.

The report contained a number of guidelines for the selection of delegates to future national conventions which were designed to prevent the recurrence of abuses which had occurred in 1968. Selection of delegates by state committees and closed party caucuses or conventions were banned outright, as were primaries in which “uncommitted” slates of delegates stood for election. Many practices which had been commonplace previously such as the imposition of a “unit rule”, slate making, or the appointment of alternate delegates were also prohibited. As a guiding principle, the commission sought to eliminate any:

“...rules or practices which inhibit access to the delegate selection process, or which compromise full and meaningful participation.”<sup>vi</sup>

In general, the new rules were intended to give the grassroots party member a direct voice in the presidential nominating process. Although modified by subsequent party commissions in 1972, 1973, 1974, 1978, and 1982, the McGovern-Fraser reforms effectively restructured American party politics. They shifted the locus of power from the leadership of state party organizations to the general public, and “nationalized” the entire process of delegate selection. Because many of the changes required revisions in state laws, new rules adopted by state legislatures were often applied to both parties. The reformers of the 1970's did not deliberately set out to increase the number of presidential primaries, but such was the principal effect of the reforms (table 1). In the last U.S. presidential election, forty states held some type of primary, and over eighty percent of all convention delegates of both parties were elected by this method. Of those delegates *not* chosen in primaries, most were elected through precinct caucuses.<sup>vii</sup> In fact however, the practical distinction between primaries and caucuses has also diminished. The effect of the reforms has been to make

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Table 1. The growth of presidential primaries in the United States, 1968-96

PRIMARIES	NUMBER OF PRIMARIES		PERCENT OF DELEGATES ELECTED IN	
	Democrat	Republican	Democrat	Republican
1968	17	16	40	38
1972	23	22	66	57
1976	29	28	75	70
1980	31	33	72	76
1984	24	28	52	71
1988	33	34	66	77
1992	35	38	78	80
1996	37	40	82	79

Sources: Polsby (1983), Mayer (1996), Davis (1997).

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caucuses more open to public participation and, like the primaries, more closely linked to the fortunes of presidential candidates. Since 1976, the first major electoral event of the presidential season has been the Iowa caucuses held in early February, followed by the New Hampshire primary about a week later. Both events are now widely followed by the media and hotly contested by aspiring candidates. Primaries and caucuses do however differ markedly in voter turnout. While voter turnout is low in U.S. primaries by any comparative standard, it is even lower in precinct caucuses. Thus, while the New Hampshire Democratic primary in 1992, in which former Senator Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts finished ahead of Bill Clinton and Jerry Brown, drew about 35% of registered Democrats, turnout in the Iowa caucuses of the same year was only about 5% of the voting age population.<sup>viii</sup> The implications of low turnout in such a setting are evident. In the 1988 Iowa Republican caucuses, Pat Robertson's efforts towards organizing evangelical Christians won him a second place finish (25% of the vote) behind Senator Dole (37%). George Bush, the eventual nominee, ran third (19%). Turnout in the 1988 Iowa caucuses, at about 11% of the voting age population, was still low, but was nevertheless more than double that of other years. Robertson's organizing efforts had obviously paid off, in a way in which they could not have under older rules.

Is it likely that the future of American presidential politics holds more Pat Robertsons, and if so that the McGovern-Fraser reforms and their aftermath deserve a lot of the credit or blame? Certainly, the opening up of the presidential nominating process spurred by the reforms has changed the shape of American party politics in a number of important ways. It has arguably made it substantially more difficult for a Washington based party elite to assert control over the party's affairs. Hence, although it appears today that Al Gore is the choice of much of the party establishment as the Democratic presidential candidate in the next election, he will nevertheless face numerous challenges from adversaries both inside and outside the party before he will be able to claim its nomination. The Republicans, with even less consensus regarding probable candidates, face a wide open contest in which several outside candidates have already staked out preliminary claims. Greater openness has, in effect, meant greater permeability for both major parties.

The reforms have also brought a shift in the kinds of individuals that U.S. parties tend to recruit as candidates for the country's highest office. While this line or argument is difficult to document, given the small numbers involved, it seems probable that Washington based politicians, particularly those holding positions of party leadership, are significantly disadvantaged by the new processes. An increasing number of candidates for the presidency in both parties are in fact *former* officeholders, who are able to run full time campaigns without the diversion of other political responsibilities. In 1996, Robert Dole resigned his position as Senate Majority Leader in order to give full time to his primary campaign. Other candidates, such as Steve Forbes or Pat Buchanan, who hold no elective office and who are able to raise the large sums of money needed to finance effective campaigns, are also better positioned than the average Congressman or Senator. State Governors, and especially *former* Governors (here including Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and Jerry Brown, among others) are likewise better able to navigate this new system than are most politicians coming from a background of national political office. While not definitive, a listing of candidates in the Democratic primaries from 1976 to 1992 when there was no incumbent

Democratic president (table 2) gives a sense of the impact of these new trends on candidate recruitment. A similar listing of Republican candidates in comparable years would suggest much the same conclusion.

Table 2. Candidates running in Democratic presidential primaries, 1976, 1984, 1988, 1992

		<u>Senator</u>	<u>Representative</u>	<u>Governor</u>	<u>Other</u>
1976	Jimmy Carter			X	
	Jerry Brown			X	
	Frank Church	X			
	Morris Udall		X		
	George Wallace			X	
	Henry Jackson	X			
	Fred Harris	X			
	Sargent Shriver				X
	Milton Shapp			X	
	Birch Bayh	X			
1984	Walter Mondale	*			
	Jesse Jackson				X
	Gary Hart	X			
	John Glenn	X			
	George McGovern	X			
	Ernest Hollings	X			
	Reubin Askew			X	
	Alan Cranston	X			
1988	Michael Dukakis			X	
	Jesse Jackson				X
	Al Gore	X			
	Paul Simon	X			
	Richard Gephardt		X		
	Gary Hart	X			
	Bruce Babbitt			X	
1992	Bill Clinton			X	
	Jerry Brown			X	
	Paul Tsongas	X			
	Tom Harkin	X			
	Robert Kerrey	X			
	Joseph Biden	X			

\* Mondale, a former Senator from Minnesota, had also been Vice-President under Jimmy Carter (1977-1981)

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What lessons might a comparativist draw from this brief examination of the American reforms? U.S. presidential politics contains so many unique characteristics that one might be tempted to treat it in its entirety as yet another example of American exceptionalism. However, some parallels can be drawn with other systems, particularly those that have undertaken party reforms motivated by some of the same concerns that drove the 1968-72 McGovern-Fraser reforms. If these types of changes in the party selectorate are capable of producing the kind of transformation in party politics found in the U.S. over the past thirty years, elements of them might conceivably be found elsewhere.

### **Labour's Electoral College**

The reforms adopted by the Labour party in 1980-81 likewise had their roots in internal party conflicts. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, a grassroots organization frustrated with the rightward tilt of policies followed by the Wilson and Callaghan governments of the 1970's, promoted a package of reforms which would have had the effect of curbing the nearly exclusive control of the parliamentary party over policy. Specifically, they sought (1) a process of mandatory reselection for sitting Labour MP's, (2) placing the right to frame the electoral manifesto with the National Executive Committee rather than the leader, and (3) election of the leader and deputy leader of the party by the party members at large rather than by the parliamentary caucus. As Shaw (1994) notes:

“The constitutional reformers had three interlinked aims: to weaken the right's hold on the party, to redistribute power from the parliamentary establishment to the rank and file, and to end the effective independence of the PLP on which right-wing control was seen ultimately to rest.”

It was not however until the defeat of the Labour Government by Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives in the May 1979 general elections that it became possible for the reformers to overcome the many obstacles to this agenda. Blaming former Prime Minister Callaghan and former Chancellor of the Exchequer Dennis Healey for the election defeat, the left of the party succeeded in carrying resolutions supporting reselection and control of the manifesto at the annual party conference held at Brighton in October 1979. A resolution regarding election of the leader by the party membership was narrowly defeated. All of these issues however were still on the agenda at the time of the October 1980 party conference at Blackpool, and attempts to find compromises on some of them over the preceding year had generally failed. At the 1980 party conference, the reselection proposal was endorsed, but the proposal regarding control of the manifesto was narrowly defeated. However, a compromise proposal to elect the leader and deputy leader of the party by means of an “electoral college”, the details of which were to be worked out at a special party conference to take place in January, was approved.

These events, and especially the controversy over leadership selection, led directly to the rupture in the party which took place over the next few months. Callaghan resigned as party leader following the Blackpool conference, thereby precipitating a contest for the leadership which would be held under the old voting rules rather than waiting for the new formula to be worked out. They also led to the decision by Shirley Williams, David Owen, and William Rodgers — all former Labour cabinet ministers — to leave the party a few months later to found the SDP.

The election by the parliamentary caucus of Michael Foot as leader in November 1980 reflected the deep left-right split within the party (table 3). Tony Benn, one of the principal proponents of the reforms, declined to stand for the leadership under the old rules.<sup>ix</sup> Following Foot's election as leader and Healey's subsequent uncontested election by the caucus as deputy leader, Benn indicated that he would challenge Healey for the deputy leadership *after* the new electoral college rules had come into effect.

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Table 3. Parliamentary Labour Party leadership vote, November 1980

	<u>1st ballot</u>	<u>2nd ballot</u>
Dennis Healey	112	129
Michael Foot	83	139
John Silkin	38	
Peter Shore	32	

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The electoral college arrangement adopted by the special party conference at Wembley in January 1981 assigned 40% of the weighted votes for leader and deputy leader of the party to the affiliated trade unions, and 30% each to the parliamentary caucus and the individual members of constituency associations. The formula, with its weighting toward the unions, infuriated the right, and was the single event, more than any other, which precipitated the final split in the party which led to the formation of the SDP. David Owen, who had argued forcefully that the formula would “put the leader in the pocket of the unions”, signed the Limehouse declaration along with Shirley Williams, William Rodgers, and Roy Jenkins the day after the Wembley conference. In their view, the 269 Labour MP's, duly elected by the voters in their respective constituencies and nominated by their constituency associations, and a number of whom were already sponsored by the unions, were a far more legitimate “electoral college”. But the point of the reform was clear, bickering over the specific weights of the formula notwithstanding. There were over six million members of affiliated unions, and more than 300,000 members of constituency associations. These groups, with the support of the left, were now determined that their voices would be heard and counted in party affairs.

Interestingly, the SDP itself was divided on the issue of leadership selection, in spite of the fact that this was one of the issues which had precipitated the formation of the new party. Most of the MP's who ultimately deserted Labour to join the SDP favoured retaining the system of election of the leader by the parliamentary caucus. However, partly for tactical reasons, both Owen and Williams had supported OMOV in the Labour party debates over this issue. A poll of party members, conducted as part of the process of drawing up a constitution for the newly formed SDP, found greater support among the membership for OMOV which was ultimately adopted. In the first (and only) contested election for the party leadership, held in July 1981, Jenkins defeated Owen by a margin of slightly over 5,000 votes out of 47,000 cast.

The first test of Labour's new electoral college system came quickly with Benn's challenge of Healey for the deputy leadership at the 1981 annual party conference. The outcome of this contest was extremely close, again reflecting the deep split in the party (table 4). Ironically, Healey was saved from defeat by the slightly higher weight accorded to the unions. Had the current (1/3, 1/3, 1/3) formula been in effect, Benn would have won, due mainly to his broader support among individual members of constituency associations. (Punnett, 1990).

The electoral college system of electing the leader and deputy leader has been used on four more occasions, but no other contest since has produced the kind of division seen in the 1981 deputy leader race, and no other has gone to more than a single ballot (table 4). Neil Kinnock won the leadership easily in 1983 following Foot's resignation, and his nearest challenger, Roy Hattersley, was elected as his deputy, also by a wide margin. Both easily survived a challenge to their leadership in 1988. John Smith was elected leader by a lopsided margin in 1992 when Kinnock resigned following Labour's defeat in the election of that year, and Tony Blair was elected on the first ballot in 1994 in a contest precipitated by Smith's sudden death. In each of these instances, the winning candidate carried a majority in all three sectors of the electoral college vote, thus avoiding the situation in which the parliamentary party was pitted against the constituency members or the trade unions in a leadership contest. In each case, the winning candidate also had long standing parliamentary experience, and enjoyed substantial support within the parliamentary caucus. The divisions which led to the creation of the system in 1981 have thus not figured heavily in its actual operation.

The "renewal strategy" on which the party embarked after its devastating defeat in the 1983 election, and which led ultimately to Tony Blair's "New Labour", involved gradually recapturing control of party institutions from the left, but working within rules which had been designed to empower the very groups within the party which were likely to be most antagonistic to this course. Kinnock's desire to move the party closer to OMOV was thwarted by the unions, who insisted on retaining their direct voice through the electoral college and the party conference. Yet, as Seyd & Whiteley (1992) point out, empowering the membership at the time was "a leap in the dark". Their surveys of party members however later disclosed a membership that was generally supportive of the leadership and suspicious of both the unions and the party activists (Seyd & Whiteley, 1992). But with Labour now once again in power, these competing constituencies will almost certainly come into conflict again at some point.

Table 4. Elections for leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party, 1981-94

	<u>Leader</u>	%	<u>Deputy leader</u>	%
1981				
1st ballot	*		Dennis Healey	45.4
			Tony Benn	36.6
			John Silkin	18.0
2nd ballot	*		Dennis Healey	50.4
			Tony Benn	49.6
1983	Neil Kinnock	71.3	Roy Hattersley	67.3
	Roy Hattersley	19.3	Michael Meacher	27.9
	Eric Heffer	6.3	Denzil Davies	3.5
	Peter Shore	3.1	Gwyneth Dunwoody	1.3
1988	Neil Kinnock	88.6	Roy Hattersley	66.8
	Tony Benn	11.4	John Prescott	23.7
			Eric Heffer	9.5
1992	John Smith	91.0	Margaret Beckett	57.3
	Bryan Gould	9.0	John Prescott	28.1
			Bryan Gould	14.6
1994	Tony Blair	57.0	John Prescott	56.5
	John Prescott	24.1	Margaret Beckett	43.5
	Margaret Beckett	18.9		

\* The leadership was not contested in 1981.

How does the electoral college system actually work in practice? First, candidates for the leadership *must* be sitting MP's. Under the original (1981) rules, they were required to have the support of 5% of the caucus in order to be nominated, but in 1988 this requirement was raised to 20% for challenges of an incumbent leader and 12.5% in the case of a vacancy in the leadership. Hence, candidacies must still originate primarily within the parliamentary caucus, and be

supported by a significant number of its members. Unlike American primaries, there is virtually no possibility that groups from outside the formal party structure may decide for their own reasons to enter the contest. Even the trade unions, which under the 1981 formula controlled the largest share of the votes, are limited to supporting a particular member of the parliamentary caucus who in turn enjoys the support of a significant proportion of his/her colleagues. So long as candidates can be recruited

only from among members of Parliament, and are required to have substantial caucus support to be nominated, any further move in the direction of OMOV might be expected to have relatively modest effects. It might be capable of producing different outcomes in some circumstances, but would be unlikely to lead to substantially different patterns of recruitment. OMOV continues to enjoy broad support among the party membership (Seyd & Whiteley, 1992). But the electoral college, whatever its future, has not been a precursor of American style primaries in Britain.

### **Canada's Progressive-Conservatives**

Canada provides an ideal setting in which to study processes of leadership selection in political parties. Having begun in the British tradition of selecting leaders from within the parliamentary caucus, both of Canada's major national political parties have evolved over this century a complex system of selecting their leaders through national party conventions. In addition, minor parties and provincial parties have experimented with various devices for choosing party leaders, thus providing a rich comparative source of information on different types of rules, processes, reforms, and consequences (Carty et al, 1992; Cross, 1996). In recent years, party "democracy" has become an important topic of concern among nearly all of Canada's political parties, in part because of widespread public dissatisfaction with parties, politics, and politicians (Blais & Gidengil, 1991; Clarke & Kornberg, 1993; Clarke et al, 1995). Parties appear willing, even anxious, to experiment with reforms that might hold out the promise of reducing their perceived "democratic deficit". Further, the volatility of Canadian electoral politics and the relatively weak party loyalties of most voters contribute towards an environment in which all parties seek to gain a competitive "edge" through leadership or image. Massive electoral defeats suffered by both major parties (Liberals in 1984; Progressive-Conservatives in 1993) forced upon the survivors long and painful periods of internal change and party renewal. At the same time, the sudden rise of new parties such as the Reform Party and the Bloc Québécois created new competitors and greater challenges for the "old" parties, especially for the Progressive-Conservatives (LeDuc, 1996). After two consecutive terms in government under Brian Mulroney (1984-93), this party found itself reduced in the 1993 election to a humiliating 16% of the total popular vote and only two seats in Parliament. Renewal and change became, for Canada's oldest political party, a matter of survival.

Leadership conventions in Canada have traditionally been an important mechanism for party renewal. The very earliest conventions held by the two major parties (1919 for the Liberals; 1927 for the Conservatives), were held while their respective parties were in opposition and at the early stages of a rebuilding process.<sup>x</sup> The idea that a leadership convention might help to boost the party's electoral fortunes was not lost on the organizers of these events. The fact that, in both instances, the respective parties came to power in the election following the conventions (the Liberals in 1921; the Conservatives in 1930) helped to solidify the idea of the convention as an

integral part of a process of internal change and renewal (Courtney, 1995). It would be inaccurate however to argue that the conventions were merely a device for rebuilding a party's electoral support. Many other factors also contributed to the growth of national conventions as the preferred method for selecting party leaders in Canada. Among these were the rise of the Progressive movement in the 1920's, and the strong influences of American institutions on the Canadian political environment.<sup>xi</sup>

Although they established themselves easily as the institutions of choice for the selection of party leaders, national conventions in Canada had only very modest effects on Canadian party politics during the first fifty years or so of their existence. There were few discernible effects, for example, on patterns of leadership recruitment. Most leaders selected by conventions were men who had made their careers in the federal parliament and, if their party had been recently in power, had generally also served in Cabinet (table 5). Few other candidates contested the leadership and, when some occasionally did so, they attracted little support. The size of conventions tended to be relatively small, and the decision was often made in one or two ballots. The 1958 convention that elected Lester Pearson as leader of the Liberal party, for example, was actually smaller than the convention that chose R. B. Bennett as Conservative leader in 1927. There were only three candidates, and Pearson was elected easily over Paul Martin on the first ballot. Both Pearson and Martin had served as senior ministers in the St. Laurent government. The third candidate received only one vote. Although conventions could be said to be more broadly representative of the "party on the ground", there was little doubt that the parliamentary caucus was still the dominant force in their politics.

These attributes of national leadership conventions began to change dramatically during the 1960's. Pressures to make conventions more representative of society as a whole led to the adoption of quotas for women and youth delegates, leading in turn to a significant increase in the size of the conventions. Some of these factors were comparable to those occurring in the U.S. around the same time, which led the McGovern-Fraser Commission to adopt minimum quotas based on race, gender, and age for state delegations.<sup>xii</sup> This increase in size, together with the recruitment of new kinds of delegates, further undermined caucus control. Convention politics became less predictable, with its multiple ballots, "dark horse" candidates, and substantial vote switching, leaving outcomes sometimes in doubt until a fourth or fifth ballot. The number of candidates running for the party leadership also increased, as politicians entered the race for reasons unrelated to the leadership itself, hoping to secure a cabinet post in a new government, for example, or promoting a particular issue, region, or group. More candidates meant more ballots, and greater unpredictability. Conventions seemed to take on some of the characteristics of American primaries, and delegates frequently behaved more like voters than like partisans (Krause & LeDuc, 1979). Contests for the leadership spilled over into the delegate selection process itself, as aspirants for the leadership and their supporters sought to secure the election of favourable slates of delegates at the constituency level. Conventions became major media events, and the attention accorded them made them useful vehicles for the pursuit of other political agendas.

The two conventions held in 1967 and 1968 respectively illustrate many of these new characteristics. The 1967 Progressive-Conservative convention is also noteworthy because it represented the culmination of a bitter power struggle between the party executive headed by Dalton Camp and the party's parliamentary leader and former Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker. The 1967

convention, which fulfilled a commitment made by Camp in his campaign for the party presidency a year earlier, became the vehicle by which Diefenbaker was ousted from the party leadership, a series of events which further diminished the authority of the parliamentary caucus. Both parties at around the same time adopted new procedures for leadership review, a process which had previously not existed in Canada. This aspect of convention politics again became important in

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Table 5. Characteristics of major party leadership conventions in Canada, 1919-93

<u>Year</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u># delegates</u>	<u># candidates</u>	<u># ballots</u>	<u>Leader elected</u>	<u>Parliament</u>	<u>Cabinet</u>	<u>Premier</u>	<u>Other</u>
1919	LIB	947	4	3	Mackenzie King	X	X		
1927	CON	1564	6	2	R. B. Bennett	X	X		
1938	CON	1565	5	2	R. J. Manion	X	X		
1942	PC	870	5	2	John Bracken			X	
1948	LIB	1227	1	3	Louis St. Laurent	X	X		
1948	PC	1242	3	1	George Drew			X	
1956	PC	1284	3	1	John Diefenbaker	X			
1958	LIB	1380	3	1	Lester Pearson	X	X		
1967	PC	2233	11	5	Robert Stanfield			X	
1968	LIB	2366	8	4	Pierre Trudeau	X	X		
1976	PC	2360	12	4	Joe Clark	X			
1983	PC	2988	8	4	Brian Mulroney				X
1984	LIB	3435	7	2	John Turner	X	X		
1990	LIB	4658	5	1	Jean Chrétien	X	X		
1993	PC	3469	5	2	Kim Campbell	X	X		

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1983 when another Conservative leader, Joe Clark, was also ousted from the party leadership. Both the 1967 Progressive-Conservative and 1968 Liberal conventions reflected deep conflicts within their respective parties, but they were also occasions of significant party renewal. The two political parties which Pierre Trudeau and Robert Stanfield led into a federal election only two months following the 1968 Liberal convention were very different entities than those headed by Diefenbaker and Pearson only a few years earlier. The leadership changes of those years had meant more than merely a change in the man at the top. It represented the culmination of a process of renewal and change for the parties themselves.

These dramatic changes in convention politics also had implications for leadership recruitment. In the 1967 Progressive-Conservative convention, two provincial premiers, Stanfield of Nova Scotia and Roblin of Manitoba, were the choices presented to delegates on the fifth and final ballot. Just as American primary politics tends to favour state governors as candidates, Canadian parties have increasingly looked to provincial premiers as potential national party leaders. Within the parliamentary caucus itself, legislative or cabinet experience has carried less weight for successful leadership candidates. Pierre Trudeau, chosen as Liberal leader on the fourth ballot of the

1968 convention, had been in the cabinet for only a year, and in Parliament itself for less than three years. Likewise Joe Clark, elected as Progressive-Conservative leader on the fourth ballot in

Table 6. Voting results of Progressive-Conservative leadership conventions, 1956-93

		<u>1st ballot</u>	<u>2nd ballot</u>	<u>3rd ballot</u>	<u>4th ballot</u>	<u>5th ballot</u>
1956	John Diefenbaker	774				
	Donald Fleming	393				
	E. Davie Fulton	117				
1967	Robert Stanfield	519	613	717	865	1156
	Dufferin Roblin	347	430	541	771	969
	E. Davie Fulton	343	346	361	357	
	George Hees	295	299	277		
	John Diefenbaker	271	172	114		
	Wallace McCutcheon	137	76			
	Alvin Hamilton	136	127	106	167	
	Donald Fleming	126	115	76		
	Michael Starr	45	34			
	John MacLean	10				
	Mary Walker-Sawka	2				
1976	Claude Wagner	531	667	1003	1122	
	Brian Mulroney	357	419	369		
	Joe Clark	277	532	969	1187	
	Jack Horner	235	286			
	Paul Hellyer	231	118			
	Flora MacDonald	214	239			
	Sinclair Stevens	182				
	John Fraser	127	34			
	Jim Gilles	87				
	Patrick Nowlan	86	42			
	Heward Grafftey	33				
	R. C. Quittenton	0				
1983	Joe Clark	1091	1085	1058	1325	
	Brian Mulroney	874	1021	1036	1584	
	John Crosbie	639	781	858		
	Michael Wilson	144				
	David Crombie	116	67			
	Peter Pocklington	102				
	John Gamble	17				
	Neil Fraser	5				
1993	Kim Campbell	1664	1817			
	Jean Charest	1369	1630			
	Jim Edwards	307				
	Garth Turner	76				



1976, has been in Parliament for just over three years and had never served in a cabinet. Brian Mulroney, who ousted Clark in 1983 and went on to become Prime Minister a year later, had never previously held *any* elective office. While some of these trends appear to have been reversed in later contests (Turner in 1984, Chrétien in 1990, were both long serving cabinet ministers in the Trudeau governments), it is clear that party leadership in Canada has become a much less predictable affair, as have candidacies for the American presidency. Kim Campbell, who became Prime Minister in 1993 upon her election as Progressive-Conservative leader was still in her first term in Parliament and had held only two cabinet positions — Minister of Justice and Minister of National Defence in the second Mulroney government.

Nearly all Canadian political parties at both the federal and provincial level now stand at some point of transition with respect to leadership selection. Responding to calls for further reform, a number of provincial parties have experimented with various OMOV type systems in selecting their leaders (see Cross, 1996). In 1985, the Parti Québécois became the first major party in Canada at either level to select its leader by direct vote of the party membership (see Latouche, 1992). Since then, other provincial parties have chosen variations of this option, including Liberal parties in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, and Conservatives in Alberta, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan. The Alberta, British Columbia, and Nova Scotia Liberals and the Saskatchewan Conservatives provided for voting by telephone, while the Manitoba Liberals utilized a mail ballot in conjunction with regional polling stations. Other parties utilizing such systems have generally provided for polling stations located in the constituencies.

The point of these exercises of course has been mainly to increase participation in the leadership selection process and to further diminish control of the process by party elites. Of the cases cited above, the Parti Québécois and the Alberta Progressive-Conservatives (1992) have been the most successful in this regard.<sup>xiii</sup> Party officials tend to like these systems, in part because they provide an ideal opportunity to recruit new party members and workers. As Katz (1990) has noted, such individuals provide an important linkage to the electorate at large, and are themselves generally loyal voters. On the other hand, the loss of conventions as major media events deprives parties of one of their most cherished sources of public attention. The Ontario Liberal Party and the federal New Democratic Party have both utilized a limited direct vote system *together* with a convention in recent leadership contests, and the federal Bloc Québécois did the same using a mail-in ballot in 1997.<sup>xiv</sup> Such processes, as they have evolved, look somewhat like U.S. primaries, but without some of the safeguards that state regulation of primaries provides in that country.

In 1998, the federal Progressive-Conservatives joined this trend toward a direct vote system in the election of their new leader. Following the party's devastating 1993 election loss, Jean Charest, the runner-up in the 1993 PC convention and one of its two surviving MP's, assumed the leadership by agreement of the party executive. Charest led the party in the 1997 election, improving its electoral standing to 20 seats and 19% of the popular vote. But Charest, a native Quebecker, resigned in 1998 to assume the leadership of the Quebec Liberal party. This set in motion the party's previously agreed upon plan to elect its next leader by direct vote of the membership. While the principle of direct election was already in place, the details remained to be

worked out. The model finally adopted was similar to that used by the Ontario Progressive-Conservatives in 1989. Voting would take place on a constituency by constituency basis, with each constituency assigned 100 points. Votes would then be counted as a fraction of the points. A candidate who received 40% of the total votes cast in a constituency, however many these were, would receive 40 points. To be elected, a candidate had to obtain an absolute majority of the 30,100 available points (301 constituencies times 100 points each) on the first ballot. If no candidate received such a majority, a second ballot would be held three weeks later using an STV method of voting. In theory at least, this system was intended to provide regional balance and to prevent a candidate from winning by concentrating large numbers of votes in a small number of constituencies or in a single region. But it clearly violated the OMOV principle in that a constituency with only 50 members had the same weight in the formula as one with 2000.

The law of unintended consequences began to come into play almost as soon as these arrangements were finalized. Party organizers clearly hoped that the leadership contest would revitalize the party by recruiting thousands of new members, choosing a new leader in an exciting contest, and presenting a modern and more democratic image to the electorate which would serve to boost the electoral party's fortunes. One serious difficulty in this scenario however was that the party, still suffering the effects of its 1993 electoral defeat, was woefully short of both members and potential candidates. None of the four sitting Conservative provincial premiers expressed any interest in the federal leadership, in spite of the hopes of some of their federal supporters. Most of the members of the parliamentary caucus had been first elected in 1997, and seemed unlikely prospects for assuming the party leadership so early in their careers. The candidate who first emerged was Hugh Segal, a longtime party organizer who had twice run unsuccessfully for a parliamentary seat in previous elections. He seemed an unlikely figure to provide the type of revitalization and renewal that the party was seeking. The others who gradually came forward seemed equally improbable — Brian Pallister, a junior provincial cabinet minister from Manitoba, and Michael Fortier, a Montreal lawyer with no political experience. Then a man with rather dubious party credentials announced his candidacy, a Saskatchewan farmer (David Orchard) whose sole purpose in running was to attack the North American Free Trade Agreement, one of the Mulroney government's most cherished policy achievements. Finally, a former party leader, Joe Clark, who lost the leadership to Mulroney in 1983 but who served as Foreign Minister in his governments before retiring from politics in 1993, announced his candidacy. This field — two "has beens", two unknowns, and an outsider bent on stirring up controversy — was not what the party organizers had in mind in their quest for party renewal.

There was also a problem in defining party membership, a difficulty which has plagued all similar electoral arrangements at the provincial level as well, and represents a significant challenge for parties attempting to implement OMOV. Since part of the intent is to attempt to increase membership, the threshold for joining is deliberately set low. New members (defined as "any citizen or permanent resident over the age of 14") could join the PC party upon payment of a \$10 membership fee, and new members could be signed up until 30 days before the vote. An important part of the candidates' campaign strategies therefore involved signing up members, who would then be eligible to vote in the election.<sup>xv</sup> Even long standing party members were not eligible to vote

unless they renewed their membership and paid the new \$10 fee. Such arrangements seemed ideal for a candidate like Orchard, who could recruit new members from various groups outside the party by mobilizing support around the free trade issue. This potential scenario alarmed many party officials, but the voting rules were already in place. Most thought that Clark, the only candidate in the race with any genuine name recognition, would win, but many also feared that the apathy which set in almost immediately could easily work against him. Signing up members and getting them to the polls remained the principal challenge for the candidates, a style of campaigning that generated little media coverage or interest. In all, about 90,000 party “members” were eligible to vote in the leadership contest.<sup>xvi</sup>

The results of the first ballot (table 7) confirmed the advantage enjoyed by a former leader with broad name recognition in such a weak field. But in spite of this advantage, Clark fell just short of winning a majority on the first ballot, thereby forcing a second. Seemingly embarrassed by the whole affair, party organizers exerted pressure on the other candidates to withdraw from the second ballot and concede victory to Clark. All except Orchard, who relished the opportunity of a one to one contest with Clark, did so. The second ballot, which took place three weeks later, proved anticlimactic, but the risks in allowing it to take place at all were obvious. Many feared that perceptions that the contest was effectively over would further depress the vote, but that Orchard’s supporters had greater motivation to turn out for the final ballot.

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Table 7. Progressive-Conservative leadership vote, October 24, 1998 and November 14, 1998

	<u>1st ballot</u>		<u>2nd ballot</u>	
		%		%
Joe Clark	14591.82	48.5	23290.97	77.5
Hugh Segal	5689.20	18.9		
David Orchard	4915.77	16.3	6779.03	22.5
Brian Pallister	3675.88	12.2		
Michael Fortier	1227.23	4.1		

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## Consequences, intended and otherwise

What conclusions can be drawn from this recent Canadian experiment in party leadership selection, and from some of the other cases of reforms in leadership selection processes examined here. First, the Progressive-Conservatives' 1998 formula represented a genuine hybrid, combining some elements of a caucus, a primary, and an "electoral college". Not following an OMOV rule but advertising the contest as an exercise in participatory democracy would seem to combine the worst rather than the best of both options. Like American open primaries, there is also a serious problem of permeability, as both candidates and voters may be attracted by the low threshold for entry. Attempts by the Democratic party in the U.S. to ban open or crossover primaries demonstrate the extent to which parties themselves have begun to see the loss of control over their selectorates as a threat to their integrity (Wekkin, 1984; Davis, 1997). On the other hand, parties seeking greater democratic legitimacy and participation find it difficult to mount effective arguments for limiting entry. One of the Progressive-Conservative co-chairs in 1998 stated that the intent of the process was to "allow all Canadians to have a direct say in who the next leader of the party will be."<sup>xvii</sup> The potential problem of party crossovers is compounded by the relatively small electorate, just as is the case in precinct caucuses in the U.S. Every voter mobilized in an electorate of 90,000 counts for far more than one in an electorate of 19,000,000. American party officials and academics worry a great deal about the "representativeness" of primary electorates. In Canada, this effect is further compounded by treating the constituencies as equal units regardless of the number of votes cast — an "electoral college"-like method. In some constituencies where the party is weak and membership low, a handful of votes can earn a candidate a large share of the points in that riding. One constituency in Saskatchewan, for example, reportedly had as few as 57 members on its 1998 voting rolls.<sup>xviii</sup> The lopsided results reported for some individual constituencies would tend to suggest that this type of distortion was fairly widespread in the 1998 PC contest.<sup>xix</sup>

It is more difficult to assess the effects over time of such a system on patterns of leadership recruitment, but perhaps possible to make some generalizations about recruitment in the larger context. Certainly, the issue of permeability is a factor here, as it is entirely possible that future Canadian leaders could come from entirely outside the party. On the other hand, the fact that a former leader was chosen in the 1998 contest will provide assurance to some partisans, but may suggest to others that reputation and name recognition will often carry substantial weight, just as tends to be the case in American primaries, especially in the larger states. The overall weakness of the particular field of candidates in the 1998 Progressive-Conservative race was attributable, not to the electoral system, but to the weakness of the party more generally at the present time. Yet there is no assurance that the kinds of candidates who might win a leadership contest will necessarily be able to subsequently win a seat in Parliament, or to provide effective leadership of a parliamentary caucus. Here, the British rule that a candidate for the party leadership must be a Member of Parliament provides an effective barrier, but at the cost of the type of openness that North American parties seem to value more highly. The friction between David Orchard's supporters and the party "regulars" in the 1998 PC contest provides a foretaste of things to come. As is frequently the case in American primaries, the direct vote system, structured in this way, provides an ideal ground on

which to fight internal party battles. The Canadian Progressive-Conservative party, with its long history of party factionalism and with the Reform Party constantly challenging its voter base, can expect more such conflicts in the future.

Labour's 1981 reforms have been much more modest in their effects, in spite of the heated controversy that they generated within the party at the time. Because of the requirement that leadership candidates must be Members of Parliament and must enjoy a minimum threshold of support within the caucus, it can be argued that the electoral college has, in its 18 years of operation, had rather little effect on patterns of recruitment. Neither has it empowered the left or the trade unions within the party as was originally feared by its opponents. Ironically, both groups have seen their influence diminish steadily, first under Kinnock's leadership and subsequently under Blair. Margaret Beckett, defeated for reelection as deputy leader in 1994, is quoted (Stark, 1996) as observing that the electoral college has had "almost the reverse effect of what some of its proponents intended". If the electoral college represented a partial step toward greater internal party democracy, the next move by the Labour Party, when it comes, will almost certainly be to OMOV, a limited version of which has already been adopted for the selection of parliamentary candidates. While still not a primary in the American sense, such a reform would constitute one further step towards a loosening of control of the party by those groups which have traditionally had the greatest voice in its affairs — a further "leap in the dark" to paraphrase Seyd & Whiteley. But so long as leadership candidates can be recruited only from among members of the parliamentary caucus, and are required to have substantial support from within the caucus in order to be nominated, such a "leap" would still be a modest one in comparative terms.

The history of reform of leadership selection processes in the three countries considered here suggests that some of these trends are irreversible, regardless of the reservations that many partisans and some academics may have about them. The 2000 U. S. presidential primaries, with the nomination open in both parties, and primaries or caucuses taking place in virtually all of the states, are likely to be full of unintended consequences. Proposals to institute a single national primary or a coherent system of regional primaries with more consistent and clearly defined rules, although often advanced, seem unlikely to be adopted at any time in the foreseeable future. With primaries and precinct caucuses now firmly entrenched in American party politics, there is clearly no going back to more closed processes. While neither Britain nor Canada is likely to consciously adopt the American presidential primary as a model, the moves towards OMOV, however defined, will inadvertently import at least some of its characteristics. If party selectorates become more like those of the U.S., will we be surprised to someday discover that parties elsewhere have begun to look like American parties? Lord Bryce would not be.

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## NOTES

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- i. The original formula adopted in 1981 gave 40% to the affiliated trade unions and 30% each to the constituency associations and the parliamentary caucus.
  - ii. The Liberal party held its first convention for the purpose of electing a party leader in 1919, and the Conservatives followed suit in 1927. In both instances, the parties were out of government at the time that these conventions took place.
  - iii. The balance mainly choose their delegates by means of local caucuses, which under current rules bear some similarity to closed primaries. See Davis (1997).
  - iv. Trudeau was recruited into politics by Prime Minister Lester Pearson in 1965, and went directly into the cabinet as Minister of Justice. He was elected leader of the Liberal Party on the fourth ballot of a national party convention in 1968 and thereby automatically became Prime Minister. He won his own term of office two months later in a general election. Clark was first elected to Parliament in 1972, and was chosen as leader of the Progressive-Conservative party on the fourth ballot of a party convention in 1976. He became Prime Minister as head of a minority government in 1979, but was defeated nine months later in an election following the fall of his government in 1980. Mulroney was a business executive at the time that he defeated Clark for the party leadership in 1983. His party swept to victory and he became Prime Minister the following year (1984).
  - v. My reference here to the McGovern-Fraser reforms is intended also to take in subsequent revisions and changes, such as those proposed by the O'Hara Commission (1972), the Mikulski Commission (1973), the Sanford Commission (1974), the Winograd Commission (1978), and the Hunt Commission (1982). For a more detailed account of all of these reform proposals, see Crotty (1983).
  - vi. *Mandate for Reform* (1970). As cited in Polsby (1983), pp. 40-52.
  - vii. With the exception of "ex-officio" delegates consisting largely of party office holders. Although the McGovern-Fraser Commission banned such delegates, subsequent bodies such as the Mikulski (1973), Winograd (1978), and Hunt (1982) Commissions restored some of the balance. While these "superdelegates" now play a larger role in the convention than would have been possible under McGovern-Fraser rules, the steady growth of primaries and precinct caucuses together with the nature of current primary campaigns all but assures that the nomination battle is effectively over long before the convention gets under way. However it is still possible that, as in 1984, inconclusive primary outcomes might enhance the role played by these delegates.
  - viii. Davis (1997). Turnout in precinct caucuses is very difficult to estimate, and is generally based

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on total voting age population statistics.

ix. There is little doubt that the battle over the leadership selection rules was also bound up with Benn's own ambitions. Because he had far greater support in the constituency associations than within the parliamentary caucus, any formula that gave greater weight to the constituencies could be viewed as serving Benn's leadership ambitions. (Stark, 1996).

x. The 1919 Liberal convention followed upon the death of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who had led the party since 1887 and served as Prime Minister from 1896 to 1911.

xi. The Progressives won 23% of the total vote and elected 65 members to the House of Commons in the federal election of 1921.

xii. For these and other reasons, American national party conventions saw a similar rapid growth in the number of delegates attending at around the same time. The Democratic convention at Los Angeles that nominated John F. Kennedy for president in 1960 had 1521 delegates, while that which nominated Jimmy Carter in New York in 1976 had 3008. Between the same years, the size of the Republican conventions also increased from 1331 to 2259. (Davis, 1997).

xiii. Approximately 97,000 voters (64% of the party membership) cast ballots in the 1985 PQ leadership election, and about 78,000 (75%) voted in the Alberta PC contest in 1992. (Cross, 1996). These two cases are also distinguished by the fact that the parties were in government at the time (see Stewart, 1997).

xiv. The 1992 Ontario Liberal vote bound delegates on the first convention ballot. The NDP, in contrast, utilized a complicated combination of non-binding "primaries" in 1995, followed by a traditional leadership convention (see Archer & Whitehorn, 1997). On the 1997 Bloc Québécois procedures, which were not regarded as particularly successful, see Bernard (1997).

xv. In the case of the 1992 Alberta PC leadership election, new members could be signed up at any time. Many new memberships were actually sold during the week between the first and second ballots. A survey of voters conducted by Stewart (1997) found that 55% of those voting had been party "members" for less than one year.

xvi. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1998.

xvii. Jan Dymond, from a speech in Ottawa announcing the leadership selection procedures, April 29, 1998.

xviii. *Toronto Globe and Mail*, September 13, 1998.

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xix. Orchard, for example, won by wide margins in some ridings in British Columbia, where many of his most enthusiastic supporters were concentrated (95.05% in Vancouver East, for example, or 83.65% in Vancouver Kingsway). Clark had equally distorted margins in some Quebec constituencies, including 100% in Lac-St. Jean! Results are reported on the Progressive-Conservative party web site — <http://www.pcparty.ca/leadership/>