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A COMPARATIVE AND HISTORICAL ANALYSIS  
OF CANDIDATE SELECTION PRACTICES  
IN THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

BY

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## Abstract

The thesis questions conventional approaches to resolving the chronic nomination problems of the Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) over the last twenty-five years. Attempts at creating a more structured, regulated candidate selection process will help eliminate many of the abuses witnessed in the past, but they will not eliminate the underlying problem. Nor will efforts to control the "Instant Liberal" phenomenon, which is viewed as a manifestation of the inability of the LPC to create a strong, stable membership. Rather, it is concluded that any permanent resolution of the LPC's nomination problems is contingent on either: taking away the grass-roots members' traditional role in candidate selection; or creating a strong, institutionalized membership by becoming a genuine member-based party. The first option is unrealistic in Canada's current political environment. The second option is compatible with the political mood, but its realization will be limited by the institutional constraint of Canada's parliamentary system (which demands strong parliamentary party discipline), and the sociological constraint of Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy.

## Abbreviations

CLP:	Constituency Labour Party
GMC:	General Management Committee
LPC:	Liberal Party of Canada
LPC(Q):	Liberal Party of Canada (Quebec)
MP:	member of Parliament
NEC:	National Executive Committee
PAC:	Political Action Committee
PTA:	Provincial or Territorial Association
RPR:	Rassemblement pour la Republique

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Modern democracies rely on political parties. Without them, democratic governments would be unrealizable. Yet paradoxically, in their internal workings these agents of democracy are themselves basically oligarchic and secretive. Since they conduct their affairs privately, it has often been difficult to analyze political parties. Students have been compelled to seek windows through which to peer into the parties' innermost secrets, to find roundabout ways of gaining insight into their practices.

One such window is the candidate selection practices of political parties. In 1942 E.E. Schattschneider wrote:

The nominating process is obviously one of the points at which parties can be studied most advantageously if for no other reason than that the nomination is one of the most innately characteristic pieces of business transacted by the party. . . . By observing the party process at this point one may hope to discover the locus of power within the party, for he who has the power to make the nomination owns the party.<sup>1</sup>

While the validity of this statement is widely accepted, it should not go unqualified. In most situations there will not be any one figure capable of making the nomination. Rather, there will be a number of different figures, each with their

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<sup>1</sup> E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1942), p.100.

own degree of influence over the process. Study of the nomination process is more effective in revealing the relative influence wielded by these competing elites than it is in revealing who "owns" the party - simply because in most cases no one person does own it. As Michael Gallagher points out, "Schattschneider is right to say that to study candidate selection is to discover where power lies within a party, but in most cases it signifies how power is distributed rather than deciding it."<sup>2</sup>

In his classic work on political parties, Maurice Duverger distinguished two types of political parties - cadre and mass. The distinction was based upon their structure. Mass parties, which tended to be workers' parties, relied on their membership to produce from their ranks elites capable of governing. The membership was also crucial to the mobilization of party support and the financing of party operations. The members were "the very substance of the party." Cadre parties, by contrast, had no need of a large membership. In fact, Duverger felt that membership had "scarcely any meaning or importance" in a cadre party. Instead, the cadre party was a "grouping of notabilities for the preparation of elections, conducting campaigns and maintaining contact with the candidates."

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Gallagher, "Conclusion," in Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective, eds. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (London: Sage, 1988), p.277.

Cadre parties were self-sufficient, since they already possessed their own elites and their own financial resources.

The distinction between cadre and mass parties stemmed from the evolution to universal suffrage. Those parties which originated prior to expansion of the suffrage tended to possess cadre structures while those originating after the expansion of the suffrage assumed the shape of mass parties. Duverger also noted that the two had certain characteristics: the cadre party was decentralized and weakly knit; the mass party more centralized and more firmly knit.<sup>3</sup> The Liberal Party of Canada has long been portrayed as a classic example of a cadre party. It possesses a decentralized (federated) organizational structure, and a clearly asymmetrical relationship exists between the (dominant) parliamentary party and the (weak) extra-parliamentary party.

In this thesis I will apply Schattschneider's approach to the candidate selection process of the Liberal Party of Canada in an effort to see what it reveals about the nature of the party and the locus (or loci) of power within it. Is the current candidate selection process consistent with

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<sup>3</sup> Maurice Duverger, Political Parties (London: Methuen, 1954, 1972), passim, pp.62-67.



perceptions of the Canadian Liberal party as a decentralized, cadre-style organization? Or are the characteristics of centralized, mass-based parties present as well? To the extent that the Liberal party is correctly understood as a decentralized, cadre party, its candidate selection process is expected to be dominated by local party elites. And while candidate selection in cadre parties is normally a closed, undemocratic affair, the current political mood features anti-elite attitudes that favour a greater degree of openness and participatory, grass-roots democracy. This leads us to expect more open selection methods than a cadre party would normally adopt.

Since the inception of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, there has been a marked increase in political activism on the part of Canadians, both inside and outside the traditional framework of political parties. The outcome of this in terms of candidate selection has been a "democratic overload" in a small but growing number of local constituency associations. Weak, under-institutionalized associations have been unable to handle large numbers of new members joining in the weeks and days preceding candidate selection meetings. This has generated perceptions of a process that is out of control, and indicates that there may be a natural limit to the degree of participation a cadre

party can withstand.<sup>4</sup> Do these disputed nominations signal a change in Canadian perceptions of political parties, or are they merely isolated incidents and of no real significance?

What makes the Liberal party particularly inviting as a subject of inquiry is that it is the first of the three major Canadian parties to take action to confront the phenomenon. After suffering considerable embarrassment over candidate selection in the 1984 and 1988 elections, the Liberal party established a Reform Commission in 1990. At a special "reform convention" in 1992, national party delegates approved constitutional changes which led to the establishment of a rule giving the national party leader the power to by-pass the nomination process and appoint candidates directly. In preparation for the impending election, Jean Chretien has used this power of appointment fourteen times.

The narrow focus of the thesis will be devoted to exploring this appointive power. Questions abound. Why was this undemocratic power adopted at a time when the contemporary mood is strongly in favour of greater openness and participatory grassroots democracy? How has the power

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<sup>4</sup> R.K. Carty, Canadian Political Parties in the Constituencies (Toronto: Dundurn, forthcoming), ch.5.

been used? Was it supposed to be used this way? How has its use been received by the party "grass-roots," the media and the general public? And finally, is the use of the appointment power likely to benefit the Liberal party at the next election?

The thesis is organized as follows. Chapter Two locates Canadian candidate selection practices within the international context. The literature on the international norms of candidate selection is reviewed. This is followed by a more in-depth analysis of candidate selection in Britain and the United States, the two countries which, for historical and geographical reasons, have the greatest influence on the Canadian party system.

The analysis consists of a general overview of the candidate selection process used in each country, followed by an examination of four aspects of the process: public regulation versus private control; the degree of participation; the balance between the national and local parties in candidate selection; and the reasons for the existence of incumbency advantage.

The question of whether a party's candidate selection process is subject to public regulation or is carried out privately is important because it helps determine the degree

to which the parties can control the process. Are they able to regulate who participates in the process? Or what forms the process must take? Or what candidates are selected?

The degree of participation will be analyzed because the openness of the candidate selection process is an excellent measure of the degree of democracy present within the party. Does the party rank-and-file participate in selecting the candidates? Or is this reserved for the party activists, or even the party leader? Or, as in the United States, is candidate selection open to any interested voter?

However democratic the process is or is not, there remains the relationship between the level of participation and the degree of cohesion - and effectiveness - of the party. To state it simply, does Michels' "Iron Law of Oligarchy" force a trade-off between the two? Must the use of a democratic candidate selection process necessarily destroy the party's organizational coherence and effectiveness?

The national-local balance focuses on where the nominating power lies within the party. Is candidate selection centralized in the hands of the national party leaders, or does it take place at the local level? Is the relationship co-operative or adversarial? Since local and

national interests in candidate selection rarely coincide, the balance struck between them is important in determining whether the party adopts a national or local orientation.<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of the local-national question which is particular relevant to the Britain-Canada-United States comparison is the existence of a local bias in recruitment patterns. Generally, the stronger the convention of selecting a local candidate, the more difficult it is for the central organization to interfere with the local party's choice of candidates.

The fourth aspect to be analyzed is the success of incumbents in seeking renomination. At first glance this might not seem to warrant comparison, since in all countries incumbents are almost always successful in seeking renomination if they so desire. However, the causes of this can be quite different. The relevant question is whether the party retains the power to remove an incumbent and compel the selection of another candidate.

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<sup>5</sup> E.E. Schattschneider, in the preface to Party Government, wrote of his conviction that the subject of relations between the central and local party organizations was "doubtless the most significant datum concerning any party. More than any other factor the balance of these relations determines the nature of the system." (p.x).

The four factors outlined above are incorporated in the analysis of candidate selection in Canada. Chapter Three looks at the history of candidate selection in the Liberal party during three periods: 1867 to 1917 (the first party system); 1921 to 1957 (the second party system); and 1962 to the present (the third party system).

In chapter Four the focus turns to current problems of candidate selection. The chapter outlines the controversies within the Liberal party at the time of the 1984 and 1988 federal elections. It reviews the response of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (the Lortie Commission) to nomination controversies, and then the Liberal party's own response as expressed in its Reform Commission and subsequent changes to its rules for candidate selection. These rule changes laid the groundwork for the party's candidate selection for the upcoming 1993 election, and particularly the use of the leader's appointment power.

In the concluding chapter, there is an assessment of the degree to which the study supports the theory that careful observation of the nomination process can help determine the locus of power within a party. The study of the Liberal Party of Canada is also drawn on to address two normative questions. First, do political parties inevitably

adopt oligarchic power structures? "If it is true that the democratization of the parties is impossible, what is to be gained by insisting on it?"<sup>6</sup> Second, how is a broader systemic democracy realizable via political parties which are themselves internally undemocratic?

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<sup>6</sup> Schattschneider, p.59.

CHAPTER TWO  
INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

There is a wide range of practice in candidate selection, not just between countries, but within countries, and even (as in Canada) within the parties themselves.<sup>7</sup> In some important respects, these variations are manifestations of each country's (and each party's) attempt to balance competing considerations: the need for participation versus the need for effective party organization; and the need for central control versus the need for local autonomy.

When one considers that "the political party does not, on its own, set the political style so much as its style is determined by the environment,"<sup>8</sup> then it is to be expected that each party is likely to be a little bit different from the others. No one party achieves the same balance as any other. Nevertheless, there are some international norms (and important exceptions) governing candidate selection, as the following analysis indicates.

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Gallagher, "Introduction," in Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective, eds. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (London: Sage, 1988), p.32.

<sup>8</sup> Leon Epstein, Political Parties in Western Democracies (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), p.206.



In analyzing the "public regulation-private control" question, it is important to note that candidate selection is regulated in law in only three Western democracies - Germany, Turkey, and the United States. Everywhere else, the candidate selection process is considered to be a private matter in the eyes of the law. Thus, aside from the three above-mentioned exceptions, the candidate selection rules are made and enforced by the parties themselves.<sup>9</sup>

Even more important is the distinction, made by both Ranney and Gallagher, between public control of candidate selection and private control (with or without regulation in law). In this instance there is but one example of the former - the United States. Leon Epstein writes:

Among Western democratic nations, the American method of choosing candidates differs from all of the others. . . . the United States is alone in so regulating parties as customarily to give those who are not formally organized in a party the opportunity to determine party candidates . . . . Everywhere else the selection of party candidates is basically a private affair, even if there are legal regulations.<sup>10</sup>

This differs from Germany (where candidate selection is regulated according to "strict minimum legal requirements imposed by the Party Law and Electoral Law" set down in the Constitution), in that the German parties still retain a

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<sup>9</sup> Austin Ranney, "Candidate Selection," in Democracy at the Polls, eds. David Butler, Howard Penniman and Austin Ranney (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), pp.76-81.

<sup>10</sup> Epstein, Democracies, p.201.

measure of discretion and control over the process. They determine when candidates will be selected, and whether they will be selected directly by members at constituency meetings or (more commonly) through indirect delegate conventions. Most important, candidate selection in Germany is open only to party members, as opposed to the United States, where any voter may participate in selecting a party's candidate simply by registering for that party's primary.<sup>11</sup>

In analyzing the degree of member participation in candidate selection, it is helpful to think of it as spanning a range of options. One pole is the American case, which is unique for its openness. While the rules vary from state to state, any registered voter can choose to participate in selecting a party's candidate without any binding commitment to support that candidate in the general election. This has helped to create a situation where the American parties have little or no control over who their candidates will be or what they will stand for.

The "closed" pole is occupied by cases where the selection of candidates is concentrated in the hands of a small number of party leaders, or even the leader himself.

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<sup>11</sup> Geoffrey Roberts, "The German Federal Republic: the two-lane route to Bonn," in Butler, Penniman and Ranney, eds. Candidate Selection, pp.94-99.

This is found most often in parties of the extreme right or left. For example, in France, Jean-Marie LePen's ultra-conservative Front National and the far-left *Partie Communiste* both select their candidates in this fashion.<sup>12</sup> Another excellent example is the Liberal Party of Newfoundland from 1949 till 1968. During this period, Premier Joey Smallwood hand-picked all his party's candidates for provincial and federal elections.<sup>13</sup>

No other country has gone to the American extreme of allowing non-party members to participate in selecting their candidates.<sup>14</sup> However, many parties do allow all party members to participate in candidate selection. The participation is occasionally direct, as in Canada's major parties and in the Belgian parties (at least until the 1970s). More often, member participation takes the indirect form of delegate conventions. Irish and German parties rely primarily on delegate conventions to select their

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<sup>12</sup> All information for this section, unless otherwise cited, is drawn from Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh eds., Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective (London: Sage, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Smallwood's practices will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

<sup>14</sup> For years in Canada, non-party members were invited to participate in candidate selection in many constituencies. However, the so-called "open convention," where any interested voter could participate in selecting the party's candidate, has gradually fallen out of use over the last twenty-five years.

candidates, and it is only very recently that such practices fell out of use in Canada.

Another common practice is to place responsibility for candidate selection in the hands of a small number of party elites, either at the local, regional, or national level. Candidate selection in Britain is largely carried out by "selection committees" consisting of local constituency association activists. In Italy it is the provincial organizations which choose the party's candidates. In France's Rassemblement pour la Republique (RPR), the national organization, after listening to local organizations, makes the party's nominations. In these cases there is little opportunity for meaningful participation on the part of the average member.

However, the consultation which occurs among the various levels of the party creates a more democratic process than those cases where candidate selection power is concentrated in the hands of the national leader or the national executive. While there are exceptions (as with France's Front National and Partie Communiste), such a centralized process is relatively uncommon in this age.

There are two aspects of the centralization-decentralization issue: the level of the party at which

candidate selection occurs, and the degree of local bias in recruitment patterns. On the first count, it is clear that candidate selection is generally not carried out by national party figures. In most instances, the effective decisions are made at a lower level of the party, at the regional or local level.<sup>15</sup> While candidate selection is more integrated in some parties than in others, the norm is for the national party to play a supervisory or oversight role, as in Britain where all potential candidates must be pre-approved by the national party organizations. The power of the national party organization to refuse to endorse a locally selected candidate is present in most parties.<sup>16</sup> In Canada the national leader has, since 1970, had to endorse all party candidates pursuant to the Canada Elections Act.

The second aspect of the "centralization-decentralization" question is that of whether recruitment patterns reveal a bias towards local candidates. Parties operating in single-member-plurality electoral systems, where the importance of close ties to the constituency are often crucial, might favour local candidates more readily than those operating in proportional representation electoral systems under which the electorate votes more for

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<sup>15</sup> Gallagher, "Conclusion," p.242.

<sup>16</sup> Ranney, "Candidate Selection," p.85.

party than for any individual<sup>17</sup> In the extreme case of Israel's proportional representation system, where the entire country is considered as one district, selecting a local candidate is (by definition) impossible.

Of countries with single-member districts, the United States is noted for its rigid convention that candidates for Congress must reside in the district they wish to represent (even though the Constitution only stipulates that Representatives shall reside in the State, rather than the actual district). Canada too exhibits a strong local bias, as evidenced by the traditional opposition of local associations to candidates "parachuted" by the national party.<sup>18</sup> However, there are exceptions to this. For example, British parties have demonstrated far less concern with a candidate's local origins. One common British practice is to first run unproven candidates in hopeless ridings (to prove their mettle), and then to find winnable seats for those who show promise. On the other hand, the Irish parties show a strong local bias in candidate

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<sup>17</sup> This is an oversimplification. There are different types of proportional representation. Those which employ some kind of preference voting scheme or transferable votes provide voters with considerable choice among candidates. Those with more rigid list systems allow far less choice.

<sup>18</sup> The issue of parachuting is well-documented in the Canadian literature. For a recent source, see R. Pelletier, "The Structures of Canadian Political Parties," in Canadian Political Parties, ed. Herman Bakvis (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), p.292.

selection despite operating in an electoral system featuring proportional representation and multi-member constituencies. In fact, Gallagher argues that this parochialism has become excessive enough to affect the overall quality of deputies and even government ministers.<sup>19</sup> And regardless of electoral systems, Ranney found that most countries do exhibit a local bias in selecting candidates.<sup>20</sup>

No other aspect of candidate selection comes closer to uniformity than the strong bias towards reselection of incumbents. In most parties in most countries, incumbents have very little difficulty being renominated if they so desire.<sup>21</sup> In the United States, less than 2 percent of officeholders are defeated in primaries.<sup>22</sup> In Ireland, incumbents are defeated for the party's nomination at a rate of "no more than about one every two elections," and it is common for incumbents of the country's largest party (Fianna Fail) to be declared selected by acclamation, without having to fight for the nomination.<sup>23</sup> Incumbents have proven

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Gallagher, "Ireland: the increasing role of the centre," in Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective, eds. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (London: Sage, 1988), p.142.

<sup>20</sup> Ranney, "Candidate Selection," p.99.

<sup>21</sup> Ranney, "Candidate Selection," p.98.

<sup>22</sup> Gary Jacobson, The Politics of Congressional Elections (U.S.A.: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), p.26.

<sup>23</sup> Gallagher, "Ireland," pp.122, 135-136.

successful in less hospitable climates as well. In 1983 Italy's Christian Democratic Party leadership, in a bid to renew the party, told local party organizations to renominate incumbents with more than twenty-five years of parliamentary experience "only if special justification . . . could be found." Even here, about two-thirds of these incumbents were re-nominated.<sup>24</sup>

However, as will be explained more thoroughly in the sections on Britain and the United States, the reasons for this incumbency advantage are not everywhere the same. In some countries, the advantage is largely due to the combination of safe seats (in single-member-plurality electoral systems) or safe places on party lists (in proportional representation systems) and loyalty to the party. Here, the party can normally prevent an incumbent from being renominated (for whatever reason). This is the case in Britain. In other countries, such as the United States, incumbency advantage stems primarily from the combination of a candidate-centred political system and institutional advantages (for example, the favoured position of American incumbents with respect to Political Action Committee money) which allows individuals to "create" their

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<sup>24</sup> Douglas A. Wertman, "Italy: local involvement, central control," in Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective, eds. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (London; Sage, 1988), pp.148-149.



own safe seat through careful constituency servicing and aggressive fundraising.<sup>25</sup> This produces a situation where the incumbent is invulnerable to party efforts to take away his or her nomination.

Next, the candidate selection practices of British and American parties will be examined. The differences between the two are significant: in Britain, candidate selection is a private affair, whereas in the United States it is a public one. American parties are expected to employ open, democratic, broadly participatory candidate selection practices, whereas the British people accept their parties' relatively closed, oligarchic practices with little complaint. In choosing between democracy and effectiveness, the American people have clearly opted for the former, while the British have opted for the latter.

The candidate selection practices of the Canadian parties contain similarities with both countries. The process is a private party affair, as in Britain. Yet it allows broad member participation similar to American practices. The current struggle within the Liberal Party of Canada is one where the party is trying to balance the competing demands for, on the one hand, a more democratic

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<sup>25</sup> For an excellent account of the sources of American incumbency advantage, see Jacobson, "Congressional Elections," pp.37-46.

process, and on the other, for an effective party. Thus it is being pulled in two different directions - and would-be reformers on both sides of the issue have ready models to draw on. It is to these models, the British and American parties, that we now turn.

### **The British Parties**

Early candidate selection in Britain was dominated by the aristocratic "ruling class." The British parties possessed a hierarchical, top-down organizational structure, reflecting the deferential nature of the society. Authority over candidate selection and policy was concentrated in the parliamentary party.<sup>26</sup> This elitist approach to politics was reflected in the restricted suffrage of the period.

As early as the 1830s, the practice of the national party (in the person of the Whip) keeping a coordinating, supervisory role over candidate selection had already been established. The Whip played an important role in matching would-be candidates in search of constituencies with constituencies in search of candidates.<sup>27</sup> This function is still performed by the central party organizations of British parties.

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<sup>26</sup> Samuel Beer, "Great Britain: From Governing Elite to Organized Mass Parties," in Modern Political Parties, ed. Sigmund Neumann (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1967), p.14.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.13.

A key event of the second half of the nineteenth century which coincided with the expansion of the suffrage was the rise of powerful extra-parliamentary party organizations. The prototype for this new type of organization was the Birmingham Caucus.<sup>28</sup>

This local Liberal Association was formed in the town of Birmingham between 1865 and 1868. While Joseph Chamberlain was its greatest champion, William Harris deserves the credit for its creation. Its organizational structure was developed with the intention of involving as wide a membership as possible in the party's affairs. Each of the town's thirteen wards formed a ward committee, and elected delegates to sit on a city-wide general committee numbering four hundred and eighty members. In practice, most of the work was performed by an eleven-man sub-committee of the general committee.<sup>29</sup> The "Birmingham plan" spread rapidly through Britain, leading to the creation in 1877 of a National Liberal Federation based on this organizational model. It received a large measure of credit for the Liberal

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<sup>28</sup> It was labelled a 'Caucus' by opponents who wished to associate it with American-style "machines" like Tammany Hall. See Michael Balfour, Britain and Joseph Chamberlain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), p.90.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92. All further references to the Birmingham Caucus, unless otherwise noted, will be drawn from Moisei Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Volume I (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1902, 1964), Part Two, chs. 3-6.

victory in the general election of 1878, and the Conservatives quickly followed suit in organizing their local associations in a similar fashion.

This new style of organization was hailed as a vehicle for taking political power out of the hands of the traditional ruling elite, and giving it to the people. Mr. Chamberlain noted that this national organization constituted a "Liberal Parliament outside the Imperial Legislature," elected by universal suffrage. This at a time when MPs were still selected by a restricted suffrage. It succeeded in involving far greater numbers of people in party life than ever before.

However, its promise of greater internal democracy was never fully realized, according to Ostrogorski. He was sharply critical of the Caucus model, believing it exercised too much control over the MPs. In accordance with Article 15 of the Caucus rules, candidates were reduced virtually to the status of delegates. One famous example of this is the struggle which broke out in Bradford between the local Caucus and the town's representative for eighteen years, W.E. Forster. The cause of the struggle was Mr. Forster's refusal to accept the caucus's demand that he recognize the above-mentioned Article 15. Ostrogorski noted that there was no difference of views between Mr. Forster and the local

association. Rather it was a matter of principle; Mr. Forster refusing to give up his independence, the Caucus demanding recognition of its authority. In the end, it was Mr. Forster who relented.<sup>30</sup> For Ostrogorski, this symbolized the general decline of the individual member in British politics. "To enter local life," he wrote, "you must now have a passport from a political party, you must don the party livery . . ." <sup>31</sup>

Ostrogorski observed that while many of the local organizations enjoyed initial success in democratizing their activities, over time they began to adopt oligarchic characteristics. Power became concentrated in the hands of small cliques, which paid less and less attention to the grass-roots. The promise of democracy made by Chamberlain seemed but a cruel mirage, as a new ruling class evolved to take the place of the old.

When all is said and done, the monopoly of the leadership, which the Caucus undertook to destroy, has only assumed another aspect . . . it might be said that the monopoly of the leadership which was held by the representatives of the old ruling classes tends to give place to a monopoly of wire-pullers backed by plutocrats."<sup>32</sup>

Such observations led Ostrogorski to take a dim view of the potential for truly democratic political parties.

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<sup>30</sup> Ostrogorski, Democracy, pp. 197-203.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.328.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.301.

The practices of the Birmingham Caucus have been significantly modified over the past century. Indeed, the Liberal party which created it has been reduced to the status of a minor party. However, this model has served as the inspiration for much present-day party organization in Britain. We now turn to an analysis of candidate selection practices in the Conservative and Labour parties.

Candidate selection in Britain's Conservative party is a joint national-local undertaking. In general terms, the local party does the actual selecting of the candidates, while the national party plays an oversight role, identifying potential candidates and assisting local constituencies in the search process. While a myth persists that the central organization of both the Conservative and Labour parties possess the ability to place particular candidates in particular constituencies, this should be dispelled. David Denver, in concluding that candidate selection in Britain is decentralized, finds no mechanism whereby the national party organization can impose a candidate on an unwilling constituency association.<sup>33</sup> At most, the national party possesses the negative power of being able to refuse endorsement of candidates.

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<sup>33</sup> David Denver, "Britain: centralized parties with decentralized selection," in Candidate Selection in Comparative Perspective eds. Michael Gallagher and Michael Marsh (London: Sage, 1988), pp. 47-48.

The first step for an individual who wishes to seek a Conservative nomination is to get placed on a list of nationally pre-approved candidates. The list, which is maintained by Central Office,<sup>34</sup> contains approximately six hundred and fifty names. When the two to three hundred seats normally held by incumbents are taken into account, it becomes apparent that there are many more names than there are open seats.<sup>35</sup> By necessitating that all potential candidates are pre-cleared in this fashion, the national party is able to prevent embarrassing candidacies. However, as the large number of names on the list indicates, this screening process is not particularly rigorous, nor is it used to impose certain types of candidates on the constituencies. It is better suited to purposes like weeding out candidates with questionable personal histories.

Once on the list, would-be candidates apply to any constituencies which might have an opening. Safe Conservative seats regularly attract upwards of two hundred applications, and even hopeless seats normally attract from fifteen to thirty-five applications. Each constituency association has a "selection committee" consisting of

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<sup>34</sup> Central Office is the Conservative party's national extra-parliamentary wing.

<sup>35</sup> Byron Criddle, "Candidates," in The British General Election of 1987, eds. David Butler and Dennis Kavanagh (London: MacMillan Press, 1988), p.198.

approximately twenty to twenty-five members, which is responsible for reviewing the applications, conducting candidate interviews, and drawing up a "shortlist" of three or four names. It is at this preliminary stage that the majority of applicants are rejected. Thus these twenty to twenty-five local party activists are the de facto gatekeepers in the Conservative Party's candidate selection process.<sup>36</sup>

The next step is the holding of a special meeting of the local executive council, which consists of from sixty to two hundred local party activists. These activists choose one of the shortlisted candidates by majority-vote. This person is then formally recommended to a general meeting of association members. While there have been instances of the general meeting rejecting the proposed candidate, the executive council's recommendation is normally adopted without discussion.<sup>37</sup>

The candidate selection process in the Labour party is quite similar to that of the Conservative party. While the national party plays an important role in coordinating and supervising the process, and while it has the power to veto candidacies, it is the local constituency associations which

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<sup>36</sup> Denver, "Britain," p.51.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.52.



choose the candidates. However, there are some minor differences.

Like the Conservatives, the Labour party maintains a record of approved candidates at Transport House.<sup>38</sup> However, unlike the Conservatives, there are two separate lists. List A contains persons "sponsored" by trade unions,<sup>39</sup> while List B contains names of unaffiliated party members. All such individuals must be nominated by a body directly affiliated with the Constituency Labour Party (CLP) before they will be permitted to contest a nomination.<sup>40</sup> A second difference is that Labour's national agencies have greater formal powers than the Conservatives' over candidate selection.<sup>41</sup> These powers are vested in the Organization Sub-committee (consisting of between fifteen and seventeen members) of the National Executive Committee (NEC).

According to the party's Model Rules for candidate selection, the Constituency Labour Party selects its

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<sup>38</sup> Transport House is the national party headquarters.

<sup>39</sup> By sponsoring a candidate, the trade union agrees to fund the candidate's election campaign. According to figures supplied by Byron Criddle, one hundred eighty-four of the six hundred fifty Labour candidates in 1987 were drawn from List A. ("Candidates," p.206.)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-53.

<sup>41</sup> Austin Ranney, Pathways to Parliament (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, 1965), p.130.

parliamentary candidates as follows. First, as in the Conservative party, an executive committee of the local party association consisting of approximately twenty members is charged with drawing up a short list of four to six names from among the applications received. The number of people seeking nomination varies with the desirability of the seat. Safe seats have been known to attract upwards of fifty candidates, while hopeless seats might only receive a couple of applications.<sup>42</sup> These figures are considerably lower than Conservative figures for comparable seats (over two hundred for safe seats), thus indicating that candidate selection in the Labour Party is less competitive than in the Conservative Party.

The initial shortlist is then sent to a wider body of the party, the general management committee (GMC), which may add to or delete from the shortlist. This is then forwarded to the NEC for validation. Names may be added to or deleted from the shortlist at this stage as well. Finally, the nationally sanctioned list is put to a vote at a special meeting of the GMC<sup>43</sup>, where a final choice is made. Unlike the Conservative party, there is no meeting of the local

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<sup>42</sup> Denver, "Britain," p.53.

<sup>43</sup> There is a wide range in attendance at these meetings, largely depending on the winnability of the seat. Contests for attractive seats may draw upwards of two hundred members of the GMC, while hopeless seats may draw no more than fifteen or twenty. (Ranney, Pathways, p.173).

association to vote on this choice. The decision of the GMC is final.<sup>44</sup>

The overview of Conservative and Labour nomination practices has sketched out the procedural framework which generates these parties' candidates. We know how candidates are chosen. But why are they chosen? What are the salient features and special characteristics of candidate selection in Britain. To answer these questions, we will examine four particular aspects of the British candidate selection process: the public regulation-private control question; the degree of member participation in candidate selection; the centralization-decentralization debate; and the existence and nature of British incumbency advantage.

The first aspect of candidate selection, the question of whether the process is regulated or is left to the parties to conduct, has a very clear answer. There is absolutely no recognition of the parties in law, nor is there state regulation of any aspect of candidate selection. The legal conception of parties as private clubs is so absolute that party names do not appear on the ballots for general elections. As with most countries, candidate

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 52-54.

selection in Britain remains a private, internal party affair.<sup>45</sup>

The degree of member participation in the candidate selection processes of the Conservative and Labour parties is relatively low. In the Conservative party, the general meeting of all constituency members is a formality. The effective choice is made by the association's executive council, which numbers from sixty to two hundred members. Yet even this overstates the degree of member participation, for the majority of candidates are rejected at the shortlisting stage by the party selection committee of twenty to twenty-five members. Levels of participation are similar within the Labour party, which does not require any formal ratification of the GMC's choice by the membership.<sup>46</sup> Undoubtedly, this relatively closed process reflects the attitudes of party activists (and British attitudes in general) towards political parties as private organizations, namely, that participation in candidate selection is not a right but a privilege earned through dedication to the party. For the British, democracy is to be found in the struggle between parties, rather than within them.

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<sup>45</sup> Denver, "Britain," p.47.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.59.

One of the enduring debates about British parties is the degree of centralization. Robert McKenzie believed them to be very centralized.<sup>47</sup> However, another school holds this degree of central influence to be overstated, especially in the area of candidate selection. Austin Ranney, Michael Rush and David Denver have all concluded that the national party organization has little power to place even certain types of candidates, let alone specific individuals.

An excellent example of the limits of central influence on candidate selection is the chronic inability of Conservative Central Office to increase the number of working-class candidates. John Greenwood argues that Central Office's efforts to recruit such candidates have been more extensive than was previously believed. Their repeated failures in this area clearly support the theory of local autonomy in candidate selection.<sup>48</sup>

Another noted feature of candidate selection in Britain which seems to support the opposite position of strong

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<sup>47</sup> For his thoughts on the nature of British parties, see his classic work, British Political Parties: The Distribution of Power Within the Conservative and Labour Parties (Toronto: William Heinemann, 1955).

<sup>48</sup> John Greenwood, "Promoting Working-Class Candidates in the Conservative Party: The Limits of Central Office Power," Parliamentary Affairs 41 (October 1988):456-468.

central control over candidate selection is the well-known practice of candidates moving from constituency to constituency in search of a safe seat. Why would there be thirty or forty applicants for the Conservative nomination in a hopeless riding? One explanation of this behaviour has been that the national party organization likes to test the mettle of aspiring candidates by running them first in such hopeless seats, to see how they perform. If they put up a good show, then Central Office will find them a safe seat for the next election; if they prove to be poor campaigners, then they will not receive such preferred treatment.

However, the example of Margaret Thatcher's early experiences in this area seems to indicate otherwise. Her first nomination was in the riding of Dartford, a "certain loser" which had a 20,000 vote Labour plurality. She was defeated in this riding both in 1950 and 1951. However, her effective campaigning, and the fact that at twenty-four she was the youngest Conservative woman candidate in both elections, caught the attention of Central Office. Yet this did not win her a choice of safe seats for the next election. She was rejected in a number of different constituencies until she finally succeeded in capturing the nomination in the safe Conservative riding of Finchley for the 1958 general election. What won her the nomination was not Central Office intervention, but her own efforts. From

her earlier campaigns, she had become a skilled politician who knew what was required to win a nomination.<sup>49</sup> The reason dozens of aspiring candidates like Mrs. Thatcher are willing to run in hopeless seats like Dartford is to gain experience and "pay their dues" so that they will some day be nominated in Finchley and other safe seats.

There seem to be two factors which contribute to the misconception that British candidate selection is centralized. One is the relatively high level of local-national coordination (by North American standards). While it is the activists within the local constituency associations who nominate the candidates in both of Britain's major parties, the national organizations do play an important role by supervising and coordinating candidate selection. They help identify and recruit candidates, and they establish rules and procedures which the local associations are required to follow. As well, in both parties the central office has the negative power of vetoing candidates.

The second contributing factor is the relatively weak (by North American standards) local bias in candidate recruitment. It is this feature which makes possible the

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<sup>49</sup> Hugo Young, The Iron Lady: A Biography of Margaret Thatcher (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989), pp. 30-32 and pp. 38-39.

practice of candidates going outside their immediate area to seek available nominations. This practice could never occur in the American parties, as we will see. While Ranney and Denver both argue that there is, in fact, a British preference for local candidates,<sup>50</sup> the parties are hindered far less than their North American counterparts by the perceived need to select a person with local roots. In Pathways, Ranney found from 1945 to 1964, over two-thirds of the Conservative party's candidates "had no discernible personal connections in the constituencies in which they were adopted."<sup>51</sup>

The fourth aspect to be analyzed is the nature and causes of incumbency advantage in Britain. This has traditionally been very strong in both major British parties. It has long been common for Conservative associations to automatically adopt sitting members, and this was frequently practised in the Labour party too.<sup>52</sup>

However, in 1980 the position of Labour incumbents became much less secure when the party passed a resolution requiring mandatory reselection of incumbents. This move resulted from factional warfare between the party's left-

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<sup>50</sup> Ranney, Pathways, p.116; Denver, "Britain," p.67.

<sup>51</sup> Ranney, Pathways, p.95.

<sup>52</sup> Denver, "Britain," pp. 50-52.



wing (which has traditionally been dominant in local associations) and the more moderate members of the party (which have traditionally held the upper hand in the Parliamentary Labour Party). The move requiring incumbents to subject themselves to the full selection process has been interpreted as an attempt by the left-wing of the party to "purge" Labour MPs possessing centre or right-of-centre tendencies.<sup>53</sup>

In the first general election after the passing of this rule (in 1983), eight Labour incumbents failed to win renomination and a number of others were "harried" into retirement. In 1987, the moderate wing of the party having failed in their bid to widen the selection process to the general membership (likely in an effort to dilute the power of the GMCs, which were seen to be left-wing strongholds), one-quarter of Labour incumbents were opposed, down from the one-third of 1983. Six of the one hundred seventy-seven Labour MPs were denied renomination. Four of the six were from the right of the party, while two "ardent" left-wing MPs succumbed to a movement aimed at selecting more black and minority candidates (known as the "Black Sections" campaign).<sup>54</sup> Denver believes the overall impact of the

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp.67-68.

<sup>54</sup> Criddle, "Candidates," pp. 191-195.

mandatory reselection rule has been to shift the Labour party to the left.<sup>55</sup>

One important feature of these challenges to sitting incumbents is that all were generated from the local constituency associations, rather than the national party. While dated, Ranney's findings indicate a similar pattern in the Conservative party. Between 1945 and 1964, he documented eighteen cases of Conservative incumbents being challenged for renomination. In every case, the impetus came from the local associations, usually due to associations' "objections to their members' votes or speeches in the House."<sup>56</sup> So we see that in Britain the local associations have the power to grant the nomination, and the power to take it away. This is very important in understanding the behaviour of British MPs, especially when considering this in conjunction with the large number (upwards of 75 percent) of seats that are "safe" for one party or the other.<sup>57</sup>

A safe seat in a decentralized candidate selection system produces a situation where an MP, as long as he or she maintains the support of the constituency, can count on

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<sup>55</sup> Denver, "Britain," p.66.

<sup>56</sup> Ranney, Pathways, pp. 81, 87.

<sup>57</sup> Denver ("Britain," p.48.) notes that between 1955-70, covering five elections, three-quarters of the seats in the British House of Commons did not change hands.

a relatively secure career in politics and can even exercise a measure of independence from the parliamentary party Whip. However, the strong constituency associations are still able to remove a maverick MP if they feel there is a need to do so.

Many of Canada's political institutions have been modelled on those of the British, or bear the mark of British influence. Yet while its parties bear important resemblances to those in Britain, they differ in a number of respects. In terms of organizational structure, Canadian parties are far more decentralized; their candidate selection practices will be found to contain far more participation and democracy. It is to shed light on the source of these differences that we will turn to the American parties. Canada and the United States both opted for a federal system in light of the difficulty of forging nations which spanned a continent. The American parties, which developed almost a full century earlier, provided an alternative model for Canada's parties to follow; a more participatory, democratic model. It is to the American parties that we now turn.

### **The American Parties**

There have been three distinct periods in the history of candidate selection in the United States: the caucus

system (1787-1830s), the convention system (1830s-1900s), and the direct primary system (1900s-present).

Candidate selection under the caucus system was a private, informal party affair. At this time, American politics still exhibited aristocratic impulses, and parties were still in the process of solidifying into coherent organizations. Not surprisingly, nominations in this period were dominated by local party elites. The party caucus assumed the form of local party leaders and activists coming together and deciding on who would be the candidate. While this frequently took the form of town meetings, Ostrogorski points out that the actual decisions were normally reached beforehand by "the small coterie of leaders in their private caucuses."<sup>58</sup> It is generally agreed that the first caucus originated in Boston in the 1760s, although the origin of the name itself is less clear.<sup>59</sup> The use of party caucuses to select candidates spread rapidly throughout the country. Nominations for the House of Representatives remained the prerogative of the local party caucus, nomination for statewide office (eg. governor) was conducted by the legislative party in the state capitol, and

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<sup>58</sup> Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties, Volume II (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1902, 1964), p.6.

<sup>59</sup> Ostrogorski, Democracy, Vol.II, p.4.

presidential nominations were dominated by the Congressional party caucuses (the era of King Caucus).

It was not long before the relatively closed, elite-dominated nature of the caucus method had become apparent. As American attitudes towards democracy changed, reformers demanded that the parties change as well. In particular, pressure arose for the parties to reform their candidate selection practices. They sought to widen participation beyond the narrow ranks of party elites, to the wider party grass-roots.<sup>60</sup> Because of these pressures for reform, the use of the caucus as a means of candidate selection fell out of use in the 1830s. It was replaced by the convention system.

Party conventions to select the party's candidates involved giving all party members an indirect say in who the candidate would be. Meetings were held in each ward, poll or village, where party members elected delegates to attend a party "convention" (a meeting consisting of the delegates of all the relevant areas within the district). These delegates, in turn, selected the party's nominee.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Theodore Lowi and Benjamin Ginsberg, American Government: Freedom and Power (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992), p.528.

<sup>61</sup> Lowi and Ginsberg, American Government, p.528.

The move to the convention system was made with the intention of taking control over candidate selection from the party elites and giving it to the party rank-and-file. It seemed to hold out potential for the attainment of truly democratic political parties.

The adoption of the convention system . . . reflected a profound change in the distribution of political power. The aristocratic leadership working through the legislative caucuses was gradually deposed, and the notion that the "general will" of the mass of party membership should govern in the selection of party nominees became dominant. The convention system was the means for the expression of that general will; it was a type of representative government of the party.<sup>62</sup>

Theoretically, this reform should have had a profound democratizing effect on the parties. However, the reality of the convention system proved to be a disappointment to democrats. As the Birmingham Caucus's initial promise had degenerated into an oligarchy of "plutocrats" in Britain, the American convention system never attained what was believed to be its democratic potential. While there was indeed more opportunity for participation, the indirect nature of this participation created opportunities for manipulation. It was not long before the strong local party machines of the day had gained control over the party's nominations. These machines and their bosses perfected,

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<sup>62</sup> V.O. Key, Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups (New York: Thomas Crowell Co., 1942), pp. 366-367.

through organization, the art of managing the delegate-selection phase of the process, thereby ensuring their dominance of the convention itself. "Conventions, in fact, became a symbol for bossism."<sup>63</sup>

The most enduring and infamous symbol of bossism and machine politics was Tammany Hall, the Democratic political machine which came to dominate the party's nominations (and all other aspects of its affairs) in New York city. While it was originally organized as a "non-political" social club in 1789, Tammany Hall gradually became politicized. By the 1850s it was powerful enough to elect the city's mayor.<sup>64</sup> However, it did not become politicized in the normal sense of the word. As Ostrogorski notes, "The use which Tammany made of its power, especially during the period after the [Civil] war, had nothing in common with the interests of the party under the banner of which it operated; . . . its sole aim was to secure and exploit the vast material resources of the city."<sup>65</sup>

To Ostrogorski, the Tammany machine represented all that was wrong with American parties. Tammany, and other machines like it, had reduced politics to a business. It set

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., pp. 367-369.

<sup>64</sup> Lowi and Ginsberg, American Government, p.516.

<sup>65</sup> Ostrogorski, Democracy, p.89.

a price for every political service; it was built on the commercial principle of individual self-interest, rather than on any deep-rooted political principles. This commercialization of politics meant the "complete elimination of political principles and ideas from its existence."<sup>66</sup> From being a means to an end (namely, to elect a party's candidate so that he or she might advance the party's beliefs), the party organization had become an end in itself. Its raison d'etre became the perpetuation of the machine. In the true sense of the word, it ceased to be a party at all.

To attempt to counter these evils, reformers made efforts to regulate conventions through the law, beginning with California in 1866.<sup>67</sup> However, by this time the convention system had become too closely associated with the practices of Tammany and the like. Any form of indirect participation in candidate selection was viewed sceptically. The only sure way to prevent local machines from dominating party nominations was to allow the party members to choose their candidates directly.

This criticism became more pronounced after the Civil War as many regions of the country (most notably, the

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.105.

<sup>67</sup> Key, Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups, p.370.



Democratic "Solid South") lapsed into a period of one-party dominance. In areas where the election outcome was a foregone conclusion, winning the dominant party's nomination was equivalent to being elected. If the party nomination, in turn, fell under the control of a party boss, or a small group of party elites, then there was no real democratic choice available to the people. This combination of machine domination of nominations and regional one-party dominance led to the downfall of the convention system and the rise of the direct primary election.<sup>68</sup>

The direct primary was one aspect of a series of democratic (and arguably anti-party)<sup>69</sup> reforms carried out in the 1890s and early 1900s. By 1917, all but five states used the direct primary for at least some elective offices,<sup>70</sup> and today every state holds primaries for House and Senate nominations. Championed by Robert LaFollette and other Progressives, the direct primary was designed to weaken the party machines and to allow people to cast meaningful votes in areas of one-party dominance. It was hoped that by giving party members a direct vote, the

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<sup>68</sup> Gary Jacobson, The Politics of Congressional Elections (U.S.A.: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992), p.19.

<sup>69</sup> Galderisi and Ginsberg, "Primary Elections and the Evanescence of Third Party Activity in the United States" in Do Elections Matter? eds. B. Ginsberg and A. Stone (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1986), p.116.

<sup>70</sup> Key, Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups, p.373.

primary would prove difficult to manipulate. Unlike the convention system, the direct primary has been very successful in doing what it was designed to do. The days when local party machines dominated the nomination process are largely a thing of the past.

In many ways, the acceptance of the direct primary in the early decades of the century signifies the ascendancy in America of the concept of participatory democracy. Whether consciously or not, it also marked a shift in American perceptions of the political party. Formerly viewed as a private club of sorts, free to behave as it pleased, the political party is now looked upon as a sort of "public utility," which has been granted a monopoly over political business and therefore should be subject to careful government regulation.<sup>71</sup>

There is considerable variety from state to state in the types of primaries used and the rules governing them. In most states, primaries are either "closed," or "open." In a closed primary, the voter must declare which party's primary he or she would like to participate in when registering to vote. In an open primary, the voter does not have to make such a prior declaration. The voter simply decides (in the

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<sup>71</sup> The phrase "public utility" was taken from Carty's Political Parties. He attributes it to Leon Epstein.

voting booth) which party's primary he or she would like to vote in. Some states even allow voters to split their ballots for different offices (eg., the Democratic Senatorial primary and the Republican House primary). In the South, where one-party dominance has been particularly strong, most states established a runoff primary, whereby, if nobody gets a majority of votes on the first ballot, a second ballot is held for the top two vote-getters. The extreme example of an open primary is Louisiana's non-partisan primary. Under this system, both parties' candidates participate in the same primary, and party labels are left off the ballot. The top two vote-getters, even if they are two Democrats, go on to contest the general election.<sup>72</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, a handful of states (Colorado, Connecticut, etc.) have adopted a sort of hybrid convention-primary system where all aspirants for office must first participate in a party convention. To be placed on the primary ballot, they must first receive a certain minimum vote at the convention (Jacobson cites 20 percent as the usual threshold). This preserves at least a partial screening role for the parties of these states.

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<sup>72</sup> Jacobson, Congressional Elections, pp. 19-21.

Each state also varies with respect to the legal requirements to get on the ballot. The Constitution only spells out age and residency requirements for officeholders. The states, however, generally require a certain number of signatures and/or a deposit. In some states, the requirements are quite lax. However, in states such as New York, which requires independent Congressional House candidates to submit 3500 signatures from the congressional district, and party candidates to submit 1250, this can be a significant hurdle.<sup>73</sup>

We are now ready to look at the general characteristics of current candidate selection practices in the United States according to our framework.

With respect to the first area, the degree of regulation of candidate selection, the United States is unique in terms of the extent of public regulation in law. Over the course of this century, control over candidate selection has been removed systematically from the parties and placed under the control of state laws. Virtually every aspect of the candidate selection process is determined by public authorities. How and when the primaries shall be held and who shall be able to vote in them are no longer matters to be determined by the parties. The American case is the

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<sup>73</sup> Lowi and Ginsberg, American Government, p.531.

purest example of a political system where candidate selection is considered to be a public process. In this sense it differs markedly from the British example.

With respect to the degree of participation permitted, the American case is again without equal. In every state, all legal voters have the right to participate in the primary of their choice. The actual degree of participation, however, is not nearly so great as might be supposed. This is because the turnout for primaries tends to be quite poor, rarely rising above 25 percent of registered voters.<sup>74</sup> However, in terms of sheer opportunity for participation, it would be impossible to design a more open process than the American direct primary.

In terms of which level of the party (central versus local) has the effective power to make the nomination, the answer in the American case is - none. There are still a few examples of party control over congressional nominations,<sup>75</sup> but far more typical today is the primary described by Louis Maisel, one in which the local party organization remains

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<sup>74</sup> Lowi and Ginsberg, American Government, pp. 528-529.

<sup>75</sup> Jacobson (p.20) cites the case of Mayor Daley and the Chicago Democratic party of the 1970s and early 1980s as one hanger-on from the days of the infamous party machines.

scrupulously neutral throughout the primary battle.<sup>76</sup> The reality in most congressional districts today is that primary contests are candidate-centred, and no level of the party can have much impact on the outcome. Ranney, writing in 1975, assessed the situation as follows:

. . . it seems to me that the direct primary in most instances has not only eliminated boss control of nominations but party control as well. Whatever may have been the case before the LaFollette revolution, there are today no officers or committees in the national parties and very few in the state and local parties who can regularly give nominations to some aspirants and withhold them from others.<sup>77</sup>

This interpretation is supported by Jacobson, who points to the direct primary as a fundamental cause of the decline of American parties.<sup>78</sup>

While true that no level of party organization has much say over candidate selection, it can be said that the process itself remains an extremely decentralized affair. One example is the parochial nature of candidate recruitment. In this area, the United States has about as rigid a convention as one finds anywhere, in that all candidates must reside in the district they seek to

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<sup>76</sup> Louis Maisel, From Obscurity to Oblivion: Running in the Congressional Primary (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1982).

<sup>77</sup> Austin Ranney, Curing the Mischiefs of Faction (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1975), p.129.

<sup>78</sup> Jacobson, Congressional Elections, p.19.

represent. Such a convention was reportedly an important component of the local bossism of earlier periods, since it forced anyone interested in seeking a nomination to deal with the local party machine. Unlike in Britain, would-be candidates were not free to shop around for openings. If the congressional district that person resided in was filled, then the only option left would literally be to move. Ostrogorski wrote: "As it enjoys a monopoly in its line of business, the Machine can refuse offers without giving any reason, that is to say, forbid an aspirant to become a candidate."<sup>79</sup> In other words, if someone wanted to be a candidate, they were forced to deal with the local machine or give up all thoughts of elected life. While the power of the party machines has largely been broken, the convention itself has shown no signs of weakening. Thus a strong local bias in the recruitment of candidates is likely to remain an important feature of the American candidate selection process.

As in the British case, American incumbents are very rarely denied renomination. On average, fewer than 2 percent of incumbents are defeated in House primary elections, and of the eight hundred and fifteen incumbent Representatives who sought reelection in 1988 and 1990, only two were

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<sup>79</sup> Ostrogorski, Democracy, p.196.

defeated in their party's primary.<sup>80</sup> However, the reasons for this high success rate are very different from those in Britain. There, as explained earlier, incumbents are renominated because of reasons having to do with party. As long as an MP is loyal to his or her party and local constituency association, he or she faces few problems in being readopted. However, the party itself still has the power to refuse a nomination.

In America, the party organization's role in candidate selection is not usually a determining factor in the outcome. Given the candidate-centred nature of American primaries, why is there such a strong incumbency advantage? The answer is that sitting members of Congress enjoy an overwhelming number of advantages over challengers. Jacobson estimates that the institutional perks congressmen have voted themselves, such as generous travel allowances and the franking privilege (free mailings for all "official business"), are worth more than \$1.5 million over a two-year House term.<sup>81</sup> Another advantage is fundraising. Incumbents have much greater access to Political Action Committees (PACs) and their campaign contributions than challengers.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jacobson, Congressional Elections, pp. 26-27.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64. Jacobson notes that PAC contributions accounted for 43 percent of donations to House candidates in 1990.



Maisel found that in 1978 fifty incumbents each received more than \$70,000 from Political Action Committees. He felt that such enormous financial inequities were a major reason why, in that same 1978 election, only five incumbents lost in their party primaries.<sup>83</sup> Both trends (increasing PAC contributions to incumbents and the percentage of incumbents winning their primaries) have accelerated since then, to the point where Jacobson estimated that for a challenger to have a reasonable chance at knocking off an incumbent, he/she would have to be prepared to spend at least \$150,000 to \$250,000.<sup>84</sup>

Not only does the advantage of incumbency ordinarily place congressmen beyond the reach of most challengers, it places them beyond the reach of the party itself. And when the party can no longer threaten the incumbent who carries its label, then it can exercise no control whatsoever over him or her. Nor can it control what the label represents.<sup>85</sup> This has led to the curious phenomenon, noted as early as 1942 by Schattschneider, that American parties, having won control of government, have so little party discipline that they are unable to govern.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Maisel, Obscurity, pp. 67, 131.

<sup>84</sup> Jacobson, Congressional Elections, pp. 50-52.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>86</sup> Schattschneider, Party Government, pp. 131-132.

This overall portrait suggests that the American candidate selection process of direct primaries, regulated by the state, is both very decentralized and almost entirely out of the hands of the parties themselves. While the direct primary succeeded in introducing a greater measure of democracy into the process, it has also been widely blamed for the decline of American parties. It has taken from the parties any ability to control who their candidates are, resulting in embarrassing spectacles like one 1962 Democratic primary in Ohio which resulted in the party being unable to support its own candidate, who was an avowed segregationist.<sup>87</sup> It is also believed to contribute to the weakness of party voting, which is so prominent a feature of the American system. Indeed, Frank Sorauf pointed to the experience of states which employed the pre-primary convention (which gives the party more control over candidate selection) as supporting this claim. He argued it was no coincidence that parties in these states demonstrated "about the strongest" legislative cohesion of the fifty state legislatures.<sup>88</sup>

Essentially, the American people in the 1890s and the 1900s were confronted with a choice: either they could

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<sup>87</sup> Frank Sorauf, Political Parties in the American System (Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), p.98.

<sup>88</sup> Frank Sorauf, Party Politics in America (Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1976), p.220.

suffer the undemocratic actions of the machine-dominated, yet very strong party organizations, or they could demand a more democratic internal party structure, and thus risk weakening the parties' effectiveness. By choosing the direct primary, they threw in their lot with the forces of democracy and created parties that, in their internal affairs, are the most open and democratic in the world. In the process, they have also created perhaps the weakest, least cohesive parties in the world.

We have now seen how political parties in Britain and America select their candidates. While both allow selections to be made at the local level, they have chosen quite different approaches in terms of the amount of democracy they are prepared to tolerate. The American parties, operating in a separation-of-powers system which does not demand cohesive legislative parties, are notable for the absence of party control over the process. The British parties, operating in a parliamentary system where the parties must be able to control their members, have opted to keep tighter control over candidate selection. They both contain important lessons for the Canadian parties, and both exert considerable influence over the way the Canadian people see their parties. We measure the conduct of our parties, at least in part, according to the standards the American and British parties set. So how does the Liberal

Party of Canada measure up? This is what we will begin to address.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA - A HISTORY

The orthodox historical interpretation of political parties in Canada holds that there have been three distinct party periods (or systems), each with its own characteristics. The first party system is understood to have lasted from Confederation to the formation of the Union Government near the end of the First World War (1867 to 1917). The second party system is thought to have lasted until John Diefenbaker, the new leader of the Progressive Conservative party, won the 1957 election and thereby ended twenty-two years of Liberal administration. The third party system, which is the system our parties currently operate within, usually is dated from about 1962.<sup>89</sup> In this chapter we borrow the approach of R.K. Carty and Linda Erickson in their study for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (hereafter referred to as the Lortie Commission) to examine the history of candidate selection in the Liberal Party in each of the three periods.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> For a detailed explanation, see R.K. Carty, "The Three Party Systems" in Canadian Political Party Systems, ed. R.K. Carty (Canada: Broadview Press, 1992).

<sup>90</sup> R.K. Carty and Linda Erickson, "Candidate Nomination in Canada's National Political Parties," in Canadian Political Parties: Leaders, Candidates and Organization, ed. Herman Bakvis (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991).

### The First Party System (1867-1917)

To understand candidate selection in this early period, the origins of the Liberal party must be considered. The first important point is that the genesis of the Liberal party, like that of the Progressive Conservative party, is the parliamentary (or caucus) party. Carty and Erickson write:

Political parties in this formative period were little more than coterie of notables, a parliamentary caucus gathered together behind a leader. There was no formal national party organization, and there were no permanent structures and no regular national conventions of members. Indeed, in this period our contemporary notion of party membership, implying as it does some organization for the citizen to be a member of, had little relevance.<sup>91</sup>

The Liberal party's roots are to be found in the motley assortment of Ontario Clear Grits, Quebec Rouges, and reform-minded Maritimers who (gradually) coalesced into a united parliamentary party. However, this took considerable time. Murray Beck writes that when these loosely knit MPs formed the first Liberal government in 1873 (after John A. Macdonald's Conservatives were brought down by the Pacific Scandal), they were "anything but a cohesive force; in no sense had they been welded into a national party as had the Conservatives."<sup>92</sup> According to Beck, the Liberal party did not achieve this level of cohesion until at least 1893, the

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<sup>91</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.100.

<sup>92</sup> Murray Beck, Pendulum of Power (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1968), p.22.

year of the convention at which Wilfrid Laurier was elected party leader. The convention "completed the forging of a loose alliance of provincial parties into a coherent, national organization."<sup>93</sup>

The second important feature of the first party system was its intense parochialism. Due to the combination of an electoral system based on single-member constituencies and the absence of any form of extra-parliamentary party organization, candidate selection was conducted by, and responsive to, the local partisans. "Members went to Parliament to represent their constituencies, for that is where their elections were won."<sup>94</sup>

A manifestation of this localism was the large number of independents elected to Parliament. F.R. Underhill writes of the difficulties the two parties had in this period:

There were too many individuals whose allegiance was uncertain - 'loose fish', 'shaky fellows', 'waiters on providence'. There were too many constituencies whose practice it was to elect 'independents' of one stripe or another - i.e., representatives who were expected, by a realistic bartering of their votes, to get the utmost possible concessions for their locality or their economic group<sup>95</sup> from the party leaders who sought their support.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>94</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.100.

<sup>95</sup> F.R. Underhill, In Search of Canadian Liberalism (Toronto: The MacMillan Co., 1961), p.23.

This practice occurred in all regions of the country, but it was especially prevalent in the West, as Goldwyn Smith discovered in the 1880s. Underhill reports that, upon asking one British Columbia citizen what his politics was, Smith received the answer, "government appropriations."<sup>96</sup>

The pattern of candidate selection that developed was one in which nominations were the closely guarded prerogative of the local constituencies. Naturally, with no national party guidelines for them to follow, they utilized a variety of methods of selecting candidates. However, Carty and Erickson paint the following picture of the "typical" candidate selection process of the first party system:

For the most part, local party activists established and maintained the habit of coming together in a recognized meeting to settle on and nominate their candidate at election time. . . . Practice varied considerably, but the predominant pattern appears to have been some form of representative local assembly at which delegates or spokesmen were present from as many as possible of the areas (polls, rural districts, or towns) in the constituency. . . . this practice of a recognizable constituency party meeting publicly to choose its candidate became accepted as the standard, legitimate nomination process.<sup>97</sup>

Having established how candidates were selected in the first party system, we will now look at why they were

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<sup>96</sup> F.R. Underhill, Canadian Political Parties (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association., 1974), p.16.

<sup>97</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," pp. 100-101.



selected. As in the earlier chapters, this analysis will examine four aspects of candidate selection: the "public-private" question; the degree of member participation; the "centralization-decentralization" question; and the reasons why incumbents were usually successful in being renominated.

Candidate selection in this period was clearly a private affair. The parties themselves would not be recognized in law for more than a century after Confederation. How lax and informal the whole practice of politics was in this period is colourfully revealed by Norman Ward's description of the spectacle that was the official nomination meeting. The official nomination meeting was the formal means of getting one's name on the ballot. The parties played no official role in this process. In all four of the original provinces any citizen (in theory) could be placed on the ballot simply by appearing at the announced public nomination meeting (and in Nova Scotia by having two nominators) and notifying the electoral officer or sheriff. However, in practice this often proved to be quite difficult.

A favourite tactic seems to have been to make it impossible for the other party's candidate to be officially nominated, thus guaranteeing the election by acclamation of the candidate of one's own party. Ward recounts tales of one

electoral officer who was deaf to Liberal shouts, but had no trouble hearing the name of the Conservative nominee - partially due to the fact that he allowed hired bullies to surround the stage and keep all Liberal supporters at a distance. In another instance, a New Glasgow returning officer "held the place of nomination in the woods at an immense distance from the centre of the district without bothering to inform the opposition." In still another case, the returning officer simply hid for the duration of the day of the scheduled meeting, then held another meeting when convenient for his party.<sup>98</sup>

The point of all this is that candidate selection in the first party system was notable for the lack of any formal structure, let alone regulation. What will shortly be made clear is that this lack of structure was not confined to the legal side of candidate selection - the parties themselves demanded very little in the way of formal procedures surrounding candidate selection. However, according to Carty "the informal networks that defined the party machinery in the constituencies were effective and efficient, their operation well understood by all those

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<sup>98</sup> Norman Ward, The Canadian House of Commons: Representation (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1950), p.155.

involved . . . "99 This feature of candidate selection (that the rules were informal yet well understood) is key to understanding both the reality of party practices in the first and second party systems, and to grasping the underlying causes of many of the problems the Liberal Party is currently confronting.

It is difficult to assess accurately the degree of participation in the selection of candidates in the early days of Canada, but by most accounts it was very high. Carty writes that these early nominations were quite sophisticated and representative, with the larger ridings often using delegates from the polls or villages. In an age when the size of the average constituency was only about 5500 voters, these conventions often drew hundreds of people.<sup>100</sup>

However, there seems reason to suspect that this apparently high level of participation did not translate into high levels of competitiveness. The large public meetings which formally selected the candidates served in most cases merely to ratify decisions already made privately by local elites. In the literature of the period, a large number of references are made (in passing) to the

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<sup>99</sup> R.K. Carty, Canadian Political Parties in the Constituencies. (a forthcoming study done for the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing), ch.I

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., ch.I.

undemocratic and managed nature of these candidate selection meetings, especially prevalent in studies of the causes of the rise of the western-based Progressive movement. Their demands for a more democratic, representative, participatory political system played a large part in the downfall of the first party system. For example, W.L. Morton writes that an important aspect of the success the Progressives enjoyed in the 1921 election was that the movement "was directed against the old party system, and in particular against the control by the party organization of the district nominating conventions." He adds that the popularity of the Progressives' insistence on local autonomy in candidate selection "was a reaction against the practice of the old parties influencing nominations, "importing" candidates, sending workers and funds into a district, and generally making the election, not a local effort, but part of the strategy and general operation of the party organization."<sup>101</sup> In characterizing candidate selection in the first party system, Carty stresses the competitiveness of the process, writing that "real contests stretching over several ballots were not at all unknown." Yet this language implies that most nominations were not (openly) competitive. He then writes that this system "gave way under the pressures for increased democratization and regional

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<sup>101</sup> W.L. Morton, The Progressive Party in Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1950), pp. 118-119.

politics in the aftermath of the first World War."<sup>102</sup> Why would demands for democratization bring down the system if it already enjoyed high levels of democracy and competition? Because of this ambiguity, it seems wise to retain a degree of scepticism about the true degree of democracy existing in candidate selection in the first party system.

A wonderful example of such an unstructured, yet controlled, process is Chubby Power's account of his first nomination. He was first interviewed and recruited by Ernest Lapointe and Wilfrid Laurier (the leader of the Liberal party), whereupon these two agreed he would be their candidate. He recalls that his first step in securing the nomination was to rally his supporters from Quebec West.

The next move was to call for a meeting of the electors of the two sections, Quebec West and Quebec Centre, issued by the other group [who also sought the nomination]. My crowd decided to attend; and, since there were no official delegates and no real organization, my Lower Town friends . . . under the command of Jimmy O'Neill . . . pretty well filled the hall. . . . After several hours of futile bickering, Jimmy O'Neill announced from the hall that 'if Chubby Power does not emerge from the meeting as the official candidate blood will be shed.' The gentlemen on the platform were silenced or folded their tents and stole away. A motion was put and carried, . . . and I left the hall a more or less official candidate.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.I

<sup>103</sup> Norman Ward, The Memoirs of Chubby Power: A Party Politician (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1966), p.54.

It seems logical to conclude that, contrary to appearances, nominations were effectively decided by a relatively small number of local party activists - the rest was largely bread and circuses.

The third aspect to be analyzed, that of the local-central balance within the party, is straightforward in the first party system. The combination of the single-member-constituency electoral system (which predated the parties themselves), the parliamentary origin of the parties (and the corresponding absence of any extra-parliamentary organization), and the intense parochialism of the period combined to produce a system where candidate selection rested in the hands of the local party activists. Not until the transition to the second party system did this candidate selection regime come under pressure from the wider party circles (both regional and national) for a say in nominations. Even the Saskatchewan Liberal "machine" strictly adhered to the principle of local autonomy in candidate selection. David Smith notes that "[f]rom the very first, local associations were sensitive about their prerogative in the matter of selecting candidates and forthrightly rejected any candidate whose selection might be interpreted as the result of 'boss or clique rule.'"<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> David Smith, Prairie Liberalism (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1975), p.37.

In neither the literature nor in popular attitudes of the day is a distinction made between the questions of how "democratic" the candidate selection process was, and of whether the process was centralized or decentralized. It seems to be taken for granted that centralization was equivalent to an undemocratic process, and therefore, decentralization was necessarily more democratic. However, recalling the lessons of the American experience with local boss rule during the convention period (1830s-1900s), it seems that some distinction should be made. It is arguable that while the first party system's candidate selection process was more decentralized than it has been since, it is likely also the most closed it has ever been. While it is true that the decentralized nature of the candidate selection process made it very difficult for the closed circle of parliamentary elites to dominate the process, in the end it was merely exchanged for domination by a small circle of local elites. Indeed, candidate selection in this period was comparable to the above-mentioned convention period in the United States, and not surprisingly it suffered (granted to a far lesser degree) from the same local bossism the American system did.

One of the most obvious examples of the parochialism of the first party system is the strong bias for local candidates. In explaining this, Robert Williams identified

"the need of certain communities or classes (the farmers come to mind immediately) to emphasize that candidates were chosen to serve as local spokesmen in Ottawa."<sup>105</sup> Carty and Erickson note that, unlike the British example, any attempts to "import" or "parachute" outsiders were frowned upon by the locals and that it was necessary for candidates to "establish close ties to those they sought to represent."<sup>106</sup> R. MacGregor Dawson, in his biography of Mackenzie King, mentions the young King being told by the party's leader, Wilfrid Laurier, that finding an Ontario constituency for him would be very difficult. Laurier reportedly confessed that "these constituencies were closed corporations so far as securing nominations for outsiders was concerned." Here was the second-longest serving Prime Minister in Canadian history, admitting that he was unable to persuade these local constituency associations to accept a candidate they did not want.<sup>107</sup> However, this animosity to outside candidates was normally waived in the case of party leaders. Gordon Aiken, who himself sat in the House of Commons, notes that Macdonald, Laurier, and later, King frequently parachuted from riding to riding. Most

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<sup>105</sup> Robert Williams, "Candidate Selection," in Canada at the Polls, 1979 and 1980, ed. H.R. Penniman (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1981), pp. 91-92.

<sup>106</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.101.

<sup>107</sup> R.M. Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874-1923) (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1958), p.226.



constituencies were honoured to have the party leaders run in their ridings.<sup>108</sup>

In the first party system, neither the incumbents nor the defeated candidates normally had trouble getting renominated. However, this was due not to party factors, but to the special place occupied by the MP or defeated candidate in the flow of patronage. Carty and Erickson write that this person was "the crucial link" in the patronage network, "and so came to be a well-known figure of local importance."<sup>109</sup>

In this period, patronage was the engine that made cohesive parties possible. Individuals were in Ottawa to look out for the interests of their constituencies. The electoral environment was still a candidate-centred one where a local notable was elected because of his personal qualities, more so than because of his partisan

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<sup>108</sup> Gordon Aiken, The Backbencher (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p.16. There are three reasons for this practice. One is that a newly-elected party leader who does not have a seat in the House of Commons customarily contests a by-election in a safe party riding. A second is the failure of the party leader to win his or her own seat in the general election, thus necessitating a scenario similar to the first. Third, in the early years after Confederation, party leaders frequently contested more than one seat in the general election. However, by the turn of the century individuals were forbidden to run in more than one riding in each election.

<sup>109</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.100.

affiliation.<sup>110</sup> In fact, until the turn of the century it was common to find candidates (referred to as "ministerialists") being elected as free agents who virtually sold their support to the highest bidder; they would support whichever party was able to form a government. Their standing at home was based on what patronage they could deliver to the riding.

In essence, renomination in the first party system did not depend on party, for there was no real party in the contemporary sense of the word. Rather, MPs were important in their own right as the middlemen between the national leaders and the local electorate. The only people they had to please were their fellow elites, who dominated the local political scene.

### **The Second Party System (1921-1957)**

The election of Mackenzie King's Liberal government in 1921 marks a return to partisan competition, which had been temporarily submerged by the non-partisan Union Government experiment of 1917. The most important change in candidate selection from the first party system to the second was the shift in the centre of gravity from the local level to the regional level. This shift did not significantly alter the

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<sup>110</sup> Note that women were not given the suffrage, nor were they permitted to run for the House of Commons, until 1919 (the transition period between the first and second party systems).

most fundamental aspect of candidate selection in Canada - local autonomy - but it did result in the acceptance of a degree of regional (and national) concern and involvement in the process.

There were a number of factors driving the candidate selection process in this direction. First, with the growth of cohesive parties came a corresponding growth in extra-parliamentary party organization. Carty traces the emergence of national extra-parliamentary party organization to the 1919 Liberal leadership convention.<sup>111</sup> The development was furthered by the creation of the National Liberal Federation in 1932, which provided the machinery whereby the national party leaders could involve themselves in local affairs. A second factor was the weakening of localism in the aftermath of the First World War. As communication and transportation improved, parochialism gave way to a more regional perspective. A third, and somewhat related factor, was the style of government which evolved during the long period of Liberal hegemony from 1935 to 1957. It was known as the ministerialist age, where regional cabinet ministers ("bosses") became the major figures in their respective

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<sup>111</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.I.

spheres of influence and came to play an important role in candidate selection.<sup>112</sup>

A fourth factor was the parties' desire to run candidates in every riding, no matter how hopeless the cause. This was due partly to the incentives of broadcast regulations which provided air time to parties based on the number of candidates they ran.<sup>113</sup> The result was that outside (often provincial or regional) party officials were forced to assist in recruiting candidates in areas with weak or non-existent constituency associations and where there was little or no chance of winning the seat. According to Beck the Liberals were successful in running full or nearly full slates in elections from 1900 to 1911. However, the effects of the English-French split, resulting from the Union Government of 1917-1921, prevented the party from offering a full slate of candidates until 1957, which marks the transition to the third party system. Yet, the impact of this factor was felt from 1935 on, as the Liberals were successful in fielding candidates in almost all ridings, never having more than four seats go uncontested in any election. This is no mean feat when one considers that during the period the Liberal Party was steadily losing

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<sup>112</sup> The term ministerialism should not be confused with the "ministerialists" mentioned in our discussion of the first party system.

<sup>113</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," pp. 101-102.

support in Western Canada. Indeed, with regional uncompetitiveness increasing over time and with the party consistently running full slates of candidates, the practice of national and regional party figures assisting weak local associations in finding candidates would become very apparent in the third party system.

There were two principal means of selecting candidates in the second party system: the open convention and the delegate convention. An open convention is a candidate selection meeting where anyone interested may participate, regardless of partisan affiliation. In terms of scope for participation, the open convention is equivalent to the American direct primary. This type of meeting was classed by Aiken as "dangerous" for a number of reasons. Most obviously, it left open the possibility that supporters of the rival party might pack the convention and intentionally nominate a weak candidate. It also left the association vulnerable to one of the party's own candidates packing the convention with supporters of only tenuous loyalty to the party. Finally, from the perspective of the party leaders, open conventions were far more difficult to "manage" than delegate conventions. Aiken notes that the open convention gradually became less common in the period after 1950.

Delegate conventions were classed as "safe" by Aiken, not because they were safe for any one candidate, but because they could not "be packed by outsiders or any one candidate." They were also easier to manage than open conventions, because if the leaders were able (and they were in many areas) to control the delegate selection meetings at the ward or poll level, then they could effectively dominate the convention itself. Noting this, Aiken writes that "there are those who say the delegate convention is undemocratic. It keeps the 'old gang' in control and others lose interest." It was because of this that the delegate convention has largely fallen out of use in the third party system, having given way to what he termed the "half-safe" convention - candidate selection open only to those holding party memberships.<sup>114</sup>

As with the first party system, parties in the second party system were unknown to the law. There was no state regulation of any aspect of candidate selection. While the institutionalization of the parties themselves produced a measure of internal control over the process, candidate selection in the second party system remained a relatively unstructured, informal affair governed by unwritten rules that everyone involved seemed to understand. Little need was seen for any systematic formalization of the process, since

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<sup>114</sup> Aiken, The Backbencher, pp. 11-12.

nominations were rarely fought over. Howard Scarrow remarked that "the problem for the party leadership has more often been that of finding persons willing to accept the nomination than it has been that of establishing procedures for regulating competition for it."<sup>115</sup>

There was a wide range of practice in candidate selection in the period, ranging from the open convention to the practice of Newfoundland Premier Joey Smallwood announcing the Liberal candidates via press releases from his office.<sup>116</sup> The general portrait of candidate selection in the second party system is that of an oligarchic, closed, managed affair. However, the holding of a nominating convention (with the exception of Newfoundland and, frequently, Quebec) gave the appearance of a participatory, democratic procedure.

The best source of information on Liberal party organization in the period is Reg Whitaker's The Government Party. His definitive assessment of candidate selection within the Liberal Party is as follows:

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<sup>115</sup> Howard Scarrow, "Three Dimensions of a Local Political Party" in Papers on the 1962 Election, ed. J. Meisel (Canada: University of Toronto, 1964), p.53.

<sup>116</sup> F. Englemann and M. Schwartz, Political Parties and the Canadian Social Structure (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 164-165.

Rarely were these exercises more than empty formalities. Sitting members were virtually assured of renomination; defeated candidates from the previous election had the inside track; and if neither of these conditions obtained, the local cabinet minister and his organizers would normally anoint the man they wanted for the nomination. The association would then ratify the choice. It did not happen like this in every instance, but it was the general rule. . . . The Liberal party was certainly no training ground for participatory democracy, however loosely that phrase might be defined.<sup>117</sup>

John Meisel largely agreed with this finding in his study of the 1957 election, concluding that "In most instances the executive agrees beforehand on a candidate who then secures the nomination."<sup>118</sup> In some areas the party leaders did not even bother to maintain a democratic appearance. Carty and Erickson write that, "in large parts of Liberal Quebec or Newfoundland, local parties took on a vestigial quality and candidates were increasingly nominated by fiat."<sup>119</sup> Chubby Power makes frequent reference to the difficulty he faced in persuading the provincial leaders in Quebec to hold conventions at all, let alone making them genuinely democratic affairs.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Reg Whitaker, The Government Party: Organizing and Funding the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-58 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1977), p.413.

<sup>118</sup> John Meisel, The Canadian General Election of 1957 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1962), p.121.

<sup>119</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.102.

<sup>120</sup> Ward, Chubby Power.



In terms of the changing national-local balance, the developments occurring over the course of the second party system are important in that they combined to "legitimate the interest of the wider party organization in a constituency's candidate selection process."<sup>121</sup> However, the tradition of local predominance remained largely unaltered in most areas (noteworthy exceptions are Quebec and Newfoundland).

The provincial or (less frequently) national party leaders tended to get involved when the local apparatus broke down. This meant: helping to find candidates in areas where the party was not competitive and the local association was weak or non-existent; and arbitrating disputes arising within local associations over the selection of a candidate. Whitaker notes that in the 1920s and 1930s "it was still considered exceptional and even disgraceful to have a contest for a local nomination - an open contest that is, since there was often enough competition behind the scenes." As a result of this, it sometimes fell to the provincial and national bodies to resolve the issue. These bodies tried to avoid getting involved, but "if the situation demanded some action, the tendency was to call in the regional party leader . . . to sort out the problem. The party leader, as well as the

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<sup>121</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.102.

national office, tried to avoid direct intervention as much as possible."<sup>122</sup>

Even in Saskatchewan, which was noted for its Liberal "machine" in the first half of this century, all accounts indicate that the provincial party leaders and key federal figures like Jimmy Gardiner rigidly adhered to the policy of local autonomy in candidate selection. Smith writes that "if there was one fundamental principle of party organization that continually received lip service from Liberal party leaders in Saskatchewan it was that they would not interfere with local associations, especially in the selection of candidates."<sup>123</sup>

Quebec was a different story altogether. It functioned virtually autonomously from the national organization throughout this period. Wearing notes that before 1957, "there was no Quebec Liberal party with membership in the National Liberal Federation of Canada, inconceivable as it may seem."<sup>124</sup> Whitaker writes that there "was never, either federally or provincially, until the 1950s, any 'party' with

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<sup>122</sup> Whitaker, The Government Party, p.79.

<sup>123</sup> Smith, Prairie Liberalism, p.36.

<sup>124</sup> Joseph Wearing, The L-Shaped Party (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1981), p.97.

a constitution, membership cards, and structures in which the ordinary voter could participate."<sup>125</sup>

The Quebec Liberal party was organized hierarchically, with the Quebec lieutenant at its apex. This figure has been described as "a kind of viceroy in charge of a backward reach of the Liberal kingdom." A considerable amount of power was delegated to local "bosses" at the constituency level. Acting as liaisons or middlemen were the two organizateurs-en-chef, one each for the Montreal and Quebec regions. Christina McCall-Newman notes that the candidates were normally hand-picked by the local bosses, who were careful to reward them for their loyalty.<sup>126</sup> However, John Meisel and C.E.S. Franks state that candidate selection in Quebec was directed by provincial-level figures, to the detriment of the local associations.<sup>127</sup> However, there is agreement on the profoundly undemocratic nature of the party (which did not begin to change until the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s). The second prominent example of nakedly autocratic candidate selection during the second party

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<sup>125</sup> Whitaker, The Government Party, p.270.

<sup>126</sup> Christina McCall-Newman, Grits: An Intimate Portrait of the Liberal Party (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1982), pp. 88-89.

<sup>127</sup> See John Meisel, The Canadian General Election of 1957, p.63; and C.E.S. Franks, The Parliament of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987), p.100.

system was, of course, the aforementioned case of Newfoundland under Joey Smallwood.<sup>128</sup>

While other aspects of candidate selection changed to reflect the broadening of horizons beyond the local constituency, candidate recruitment did not. The bias towards local candidates remained strong, and parachuting was largely frowned upon unless in the case of a party leader. However, citing the case of Jack Pickersgill in Bonavista-Twillingate (1953), Aiken notes there was little danger for candidates parachuting into "controlled territory" such as Smallwood's Newfoundland.<sup>129</sup>

As in the first party system, incumbents had little trouble getting renominated if they so wished. An extreme case of this was the Quebec (provincial) Liberal Party under Taschereau automatically readopting sitting members.<sup>130</sup> However, there are a number of cases on record of incumbents either being toppled or facing stiff challenges. Meisel notes that the Liberal party had a serious problem with this in the 1957 election. With the party on the verge of collapse, younger Liberals were no longer willing to bide

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<sup>128</sup> For another account of this, see George Perlin, "St. John's West" in Papers on the 1962 Election, ed. J. Meisel (Canada: University of Toronto, 1964), footnote to p.7.

<sup>129</sup> Aiken, The Backbencher, p.17.

<sup>130</sup> Englemann and Schwartz, Political Parties, p.164.

their time; they began challenging the old guard for nominations. In Quebec the anti-incumbent mood was particularly severe, prompting the federal organization to renominate all incumbents wishing to run. This resulted in a number of "independent Liberal" candidacies and split associations. Likewise, in Manitoba three MPs were not reselected. Two of the three went on to run as independents.<sup>131</sup>

It is important to note that the causes of incumbency advantage in the second party system were different from the causes of incumbency advantage in the first party system. As the parties became more cohesive and institutionalized, and the voters began voting for party rather than for the individual candidate,<sup>132</sup> the incumbent's fate increasingly came to rest in the hands of the party leaders. In the first party system the individual MP was an important figure in his own right. He possessed an independent power base, rooted in the local constituency, which gave him a measure of freedom from parliamentary party discipline. In the second party system, the role of the individual MP was greatly diminished. The flow of patronage was diverted away from the local member, or dried up altogether. Canadians

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<sup>131</sup> Meisel, General Election of 1957, pp. 123-124.

<sup>132</sup> Englemann and Schwartz, Political Parties, cite a survey which found that in 1944, 53% voted for party rather than candidate. (p.216).

began voting for party, rather than for individuals. By the end of the second party system, MPs were firmly under the control of the party.

### **The Third Party System (1962-present)**

The Diefenbaker government of 1962 was the first of a string of minority governments elected in the 1960s and 1970s, and is considered to mark the beginning of the third party system. Candidate selection in the third party system has been characterized by increased demands for greater participation in the process, and a sharp increase in the institutionalization of political party organization.<sup>133</sup> Together, these two developments have heightened the tension created by two conflicting demands: first is the conflict between local and central party organizations over control of candidate selection; second is the balance between steps to increase grass-roots participation (process as an end in itself), and the need to produce a team of candidates that will enhance the party both electorally and in Parliament (process as a means to an end). The democratization of the candidate selection process in the period has reduced the control of party leaders over who their candidates will be. In response, the party has attempted to rigidify and standardize the rules governing the process. This has the

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<sup>133</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," pp. 102-103.

effect of reducing access to the process. And in one area, the question of the chronic under-representation of women and ethnic minority candidates, undemocratic means are advocated to create a more democratic outcome. By centralizing the process, these groups hope that national leaders will mandate the selection of certain types of candidates in certain types of ridings.

The accepted method of selecting candidates in the third party system is to hold a special meeting of the local constituency association, where any party member in good standing is eligible to vote for the candidate of his or her choice. For most of the third party system, the decentralized nature of candidate selection and the absence of standardized national rules and procedures have meant that each local association has been largely autonomous in choosing whoever it wishes, whenever it wishes, however it wishes.

This degree of autonomy has been significantly reduced as the national party has taken steps to create a more integrated, efficient process with increased scope for national party intervention. The national party now establishes the rules to be followed; it has discretion over when meetings can be held; it provides coordinating and oversight responsibilities, including authority over appeals

of controverted nominations; it has veto authority over candidate selection by virtue of the requirement (pursuant to the 1970 Canada Elections Act) that the national party leader must sign all candidates' nomination papers; and the national party leader has the power to by-pass the normal candidate selection process and appoint candidates directly. How did the current system evolve? To answer this, we must recall briefly the system it replaced.

Candidate selection in the second party system was a closed affair that offered little opportunity for meaningful grass-roots participation. Most nominations were foregone conclusions, prearranged either by local, provincial or national party elites and managed accordingly. Since the candidate selection process was not a competitive or open affair, and since everyone involved understood how the system worked, the party never deemed it necessary to develop formal structures or rules to govern the process. All of this was to change in the transition from the second to the third party system.

The crushing defeat the Liberals suffered at the hands of John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives in 1958 marked the end of an era in Canadian politics. The "Government Party" Whitaker wrote about was now decimated and in opposition. The ensuing period between the Liberals' defeat and their return to power in 1963 under Lester



Pearson was one in which a massive housecleaning occurred. Within the party, young reformers like Keith Davey and his Cell 13 counterparts in Toronto and, in 1965, the "three wise men" from Quebec (Jean Marchand, Pierre Trudeau and Gerard Pelletier), sought to change fundamentally the nature of the Liberal Party from an undemocratic, cadre party dominated by a hierarchy of cliques and bosses into a democratic, member-based party practising open, participatory grass-roots democracy.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, the period saw considerable pressure for greater participation and intra-party democracy arising from outside the parties. Many groups, heretofore politically latent, began to demand that they be given their due in the processes of political representation. Most vocal was the women's movement, but ethnic and other pressure groups also clamoured to be heard. Among other things, they sought nominations for members of their groups.<sup>135</sup> The outcome was that in many constituencies the old way of doing things was discarded without much consideration of how to replace it. There emerged a range of practices: some constituencies took measures to democratize candidate selection; some sought to strengthen and formalize the process to cope with the increase in competition; and others, largely unaffected by such events, essentially continued in their old ways.

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<sup>134</sup> McCall-Newman, *Grits*, *passim* p.17,88.

<sup>135</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.102.

The province which has had the most difficulty coping with the changes is Ontario. Here, the party responded to calls for democratization by opening up its candidate selection process quite rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s. Reacting to undemocratic practices such as automatic renomination of incumbents, the provincial organization in 1964 undertook the first in a series of reforms. For example, constituency associations were required to have written constitutions and to give adequate notice of nominating conventions, and to give all party members the right to participate directly in selection of candidates. Delegate conventions, perceived as undemocratic symbols of managed nominations, were effectively proscribed in Ontario, giving way to party membership conventions in which any party member in good standing was eligible to vote for the nominee of his or her choice.<sup>136</sup> The result was that a growing number of nominating conventions began to attract huge crowds, with massive numbers of new members signed up in the days and weeks preceding the convention. Increasingly, the former party outsiders were mobilizing supporters and challenging the local party's "old guard" for control of the conventions.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> R.M. Dawson and Norman Ward, The Government of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1970), p.443.

<sup>137</sup> See Howard Scarrow's accounts of "Urban Riding" (a fictitious name) in Papers on the 1962 Election, ed. J. Meisel (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1964); and Murray Beck's accounts of the spectacular nomination battles leading up to

However, problems arose because the combination of weak, under-institutionalized constituency associations and the lack of formal rules and regulations governing candidate selection made many local associations vulnerable to instances of massive voter mobilization and membership recruitment. The scale of participation overwhelmed the local associations' capacity to cope with the influx and facilitated all manner of abuses and dirty tricks. Often the local associations were incapable of enforcing those rules that did exist. In their efforts to re-establish control and impose a minimum of structure on the process, the associations increasingly abandoned the open convention in favour of party member conventions. Dawson and Ward reported that for the 1968 election, over seventy associations selected their candidates by means of a party membership convention, while only fifteen used the traditional open convention.<sup>138</sup>

The trend toward fiercely competitive nomination battles accelerated in the 1970s, and by 1978 was felt to be out of control.<sup>139</sup> This prompted yet another round of reforms at the next annual meeting. The focus of the reforms was to make membership requirements more stringent and less

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the 1968 election (found in Pendulum of Power).

<sup>138</sup> Dawson and Ward, Government of Canada, p.443.

<sup>139</sup> Wearing, The L-Shaped Party, p.117.

prone to abuse (for example, lengthening the cut-off period from seventy-two hours to seven days, requiring fourteen days notice of the holding of a meeting, requiring all candidates to declare their intention to run at least ten days prior to the nomination meeting).<sup>140</sup> However, these changes did not alter the fundamental nature of candidate selection in Ontario (and elsewhere, for that matter). Candidate selection remains, pure and simple, a numbers game. Whoever can get the most people to a meeting will win the nomination.

Perhaps the most profound changes to candidate selection occurred in Quebec. During the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, the Liberal Party of Canada (Quebec) was transformed from one of the most undemocratic of all the provincial Liberal parties to what Wearing argued had become perhaps the most democratic.<sup>141</sup> While Wearing's assessment of intra-party democracy in the LPC(Q) is very generous, it is never the less true that candidate selection became a far more participatory, democratic process in Quebec over this period. Beck notes a number of extraordinary nomination contests prior to the 1968 election, including two in which sitting ministers were defeated.<sup>142</sup> In 1972, the LPC(Q)

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.117.

<sup>141</sup> Wearing, The L-Shaped Party, p.96.

<sup>142</sup> Beck, Pendulum, p.401.

succeeded in holding nominating conventions in every riding in the province.<sup>143</sup>

However, strict controls were established to prevent abuse of the process. For example, there is an automatic suspension of membership recruitment at the calling of an election (designed to guard against a candidate attempting to pack a nomination meeting). As well, an Electoral Commission was created to find "suitable candidates." To do this it has received considerable powers, including the power to refuse potential candidates the right to contest a nomination. This is not a formality: Wearing reports that it was used to reject five applicants in 1974 alone.<sup>144</sup>

Not all provinces have had the same experiences with huge numbers of "instant" party members. Nor for that matter have many of the ridings in Ontario and Quebec. Understandably, associations that have not gone through tumultuous nomination struggles have felt less need to change their candidate selection practices. In fact, they rightly argue that altering the process to combat non-problems actually works to lessen participation and frustrate efforts at grass-roots democracy.

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<sup>143</sup> Wearing, The L-Shaped Party, pp. 102-103.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.105.

The key to understanding the debate over how to reform candidate selection is to appreciate that local associations face vastly different situations from riding to riding. Carty writes that Liberal constituency associations range in size from seven members to over six thousand members.<sup>145</sup> Studies done for the Lortie Commission show that while in 1988 over a third of successful nominees from the three major parties did not spend a cent on their nomination campaign, some battles reportedly cost as much as \$30,000 to \$50,000. Most importantly, while safe, open<sup>146</sup> seats drew fierce competition, fully two-thirds of all nominations in 1988 were won by acclamation.<sup>147</sup> Thus each constituency association defines the problem differently, or has no problem at all, which makes agreement on a standardized approach near impossible. In this sense, the flexibility provided by the extremely decentralized candidate selection process is a functional solution in the Canadian context. But it has been challenged by pressures arising outside the party for greater representation of women and ethnic minorities. As these groups realize, the decentralized candidate selection regime is the most formidable barrier to the achievement of their goals.

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<sup>145</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.3.

<sup>146</sup> An open seat is one in which no incumbent is running.

<sup>147</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," passim, pp. 120-125.

The first of the four dimensions of candidate selection we will now explore, the "public-private" question, has undergone important changes in the third party system. Most significant is the altered legal status of political parties. Since 1970, largely in response to demands for a fairer electoral process, the federal government took significant steps to regulate the behaviour of political parties. They included the 1970 Elections Act (which, among other things, placed party labels on the ballot and inadvertently gave the national party leader veto power), and the 1974 reforms governing electoral finance (including the public funding of parties through the use of refundable tax credits and expense reimbursements). The changes place the parties in an uncertain legal status. While they are now recognized in law, their candidate selection processes remain unofficial, unrecognized in law and unregulated. However, as we shall see in next chapter's more detailed analysis of the Lortie Commission, many interveners at the Commission's hearings argued that by accepting public monies via rebates and tax credits, the parties have tacitly conceded some measure of public claim over their conduct.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> For example, see Daiva Stasiulis and Yasmeen Abu-Laban, "The House the Parties Built," in Ethno-Cultural Groups and Visible Minorities in Canadian Politics, ed. K. Megyery (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), p.34.

The situation that has developed is that Canadian political parties are mid-way between two alternative approaches to dealing with how to ensure a properly controlled candidate selection process. In Britain, the parties have traditionally placed careful controls over candidate selection. Only loyal partisans are permitted to participate and there are clear, detailed rules which all constituency associations must follow. In the United States, the undemocratic abuses of the nomination process which were perpetrated by the parties themselves led to careful public regulation of candidate selection. This has meant the state governments determining who will participate, how they will participate, and when they will participate. While neither the British nor American systems are perfect, they have avoided the problems suffered by Canadian parties due to the lack of close controls, by state or party, of candidate selection practices.<sup>149</sup> What is becoming increasingly clear is that the Canadian parties are now being forced to choose between the two. The informal, unstructured nature of the process in Canada has contributed to many of the troubles surrounding it.

As will be seen in the next chapter, another important question addressed by the Lortie Commission was how to preserve the private nature of political parties while at

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<sup>149</sup> Williams, "Candidate Selection," p.98.



the same time encouraging them to be more accessible to people and more representative of the society at large. This meant looking closely at the parties' nomination practices and the potential for extending the Canada Elections Act to the nomination stage. The message was that if Canada's political parties continue to prove unwilling or unable to police their own activities, the state is increasingly prepared to do it for them.

A fundamental element of the "participation" question for the Liberal party is the dual character of the issue. Efforts made in the 1960s and 1970s to democratize candidate selection process have been only partially successful. In some constituencies there have been great increases in the scope and intensity of participation. In other constituencies, candidate selection has remained an uncompetitive affair which is still subject to domination by a small clique of local party activists. This unevenness has created barriers to the development of a more uniform, standardized approach to candidate selection.

There have been a (growing) number of cases of the "Instant Liberal" phenomenon, where massive influxes of recently joined members with little commitment to the party "take over" the nomination meeting. However, the majority of the party's associations have not been adversely affected.

In fact, the overall picture of candidate selection for the 1988 election is that of a permeable, uncompetitive process that presents little obstacle to anyone seriously contemplating a candidacy.<sup>150</sup> Carty found that in a large (25 percent to 40 percent) number of constituencies the outward forms of democracy are more apparent than real; in these cases a core group of party insiders has succeeded in maintaining effective control over the process.<sup>151</sup> This has been made possible by the generally weak constituency associations and their low level of party membership and partisan activity.<sup>152</sup>

While it is the spectacular nomination meetings that attract media attention, the Lortie Commission concluded that the less competitive selection meetings are the source of most of the undemocratic practices. In its Final Report, it wrote that "many of the problems associated with the nomination process - the low proportion of women recruited, for example - stem not from the high level of competition in a limited number of constituency associations, but from the large number of uncompetitive, relatively closed contests

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<sup>150</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.171.

<sup>151</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.5.

<sup>152</sup> Carty (Political Parties, ch.3) notes Canada's parties have the lowest membership rates in the democratic world, excepting Australia.

conducted by local party insiders."<sup>153</sup> While it is true that in those areas where large numbers of new participants have joined the local party the nomination meetings can be raucous affairs (depending on the degree of institutionalization of candidate selection procedures), it is also true that this degree of participation has largely taken the power to manage nominations away from the local party insiders. By contrast, where constituency party activity is low, power reverts by default to those willing to take the time and effort to organize the party in the constituency. It is in these cases that an inner circle of local party activists remains in control of the process.

Another outcome of the transition from the second to the third party system is that one Liberal leader after another has been confronted with the trade-off between greater openness in candidate selection and the leaders' ability to control the outcomes of the process. The approach of the party under John Turner in 1984 and 1988 was to accept the messy candidate selection battles and put up with the undesirable candidates who occasionally emerged.<sup>154</sup> In contrast, the approach of his successor, Jean Chretien, in

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<sup>153</sup> Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (the Lortie Commission), Reforming Electoral Democracy, Volume I (Canada: Supply and Services, 1991), p.265.

<sup>154</sup> Graham Fraser, Playing for Keeps, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989), pp. 162-166.

the current round of candidate selections has been to take steps (via his power to appoint candidates) to place some desired candidates and to block out others deemed less desirable, and suffer the accusations of autocratic behaviour. Neither approach has worked particularly well. In 1984 and 1988 Mr. Turner had great difficulty attracting prominent candidates, and a number of those who did seek nominations were defeated. Some of the candidates who did win Liberal nominations were perceived to be single-issue candidates (especially in the case of a number of anti-abortion activists). And on top of this, the party still suffered criticisms that its candidate selection process was undemocratic, due to the dubious practices common at them. In the current round of candidate selection, Mr. Chretien has taken action to head off these embarrassments by employing his power to appoint candidates. However, not only has this been met with charges of autocratic behaviour, it has also resulted in the very things the power was supposed to prevent - split local associations and independent Liberal candidacies.

Thus the picture that emerges of participation in candidate selection in the third party system is that of a fluid, incomplete transition from a closed, oligarchic process to an open, democratic one. The Liberal party must now decide what it wishes to do. Does the party have the

will or the means to carry this democratic transformation through? Or should it remain a cadre party? If it chooses the latter and gives up on becoming a truly member-based organization, then it will have to take steps to confront the Instant Liberal phenomenon. As Carty suggests, in its current form, the Liberal Party of Canada may well be running up against a natural limit to the amount of competition a cadre style party operating in a parliamentary system can withstand.<sup>155</sup>

The participatory struggle outlined above is intimately related to the proper degree of centralization in candidate selection. Fundamentally, the period has been characterized by an ongoing struggle between the central party body (seeking more input into and control over candidate selection) and local associations determined to hold on to one of the few functions they hold that are of any importance.

Like the participatory dimension, this struggle also has two distinct aspects, according to the competitiveness of the seat. Traditionally, the local association has succeeded in maintaining almost complete control of candidate selection in constituencies where it possesses a degree of organizational coherence. In constituencies where

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<sup>155</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.5.

the local organization is weak or non-existent, a central party organization (normally the provincial body), responding to the incentives for fielding a full slate of candidates (as discussed in the previous chapter), has assumed responsibility for finding a suitable candidate to carry the party flag.

While the tradition of local autonomy in candidate selection has remained relatively intact in constituencies capable of carrying out the function, even here the central party bodies have come to play a significantly greater role, like that of the British parties. They have increasingly devised a more standardized and integrated process. This has included greater supervisory and recruitment powers, and, since the 1992 rule changes, greater interventionary powers.

One factor which has helped increase pressure for greater centralized control of candidate selection is the demand for more representative candidate slates, in terms of gender and ethnicity. The Lortie Commission found a considerable amount of support for the establishment of candidacy "quotas" for such groups. Since the decentralized nature of Canada's candidate selection system makes it virtually impossible for the national party organization to engage in "balance the ticket" efforts, would-be reformers

have argued for greater central control as a means of facilitating representation and inclusion.

A second factor which has helped to increase pressure for greater centralized control is the fear that increased nomination spending (reportedly as high as \$30,000 to \$50,000)<sup>156</sup> and mobilization drives by particular groups make it difficult for generally small and permeable local associations to maintain control over the candidate selection process. They are unable to resist moves by single-issue groups to take over constituencies and to nominate captive or single-issue candidates with little commitment to the party or its philosophies. An example is the anti-abortion organizations, which attempted (successfully in a number of cases) to take over associations in Ontario and Saskatchewan in 1988 and again in 1993, for the sole purpose of selecting pro-Life candidates. In a parliamentary system which demands strong party discipline in the parliamentary party, Liberal leaders have been understandably concerned about the party's inability to control who runs under its label. If they cannot prevent people with un-Liberal views from using the party as a vehicle to promote a narrow cause or issue, then the possibility arises that they will also be unable to

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<sup>156</sup> Janine Brodie, "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada," in Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation, ed. K. Megyery (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), p.40.

persuade these people to follow the party line within Parliament.

The obvious way to combat such insurgencies is to create a more centralized process. This is exactly what the Liberal Party has aimed at in its recent reforms. The establishment of longer cut-off periods, more restrictive membership requirements, and the power of the party leader to appoint directly candidates - all of these effectively increase party control over the candidate selection process. Yet they also centralize the candidate selection process, making it more closed. These changes have infringed on the tradition of local autonomy in candidate selection, and as a result have drawn considerable criticism from the party grass-roots.

One expression of this has been the reactions of local associations in 1988 and 1993 to central party attempts to "parachute" star candidates into their ridings. The practice is as unpopular as ever among local party activists, and has threatened to spawn a number of "independent Liberal" candidacies, that is, by disgruntled Liberals who failed to win the nomination or were frozen out by national party figures (especially through the use of the appointive power). By all indications, traditional biases in favour of a local candidate are alive and well in the Liberal Party.



According to some writers, the fourth aspect of candidate selection to be analyzed - the question of incumbency advantage - has undergone important changes. The more open nomination process of the third party system, it is argued, has weakened the traditional advantages of incumbents. As noted earlier, Beck cites the defeat of two Liberal cabinet ministers in Quebec's 1968 nominations.<sup>157</sup> Carty and Erickson write that incumbents faced growing opposition throughout this period, and in their survey of the 1988 election they found that fully one-third of Liberal MPs were challenged at their renomination.<sup>158</sup>

While there are some indications that the increasingly open nominations of the third party system have in fact come to threaten incumbents more so than in the past, there is precious little evidence to suggest that anything significant has changed. Carty and Erickson do not cite a single instance of a Liberal MP losing his or her nomination contest in 1988. The overall picture is still one in which few incumbents face stiff challenges in their bids for renomination, and even fewer actually lose.

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<sup>157</sup> Beck, Pendulum, pp. 401-402.

<sup>158</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," passim, pp. 103, 130-132. However, they caution that the survey's return rate by incumbents was fairly low, so this data contains a substantial margin of error.

The interesting thing about the current position of Canadian incumbents is their seeming vulnerability. They generally lack the strong constituency associations which protect and support their British counterparts. They also lack the ability to create a safe seat for themselves through district servicing and the accumulation of huge campaign war chests, as is the practice in the candidate-centred American environment. Nevertheless, Canadian MPs have remained relatively impervious to challenges except in rare cases. Whether this is something that will change in the future remains uncertain. However, the recent employment of the party leader's appointment power (and the potential use of the leader's veto) to head off challenges to sitting MPs would appear to forestall this possibility.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CURRENT ISSUES IN CANDIDATE SELECTION

The 1984 and 1988 elections were notable for the emergence of three important trends in Liberal party candidate selection practices. First, women's and ethnic minorities' groups became more vocal in their demands for inclusion. This translated into greater levels of participation by these groups and increased numbers of women and members of ethnic minorities contesting nominations. Second, single-issue groups (especially anti-abortion groups such as Liberals for Life) demonstrated an increased willingness to attempt to influence the candidate selection process. In several southern Ontario ridings, this took the extreme form of such groups "taking over" constituency associations by buying up large numbers of memberships before the nomination meetings were held. Third, and partly in response to the first two points, the cost of competing for nominations escalated in a small number of associations.

The overall effect of these trends on Liberal candidate selection was decidedly mixed. The impact was devastating in a small number of constituencies (concentrated primarily in southern Ontario) where one or more of these phenomena occurred. The 1988 contest for the Liberal nomination in Markham, Ontario is an excellent example of what "ethnic

mobilization" can do to an association. In this case, the eventual winner of the bitter contest was Jag Bhaduria. In capturing the nomination Bhaduria, a Hindu who had been a loyal party worker since the Trudeau era, spent a considerable sum of his own money and signed up over two thousand new party members, most of whom were Sikhs who had just recently moved into a new subdivision in the riding. However, the local executive resigned in protest of his victory. The outcome: Mr. Bhaduria was defeated in the general election and the constituency association was left without an executive.<sup>159</sup>

The case of Perth-Wellington-Waterloo is an example of a strong single-issue candidate capturing the nomination. Here, Mike Stinson's pro-life stance reportedly drew hundreds of supporters to the "convention-like" nomination meeting, and was credited with winning him the nomination. However, his subsequent efforts to downplay the abortion issue and to broaden his message alienated many of those who supported him for the nomination precisely because of his strong stand on the issue. He was defeated in the election.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> D. Bell and C. Bolan, "The Mass Media and Federal Election Campaigning at the Local Level: A Case Study of Two Ontario Constituencies," in Reaching the Voter: Constituency Campaigning in Canada, eds. D. Bell and F. Fletcher (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991), p.80.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p.81.

In these and other ridings, the small, "under-institutionalized" local constituency associations,<sup>161</sup> combined with the traditionally unstructured and informal nature of the candidate selection process, were ill-suited to cope with large influxes of "Instant Liberals" and nomination battles costing tens of thousands of dollars.<sup>162</sup> As a result, in these ridings the candidate selection process fell out of the party's control. Huge, somewhat chaotic nomination meetings with thousands of delegates, many of whom might have been members of the party only a short time and might have felt little loyalty to anyone but the candidate that they had come to support, brought the party considerable embarrassment. Graham Fraser, in his account of the 1988 election, writes that there were "accusations of membership buying, mobilization of ethnic communities, obstructive tactics at the nomination meetings to encourage less organized supporters to go home: the worst examples of machine politics."<sup>163</sup>

Yet the majority of associations experienced a far different reality. The picture emerging from Carty and

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<sup>161</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.113.

<sup>162</sup> Note Carty and Erickson say some went as high as \$30,000, while Janine Brodie says \$50,000 in "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada," in Women in Canadian Politics, ed. K. Megyery (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991).

<sup>163</sup> Fraser, Playing For Keeps, p.163.

Erickson's survey of candidate selection in 1988 is that of a relatively uncompetitive process. Two-thirds of the Progressive Conservative, Liberal, and New Democratic parties' nominations were not contested, and 54 percent of contested nominations were decided on the first ballot.<sup>164</sup> Of those seats defined as "desirable" (those with no incumbent running and which were safe or winnable seats), 46 percent went uncontested.<sup>165</sup> In a follow-up study, Carty estimates that in 25 to 40 percent of the ridings, a core group of local party activists had managed the nomination process to some degree.<sup>166</sup> While in a small number of associations nomination spending was seen as a serious problem, Carty and Erickson report that in over one-third, the winner spent nothing at all, 70 percent spent less than \$500, and 79 percent spent less than \$1000.<sup>167</sup> Carty reports that for 89 percent of constituency associations,

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<sup>164</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.120.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., p.172.

<sup>166</sup> In chapter five of his forthcoming study for the Lortie Commission, Canadian Political Parties in the Constituencies, he found that one-quarter of the associations which had been won by acclamation reported the experience as conflictual or competitive, suggesting behind-the-scenes manoeuvring. Forty percent of associations also admitted that in their riding a "core group of the association" decided among itself who the candidate should be, then worked to get that candidate elected.

<sup>167</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.125.

nomination spending in 1988 simply was not an issue; only 3 percent said it was a serious problem in their riding.<sup>168</sup>

The dual nature of Liberal party candidate selection in 1984 and 1988 has produced two distinct schools of thought on how to reform the process. Both schools agree that a fundamental cause of the Liberal party's chronic nomination problems is the traditionally informal, unstructured nature of the process. This is nicely articulated by Carty and Erickson:

The lack of formal structure - evidenced by the absence of uniform national party rules, very limited membership requirements, almost no financial constraints, and uneven candidate search mechanisms - means there is ample scope for the operation of informal norms and raw political might.<sup>169</sup>

Both schools also agree that local constituency associations lack the institutional resources to regulate the candidate selection process by themselves, and that some means must be found to establish a candidate selection process where clear, comprehensive rules are rigorously enforced to prevent abuses.

However, these two groups are largely concerned with addressing two different aspects of candidate selection. They define the problem alternately as one of too much

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<sup>168</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.5.

<sup>169</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.116.

competition or too little competition; a process that is too open or too closed; a situation where the local associations have too little control over the process, or too much. As a result, two quite different sets of demands for reform have emerged. Problematically, these demands are not entirely compatible. On one side are reformers seeking to create a fairer and more accessible and inclusive candidate selection process. This typifies the approach of the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (the Lortie Commission). The second group of reformers is concerned primarily to reestablish party control over the candidate selection process and to deal with issues such as the "instant Liberal" phenomenon and ethnic or single-issue groups "taking over" local associations. They are concerned to protect the integrity of the party's candidate selection process from flagrant abuses that bring embarrassment upon the party. This is characteristic of the approach of the Liberal Party Reform Commission, struck in 1990, which proposed extensive changes to the party's candidate selection process at a special "reform convention" in 1992.

The Lortie Commission, established in 1989 by Order in Council, was given a mandate to "inquire into and report on the appropriate principles and process that should govern the election of members of the House of Commons and the financing of political parties and of candidates'



campaigns." It was concerned to find ways to ensure that all Canadians have an equal opportunity to exercise their rights "to vote, to be a candidate and to participate in free and open elections."<sup>170</sup> In the course of its study, the Lortie Commission focused considerable attention on the nomination of candidates. This was due to the central role parties play in our system of government. Today, access to electoral office is largely determined by political parties. They act as "gatekeepers" to political office, and to the extent that their internal candidate selection practices discriminate against individuals or groups of Canadians the whole electoral system is affected. Thus while candidate selection was recognized by the Commission as a private, internal party affair, the centrality of the parties' candidate selection processes to the Commission's terms of reference in ensuring electoral fairness was sufficient to warrant that it be studied by the Commission.

There was little demand from intervenors that the candidate selection process be changed. For example, a working document on the subject reveals that there was almost no support for a move towards American-style primaries. Rather, attention was focused on ways to improve

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<sup>170</sup> Lortie Commission, Reforming Electoral Democracy, p.1.

the existing process and to make it fairer.<sup>171</sup> As noted above, most groups believed that the root causes of problems such as the serious under-representation of women (who made up just 8.2 percent of Liberal candidates in 1980, 16 percent in 1984, and 18 percent in 1988)<sup>172</sup> and irregularities in candidate selection were the lack of formal candidate selection rules and the inability of the local associations to regulate the process. Their solution to these problems was twofold. First, a more structured process has to be created, with clear and comprehensive rules. Second, these rules need to be enforced.

There was less consensus surrounding the question of who should be responsible for the creation and enforcement of these rules. While some intervenors sought to keep these responsibilities in the hands of the parties themselves, there was considerable support among women's and ethnic groups for having the state play a more active role in these areas. While these groups recognized that Canadian parties have traditionally been considered private organizations, they made a twofold argument in justification of a legitimate state interest in how the parties conduct their internal affairs.

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<sup>171</sup> Royal Commission on Electoral Reform, "Summary of Issues from Hearings" (Working Document # 30. Nomination of Candidates), pp. 3-5.

<sup>172</sup> Lortie Commission, Reforming, p.110.

First the very centrality of candidate selection to the electoral process obligates the parties to observe an intangible set of public standards of fairness and equality. In exchange for their privileged place in Canadian electoral democracy, it is only reasonable to expect and demand that the parties carry out their internal affairs in a manner consistent with the beliefs and desires of most Canadians. A second, more concrete justification of a greater state role in internal party affairs is that the financial and electoral reforms of the 1970s, which established public funding for elections (and thereby gave parties access to public money) fundamentally altered the nature of the parties. By accepting public money and official legal recognition, the parties tacitly forfeited their claims to private status. Accordingly, they are to be viewed as quasi-public organizations and as long as they continue to accept public funding they should be expected to operate in accordance with public desires.

As a result of this interpretation, many of these groups argue in favour of the state taking extensive measures to deal with problems of candidate selection. One response which was repeatedly suggested was to extend the Canada Elections Act to the nomination stage. It is felt that having an impartial organization such as Elections Canada administer the candidate selection process and

regulate nomination spending would solve many of the problems which lead to the under-representation of women and minorities, and to abuses of democratic norms in candidate selection. Establishing spending limits for the nomination stage would address the problem of candidates with large financial resources (or access to them) "buying" nominations and would level the playing field by making the process fairer and more accessible. Allowing Elections Canada to establish and enforce clear candidate selection procedures would remedy the problems created by the inability of small, under-institutionalized associations to enforce ambiguous, contradictory, or even non-existent candidate selection rules.

The Lortie Commission largely resisted pressure to recommend a larger state role in the parties' internal affairs. While agreeing that the parties do bear a degree of public responsibility for their behaviour, the Commission largely preserved the parties' privilege of self-regulation. Its recommendations focus on efforts to persuade the parties to take internal steps to address areas of concern, rather than forcing them to do so.

In encouraging the parties to develop clear candidate selection rules and procedures, it recommends that parties be compelled to draw up a constitution "consistent with the

spirit and content of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." In this constitution the party would set out detailed provisions for all aspects of candidate selection, establishing "clear and consistent" rules for membership, eligibility, meetings and proceedings, dispute resolution mechanisms, and "specific sanctions that would be applied in cases of violation of its constitution and rules." It would then submit this constitution to the Canada Elections Commission, which would be responsible for enforcing these provisions (Recommendation 1.5.2).<sup>173</sup>

The second focus of the Lortie Commission is on taking measures to create a fairer, more representative candidate selection process. To this end, it recommends: that spending limits be placed on the nomination process (Recommendation 1.3.19), that tax credits be extended to cover donations made at the nomination stage (Recommendation 1.3.20), that the Income Tax Act be amended to include child care expenses incurred while contesting a candidacy as allowable expenses (Recommendation 1.3.21), that parties be required to establish formal search committees committed to processes that enhance the involvement of under-represented groups (Recommendation 1.3.23), and, in an effort to persuade the parties to nominate more women, it recommends that parties be reimbursed for their electoral expenses on a sliding

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<sup>173</sup> Lortie Commission, Reforming, pp. 246-247.

scale in relation to the numbers of women nominated (Recommendation 1.5.11).<sup>174</sup>

One important effect of the Lortie Commission's examination of candidate selection is to give momentum to those urging the creation of a more centralized process. Throughout the hearings, the traditionally decentralized nature of the process was repeatedly pointed to as an obstacle to many of the reforms being proposed. In particular, intervenors from women's and minority groups proposed a range of recommendations, including the establishment of quotas and the alteration of the electoral system to include some form of proportional representation (thereby facilitating party efforts to "balance the ticket" and create more representative slates of candidates). The majority of these measures require a greater national party role in candidate selection. Only at the national level, it is felt, do the parties possess the organizational capacity to regulate candidate selection and create balanced tickets.

In summary, the Lortie Commission resisted pressures to adopt a strongly pro-active approach toward remedying problems in candidate selection. It chose instead to allow the parties to establish the rules and procedures governing candidate selection, while lending the weight of the Canada

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<sup>174</sup> Lortie Commission, Reforming, pp.117-121, p.273.

Elections Commission to the enforcement of these rules. An underlying theme of the Lortie Commission's report is that, while the parties should be given every opportunity to choose their own path of internal reform, failure to do so should result in the state adopting a far more aggressive and interventionist role in candidate selection to address the issues unremedied by the parties.

Demands for reform of candidate selection practices have also emanated from within the Liberal party. Responding to a general dissatisfaction with the status quo, the party created a special Reform Commission at the 1990 leadership convention. The Reform Commission was given the wide-ranging mandate to make recommendations on: "the method of universal suffrage to be employed in the election of the next Liberal leader; the establishment of a permanent electoral commission; Party finances; the structure of the Party; its membership; and any other proposals that will enhance democracy, accessibility, accountability and equity within the Party."<sup>175</sup> One important aspect of this mandate was to find ways of solving the party's chronic nomination controversies. In its Interim Report, the Commission acknowledged that the 1984 and 1988 elections " . . . were marked by events which reflected badly on the reputation of

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<sup>175</sup> The Reform Commission of the Liberal Party of Canada, Agenda for Reform: Interim Report, (July 31, 1991), p.1.

the Party as an open, accessible, democratic and fair institution."<sup>176</sup>

The focus of the Reform Commission in the area of nominations was twofold. The issue which most troubled the Reform Commission is the phenomenon of "Instant Liberals," whom the Interim Report describes as "individuals who are signed up as members solely for the purpose of voting for one or another of the candidates."<sup>177</sup> Noting that nominations were strictly "numbers games" and that the winner was usually the one capable of signing up the most new members, the Commission focused on finding ways to ensure that only serious party members would be allowed to vote at candidate selection meetings.

The second problem area is the persistent under-representation of women and ethnic minorities in terms of candidacies. This gap in representation raises questions about the party's commitment to inclusion and accessibility for all Canadians. Pressures were mounting from inside and outside the party as women and ethnic minorities participated in ever-increasing numbers. The phenomenon of ethnic mobilization in large urban centres like Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver proves that these groups

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.



will wait no more - they are increasingly willing to take what they believe to be rightfully theirs.

The Commission's analysis of the problem is similar to that of the Lortie Commission. It argues that "complex and contradictory rules and procedures create confusion and lend themselves to abuse. . . . Also, the lack of rules for disclosure on spending, and the lack of spending limits gives candidates with access to financing an advantage over those who do not and there is no neutral body to arbitrate the process."<sup>178</sup> This guided the Commission's proposals for reforming the party's candidate selection process.

The changes proposed by the Reform Commission revolve around two themes: that of creating a more centralized, uniform candidate selection process; and that of establishing more rigorous standards for participation in the party's candidate selection process. To this end, the Commission discusses: restricting voting eligibility for candidate selection to those permitted to vote in federal elections (Canadian citizens eighteen years of age and older); establishing a minimum national cut-off of at least ninety days (many Liberals reportedly suggested cut-offs of six months to one year); and establishing spending limits for the nomination period. The majority of these changes

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<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p.8.

would be carried out by the creation of a national "Nominations Commission." The centrepiece of the Commission's reform proposals, the Nominations Commission bears similarities to the Electoral Commission of the party's Quebec wing.<sup>179</sup> This new body would administer and regulate all aspects of the candidate selection process. It would draw up the rules, in the form of national minimum standards, and would function as a "court of last resort" for all nomination disputes.<sup>180</sup>

The reform proposals, tabled in 1992 at a special reform convention, were severely watered down by the party's delegates. A considerable portion of the centralizing thrust of the Reform Commission recommendations, including the proposed Nominations Commission, was rejected in favour of retaining a more decentralized candidate selection process. Many of the proposals for a more restricted membership were also rejected in favour of maintaining the openness and accessibility of the party to newcomers. Long cut-offs of ninety days or more were rejected, as was the proposal restricting party voting privileges to legal voters.

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<sup>179</sup> It was suggested to me by James Cowan that the Nominations Commission was modelled after the Quebec example.

<sup>180</sup> Reform Commission, Agenda for Reform. passim, pp. 6-9.

However, the national party was successful in a few important respects. One area where the national party's increased centralization was accepted by delegates is the establishment of the Permanent Appeals Committee, a national body given the power to hear all appeals of controverted candidate selection meetings. This has largely assumed the anticipated role of the Nominations Committee in resolving nomination disputes.

The biggest victory for the national party was the convention's approval of a proposal to allow the national party to set the rules for candidate selection, subject to alteration by the provincial associations.<sup>181</sup> Through its use of this provision, the national party has created a candidate selection process that is considerably more centralized than would have been the case if the Reform Commission's proposals had been accepted. The new rules adopted for the current round of candidate selections have created an unprecedented degree of standardization. This marks the first time in the history of the party that the

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<sup>181</sup> Article 14.(6) of the revised party Constitution now reads: "Following consultations with the National Executive and the Executive Committee of each provincial and territorial association, the National Campaign Committee shall adopt and publish rules regarding the procedures to be followed in the nomination of candidates to represent the Liberal Party of Canada in any general election or by-election. These rules may be varied from province to province or territory by the Campaign Committee of the respective province or territory in consultation with the executive of the provincial or territorial association."

process has been governed by a set of national minimum standards. For example, there is a national minimum cut-off of fourteen days. However, the rules established by the National Campaign Committee have gone far beyond mere regulation. Through the aggressive use of their authority, the national committee has created several powers which enable the national organization to assume a "positive" or activist role in candidate selection.

One illustration of this is the change preventing local associations from independently setting the date for their nomination meetings. Now, all local nomination meetings must be authorized by the relevant Provincial/Territorial Association's (PTA's) Campaign Committee. The PTAs, in turn, must receive the permission of the National Campaign Committee before sanctioning any local meetings under their jurisdiction.<sup>182</sup> This has resulted in a more integrated and systematic utilization of the party's resources in holding candidate selection meetings, while also providing the national and provincial parties with a means of keeping ridings open for prominent late comers in some areas.

The most controversial, and powerful, of the rule changes made by the National Campaign Committee is contained

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<sup>182</sup> Subrules 3.1 and 3.2 of National Rules for the Selection of Candidates for the Liberal Party of Canada, April 1992.

in subrules 2.3 and 2.4 of the National Rules for the Selection of Candidates for the Liberal Party of Canada.

2.3 After consultation as set out in subrule 2.4, the Leader of the LPC may decide that a meeting shall not be held in an electoral district and shall designate a person who will be the candidate for an electoral district in any election upon the candidate executing forms equivalent to Forms 1, 2, and 3.

2.4 Before designating a candidate as described in subrule 2.3, the Leader of the LPC shall consult with the national campaign co-chairs of the national campaign committee and the chair of the relevant provincial or territorial campaign committee who shall consult with the executive of the constituency association.

This power, which gives the party Leader the option to by-pass the traditional candidate selection process and directly appoint candidates, has become a delicate subject for the national party leadership, and a potential election issue, for two reasons. First, it has been perceived by many grass-roots Liberals as an attempt by the national organization to usurp the local associations' traditional role in selecting the party's candidates. Second, the undemocratic nature of the power has offended the democratic sensibilities of Canadians. It is in the granting of authority to the national organization to make rules for candidate selection that the appointive power is rooted, and not, as has been maintained by Mr. Chretien and the national party organization, in the overwhelming approval of the convention delegates at the convention. Nowhere in the

documents of the party's Reform Commission is there any discussion of such a power, although it was discussed privately.<sup>183</sup> Despite the contention of some party figures I talked to, there is little evidence of any systematic effort to sell the power to the party's grass-roots prior to its establishment.

When the convention delegates voted to give the national organization the power to make the candidate selection rules, it was understood that something would be done to address the Toronto-area situation. However, giving the party leader the power to appoint candidates is almost certainly not what most delegates would have had in mind. As such, the repeated contention of Mr. Chretien and the national party organization that this is a democratic power because it was adopted by a convention of elected party delegates is misleading.

The negative reaction of many grass-roots Liberals to its use was entirely predictable; why, then, did the Liberal party still go ahead and establish such a power? The answer is to be found in the party's unpleasant experiences in several large urban (especially Toronto-area) ridings in 1984 and 1988. In the aftermath of the 1988 election, most Liberals agreed on the need for a means of preventing a

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<sup>183</sup> Interview with Jack Graham.

repeat of similar candidate selection problems. In the affected ridings, ethnic mobilizations, anti-abortion "take-overs," and free-spending candidates seeking the associations' nominations resulted in spectacular and destructive nomination battles which frequently drove out loyal party workers and split the associations.

Senior Chretien people were very critical of the way that the Liberal party under John Turner handled these situations, and they were determined not to repeat what they saw as Mr. Turner's mistake: in tolerating and encouraging grass-roots participation in the nomination contests of 1984 and 1988, he was unable to recruit potential cabinet members (who were reluctant to take their chances in the free-for-alls that passed for nomination contests), or when he did, was unable to ensure that they won. As a result, Mr. Turner was forced to live with some embarrassing or undesirable candidates, while lacking high-profile candidates and candidates personally loyal to him. One example of this is anti-abortion activist Tom Wappel's defeat of Patrick Johnston (a former director of the National Anti-Poverty Organization and co-chairman of the Liberal party's platform committee, who was recruited by Mr. Turner) in a "vicious" campaign which saw the anti-abortion group Campaign Life mobilize Roman Catholics against Mr. Johnston.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Fraser, Playing for Keeps, pp. 166-167.

When Mr. Chretien returned to the party as leader in 1990, his organization set out to ensure that such embarrassments would not happen again. They capitalized on the widespread concerns among party members to press for a more efficient and centralized candidate selection process that would allow them to get the candidates they wanted, while keeping out those they did not want.<sup>185</sup> A number of other explanations have been offered: in particular, the desire of the party to field more women and ethnic minority candidates. However, these are largely ex post facto rationalizations, invoked to lend an air of legitimacy to the appointments.

Mr. Chretien has used this power to appoint candidates in fourteen ridings. On October 22, 1992, he appointed former Toronto mayor Arthur Eggleton (touted as a "star" candidate) and businesswoman Mila Velshi (who has since resigned) to run in two Toronto-area ridings. At that time, the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord was dominating the papers, and consequently very little media attention was devoted to the action. However, the use of the power did not go unnoticed within the party ranks. Both the parliamentary caucus and the party grass-roots expressed some displeasure. Indeed, John Nunziata's criticism of the appointments as

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<sup>185</sup> This opinion is also shared by James Cowan (interview).



undemocratic was persistent enough for Chretien to strip him of his role as the party's employment critic.<sup>186</sup>

The next two appointments were made on March 12, 1993. Derek Lee and David Berger, both sitting MPs, were appointed by Chretien to protect them from what were expected to be stiff nomination challenges. These appointments, in particular the Berger appointment, where party president Don Johnston was forced to abandon plans to reclaim the riding he had represented until he stepped down in 1988 (at which time Mr. Berger moved in from another Montreal-area riding), received considerable attention from the media. Although Mr. Chretien initially gave Johnston his blessing, the leader reportedly came under heavy pressure from his caucus to protect Mr. Berger. This despite the fact that in both cases the challengers were loyal party veterans, and, in the Berger case, despite the fact that Johnston was approached by six of the eight members of the local executive and asked to run.<sup>187</sup> The effectiveness of the elaborate consultative process set out in the appointive power, involving all three levels of the party (national, provincial and local associations), was minimal in this instance. The Montreal

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<sup>186</sup> Macleans, "Laying Down the Law," Nov.30, 1992, p.11.

<sup>187</sup> Also note that in the Derek Lee case, the challenger was former association president Gobinder Singh Randhawa, who reportedly had sold thousands of memberships (Globe and Mail, March 13, 1993, p.A1, A8).

Gazette reported that the local executive in Mr. Berger's riding was infuriated by the decision to reappoint him candidate, and quoted the local members as saying that Mr. Chretien had "placed caucus solidarity before democracy." Allegations were made that the parliamentary caucus was attempting to make itself unaccountable to the local associations its members represented.<sup>188</sup>

The third round of appointments was made a week later, on March 19. Five prominent women were appointed: Jean Augustine (chairman of Metropolitan Toronto Housing Authority) and Maria Minna (a public affairs consultant and president of the National Congress of Italian Canadians) in the Toronto area, former cabinet minister Celine Hervieux-Payette in Montreal, Margo Brousseau (lawyer) in Quebec City, and Georgette Sheridan (lawyer) in Saskatchewan. The Augustine, Minna and Sheridan appointments also served to block the candidacies of anti-abortion activists who would likely have won a contested nomination. In defense of his appointments, Mr. Chretien argued the need to ensure that the party reach his goal of fielding at least 25 percent women candidates.

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<sup>188</sup> "Johnston won't seek Westmount nomination," Montreal Gazette, March 13, 1993, p.A1.

The final round of appointments was made on June 20-21, when Mr. Chretien announced five more candidates. He appointed Marcel Masse in the riding of Hull-Aylmer. A former Rhodes Scholar and Clerk of the Privy Council under Joe Clark's Progressive Conservative government, Masse has been paraded before the media as the kind of quality candidate the party needs to successfully run a government. The following day, the leader appointed four women: Janice Laking (mayor of Barrie), Eleni Bakopanos (a former advisor to the Quebec government on multicultural issues) and Raymonde Folco (a foreign policy consultant) in the Montreal area, and Rita Lavoie (businesswoman) in Brian Mulroney's old riding of Manicouagan in Northern Quebec.

These appointments were greeted with derision in a number of the constituencies involved. The local executive in Hull-Aylmer held an unauthorized nomination meeting at which it selected Tony Cannavino (a former police officer); it then refused to support Mr. Masse after his appointment and is instead working for Mr. Cannavino's independent candidacy. Riding president Judith Flynn-Bedard termed Masse's appointment "a dictatorial and autocratic approach."<sup>189</sup> A similar situation arose in Simcoe-Centre, where most of the local association resigned to protest the

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<sup>189</sup> "Liberal leader names 4 women as candidates," Montreal Gazette, June 22, 1993, p.A1.

appointment of Ms. Laking. The former riding president, Ed O'Reilly, has decided to run as an independent.

It seems clear from these fourteen cases that the appointive power's use has not been confined solely to its original purpose of heading off a repeat of Toronto-area problems of 1988. The national party has come to see the appointive power as a tool capable of dealing with a number of different candidate selection problems. Ten appointees are women, indicating that the party is responding to pressure from women's groups to nominate more women candidates. It is also likely that in some instances, the appointment of women is used as a "politically correct" shield to protect the party from criticism while achieving other objectives. For example, in the cases of Jean Augustine, Maria Minna and Georgette Sheridan, the primary motive seems to have been to block the efforts of anti-abortion candidates from capturing the party's nomination. The appointments of Velshi, Minna, and Bakopanos could likewise be construed as bolstering the number of ethnic candidates. In two instances, the appointive power was used to protect sitting MPs from nomination challenges - clearly a case of the parliamentary party protecting its own. And in the cases of Art Eggleton and Marcel Masse, the power was used to recruit high-profile "star" candidates.

This latter aspect of the power's use, which has helped the party leader to shape an attractive, balanced slate of Liberal candidates and to recruit cabinet-calibre figures, has received considerable attention in the unofficial campaign. The party has been touting the quality of "Team Liberal," attempting to make this an electoral issue. Mr. Chretien himself has repeatedly defended his use of the power on the grounds that it is necessary for a political leader to put together a strong team capable of dealing with the nation's problems.<sup>190</sup>

However, several Liberals I interviewed gave less favourable assessments of using the power in such a fashion. They felt the Chretien people were attempting to import an American-style executive (which under that constitution is appointed and is not responsible to the legislative branch of government). Such an approach was seen to be fundamentally incompatible with a system founded on the theory of responsible government. Nor has this rationale been favourably received by the party's grass-roots. In

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<sup>190</sup> For example, see "Questions of leadership," in Macleans, November 30, 1993, (p.58); "'Bad apples' can't run, Chretien says," in the Globe and Mail, July 29, 1993, (p.A3); "Team Tory Takes Shape," in the Montreal Gazette, July 22, 1993, (p.B3); "Chretien adamant about right to pick candidates," in the Halifax Chronicle-Herald, July 29, 1993, (p.A9).

addition to Mr. Masse and Ms. Laking,<sup>191</sup> at least two or three other appointees will be forced to contend with disgruntled Liberals running as independents. Anti-abortion activists Dan McCash and Terry Kelly are reportedly considering running against Augustine (Etobicoke-Lakeshore) and Minna (Beaches-Woodbine), whose appointments have thwarted their organizational efforts. Peter LiPreti, a municipal Italian politician who was frozen out of York Centre by the Eggleton appointment, has announced plans to run as an independent in that riding. In others, the appointments have prompted some members of the local executives to resign in protest. The latest sign of grass-roots discontent came on July 28, when Mr. LiPreti and former cabinet minister John Munro (who was not blocked by an appointment but contends that the party manipulated the process to muscle him out of the way of their chosen candidate in the Ontario riding of Lincoln) launched a court challenge questioning whether Liberal candidate selection practices, in particular the appointive power, violate their Charter rights to seek election to the House of Commons. "The fact of the matter is," said Mr. Munro, "he [Mr. Chretien] doesn't own the party, he's just leading it."<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> As noted earlier, Tony Cannavino plans to run in Masse's riding of Hull-Aylmer, and Ed O'Reilly plans to oppose Laking in Simcoe Centre.

<sup>192</sup> "'Bad apples' can't run, Chretien says," Globe and Mail, July 29, 1993 (p.A3).

A more general problem for the party leadership is that party members and the public alike have viewed the appointive power as fundamentally undemocratic. In failing to reflect the tradition of decentralized candidate selection it also appears as a usurpation of the role of local associations in choosing the party's candidates. Coming as this does after the rejection of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords (and the elite-dominated process they came to represent in the minds of many Canadians), and at a time of growing demands for greater grass-roots participation in the country's political institutions, the effort to create a more centralized, autocratic candidate selection process seems ill-suited to the present Canadian political climate. To establish and use such a power in such an unfavourable climate is a miscalculation on the part of the Liberal party.<sup>193</sup>

Nevertheless, any overall assessment of the party's new candidate selection process must include a comparison with what it replaced. How have the new rules, including the appointive power, affected Liberal candidate selection practices for the upcoming election? As noted earlier, two distinct candidate selection patterns have emerged in the

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<sup>193</sup> In fact, one Liberal I interviewed told me that the party had planned to make many more appointments, but backed off due to the negative feedback they received from early appointments.

Liberal party over the past ten or fifteen years. The party's efforts (begun in the late-1960s and early-1970s) at creating a more participatory process have resulted in widespread grass-roots involvement in the selection of the party's candidates in some ridings, whereas in others candidate selection remains the small, uncompetitive affair that it has always been. In associations where mass participation has occurred in the past, the results of this "democratization" of candidate selection have been alternately disastrous or terrific. For example, in the Toronto ridings where the local party lacks the formal structures and organizational capacity to handle large-scale ethnic mobilizations, the outcome tends to be split associations, disgruntled party workers, and negative publicity. In the current round of candidate selections, these notorious spectacles have largely been eliminated by the creation of a more structured, formalized process and by the national organization's willingness to employ (or threaten to employ) the leader's appointive and veto powers. Yet it is questionable whether the party is much further ahead having made the appointments, since a number of them have resulted in the very things the Liberal party had hoped to avoid: split associations, independent Liberal candidacies, and negative media attention.



On the other hand, the candidate selection experiences of two Maritime ridings (the New Brunswick riding of Miramichi and the Nova Scotia riding of South West Nova) represent everything the party's earlier reformers hoped for in candidate selection. In these ridings, the ideal of participatory democracy was realized. The Liberal nomination in Miramichi, where the incumbent Liberal was stepping down due to illness, drew seven candidates. In an association of 18,000 signed up members, the convention drew over three thousand and filled the Miramichi Civic Centre. It went to a fourth ballot, where local high school principal Charles Hubbard overtook New Brunswick Premier Frank McKenna's deputy minister (Paul Lordon) to win the party's nomination. This generated tremendous excitement among local party members and received considerable media attention. Most important of all, the six defeated candidates all vowed to support Mr. Hubbard in the upcoming election, thus creating a united, energized association ready to do battle when the election is called.<sup>194</sup>

A similar story unfolded in South West Nova, where a sitting Liberal was also stepping down. In what was described as "one of the most electrifying political

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<sup>194</sup> For an excellent account of this nomination battle, see the New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal, May 21, 1993. "McKay-Lordon rivalry is more like a feud" (p.A7) and May 31, 1993. "Hubbard wins Liberal nomination" (p.A3).

contests ever held in this region," Harry Verran (described as a veteran backroom Liberal) won an eight vote, third-ballot victory in a convention which attracted over twenty-five hundred party members. Once again, the losing candidates all pledged to support Verran's campaign, and the local party emerged from the nomination meeting with a united, invigorated association.<sup>195</sup> The outcome of candidate selection was very positive for both local associations. New members were recruited, there was renewed interest in the local association, and there were no split associations or independent candidatures.

Neither the chaotic ethnic wars of Toronto nor the electrifying Maritime battles, however, are typical of most Liberal nominations. While the nature of most party candidate selection contests can only be speculated about at this point (since they generally receive little media coverage),<sup>196</sup> there is no reason to expect that they will differ considerably from the pattern noted by Carty and Erickson in 1988. While the more structured process will

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<sup>195</sup> "Veteran survives late-ballot challenge," in Halifax Chronicle-Herald, June 21, 1993, (p.A12).

<sup>196</sup> Note that most nomination contests receive little or no attention because they are relatively low-key, uncompetitive events. As Carty and Erickson argued, those which do catch the media's eye (the huge, crazy conventions) are not typical. Thus, one tends to get a rather distorted view of the overall candidate selection process by relying solely on newspaper accounts.

probably eliminate the worst excesses of previous elections, it is likely that most nominations will continue to be "relatively uncompetitive, modest events."<sup>197</sup> There is no reason to anticipate that Carty's finding of 25 to 40 percent of nominations being managed by a "core group of party activists" will shrink. In fact, the more integrated process created by the 1992 reforms and the national party's more assertive approach to placing desirable candidates and blocking less desirable ones should produce a less open, less competitive process.

The most obvious examples of the party's recent activism are, of course, the fourteen appointments. However, the case of Joan Kouri's nomination in the Quebec riding of Brome-Missisquoi is an excellent example of how party officials can control nominations by more subtle, yet no less effective, measures. Kouri, a Montreal Liberal who is currently the president of the National Women's Liberal Commission, was parachuted into the Eastern Township riding by Senator Pietro Rizzuto (the "kingpin" of the Quebec organization) against the wishes of the local association. Mr. Rizzuto claimed that he wanted a prominent woman candidate to contest the riding. To ensure this result, he reportedly blocked at least three or four would-be candidates (both men and women) who live in the riding and

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<sup>197</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.128.

who expressed interest in seeking the nomination. One such person, insurance agent Ron Gibbs, has actively sought the nomination for over a year.

The Quebec party leadership has the power to block candidates in this manner due to its unique organizational structure (mentioned earlier). The Electoral Commission must give its permission to anyone planning to contest a nomination. Thus, Mr. Rizzuto could simply tell people like Mr. Gibbs that he would not be allowed to run as a Liberal candidate. While Mr. Gibbs said that he would stay in the party, the cool reception given to Ms. Kouri at her formal acclamation indicates that she will face considerable difficulty in winning the support of the local association in time for the general election.<sup>198</sup> The parachuting of Ms. Kouri might have done her and the party more harm than good.

The bottom line for the Liberal party's experiences in the current round of candidate selection is this: while some local associations have succeeded in involving large numbers of enthusiastic partisans in the selection of a candidate, fears of large, divisive nomination battles in other associations (especially in the Montreal and Toronto areas)

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<sup>198</sup> "Disgruntled Liberals denounce parachuting," in Toronto Globe and Mail, July 22, 1993, (p.A1, A4); "Township Liberals greet parachuted candidate with boos," in Montreal Gazette, July 24, 1993, (p.A5).

have prompted the national party to (over)react by appointing candidates in an effort to create a more efficient and controlled process. This heavy-handed, centralized approach in a small number of ridings has backfired, conveying a distorted picture of the Liberal candidate selection process as an undemocratic one. Thus, despite the party's efforts to improve the nomination process, the latest round of candidate selection has resulted in yet another black eye for the party.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS

The chapter begins by asking whether the appointive power was necessary. Could other ways have been found to remedy the problems this power has been used to deal with? National party figures say there is no way around its use; local proponents of grass-roots party democracy argue there are alternatives. This leads to an analysis of the root cause of Liberal nomination difficulties. Two prevalent schools of thought, represented on the one hand by the Lortie Commission and those who testified before it, and on the other hand by the Liberal Reform Commission, will be explained, and the limitations of their analyses revealed. An alternative explanation will be offered. Next, three avenues of reform available to the Liberal Party of Canada will be evaluated. Finally, the experiences of the Liberal Party of Canada will be applied to two broader normative questions. First, can democracy be realized within political parties? Is there a fundamental trade-off between demands for greater participation and internal party democracy, on the one hand, and a need for legislative competence and organizational coherence, on the other? Second, if democracy cannot be realized within parties, then how is democracy to be achieved in the political system as a whole?

Reflecting on the controversy that has surrounded the use of the appointive power, it is valid to consider whether other, less controversial ways might be found to deal with the problems the power has been used to confront. The partisan debate on this subject has fallen into two camps: those (primarily within the national organization) who support its use as necessary to preserve the integrity of the party and its candidate selection process, and those (primarily the local proponents of grass-roots democracy) who argue that the power is both unnecessary and offensive to democratic sensibilities.

Advocates of the appointive power identify five major problem areas: to ensure the party fields high-calibre candidates; to increase the representativeness of the party by nominating more women and ethnic minority members; to prevent single-issue candidates from "taking over" an association; to protect incumbents from nomination challenges; and to prevent divisive nomination contests (often featuring the involvement of ethnic or single-issue groups) from destroying local associations. Local democrats, while perhaps agreeing in principle with some of the goals the national party is seeking to achieve, disagree with the use of the appointive power for these purposes.

On the question of guaranteeing quality candidates, local party figures have been quick to criticize this rationale for a number of reasons. First, they ask why the existing process of democratic candidate selection at the local level should be deemed incapable of producing quality candidates. The Canadian democratic ethos holds that if elections are fair, the best man or woman will prevail. What the national party really means when it talks about the need for high-calibre candidates, they argue, is candidates the national party finds attractive. In other words, the national party is substituting its own judgement for that of the local party members, on the premise that it knows best what type of candidate the party needs.

This divergence of opinion on what defines an attractive candidate is a fundamental one, arising from two differing perspectives on the issue. Viewing candidate selection from a national, macro-perspective, party leaders in Ottawa have sought to rectify problems such as the under-representation of women and ethnic minorities by adopting a more pro-active approach to the candidate selection process. They also often attach different value to candidate qualities than the local association might. For example, the local association might wish to send a well-known, locally-oriented figure to Ottawa, confident that while lacking the background or the talents to be a major player in



Parliament, he or she would faithfully represent the district's concerns. The national party, however, might favour an individual who, while lacking any deep attachment to the riding or its particular needs, would make an excellent environment minister or finance minister.

This is the reason for the perennial disputes over "parachuting" candidates into unreceptive ridings. The difficulty the national party faces in shaping an "attractive," broadly representative team of candidates with the "proper" mix of talent stems from the combination of the single-member-district, first-past-the-post electoral system and the regional political culture, which together render the concept of "balancing the ticket" meaningless when viewed from the perspective of the local party member. In the Canadian electoral system, each riding can elect only one candidate, and any attempts by the national party organization to reserve that riding for a woman, or a "star", or an incumbent who has aroused the ire of the local party, will be viewed at the micro-level of the local association as an undemocratic exercise of power. "Balancing the ticket" is a concept best left for use in multi-member-district electoral systems.

In the instances of "star" candidates being appointed, the most frequently heard question is why people like Marcel

Masse, Art Eggleton, and Celine Hervieux-Payette need to be appointed in the first place. Surely they could win a Liberal nomination on their own. One Liberal I interviewed drew a comparison between Mr. Masse's appointment and the party's recruitment of prominent civil servants under Louis St. Laurent and Lester Pearson (who was himself recruited from the civil service by Mr. St. Laurent). In that period, winning a nomination was seen as a valuable part of the recruit's political education. It functioned as a sort of dry-run for the new politician to get his or her feet wet before the general campaign.<sup>199</sup> The point of this comparison is that in the Canadian system, anyone aspiring to a cabinet position must become a politician. It is not an American-style system with an appointed executive. If Mr. Masse, or others like him, are not willing to roll up their sleeves and fight for their nominations, then perhaps they should not be running for political office at all.<sup>200</sup> There are other, less offensive ways for party leaders (at least those in power) to place high-calibre "non-politicians" in positions of influence. Two traditional avenues have been appointing key figures to the civil service (as deputy

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<sup>199</sup> One good example of this is Mitchell Sharp's leap into politics in 1962. The story of his nomination battle is chronicled in Brian Land, Eglinton: The Election Study of a Federal Constituency (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1965).

<sup>200</sup> This view was expressed by John Young (interview).

ministers, chiefs-of-staff, etc.) or the Senate.<sup>201</sup> These are non-elected institutions, and therefore appointment to these bodies is more appropriate than appointments designed to place people in the House of Commons, which is the only elected institution we possess.

The second argument made in favour of the power is that it offers a way of remedying the chronic under-representation of women and ethnic minority groups. Thus it has become a tool for implementing an informal affirmative action program. While the appointment of women and minorities has been supported by representatives of these groups, the overall reaction by partisans has been less enthusiastic. Many of the people I talked to felt that there were several less offensive ways to increase the participation of these groups, and that such a heavy-handed approach could actually prove to be counter-productive in the long run. They suggested steps ranging from more intensive efforts to recruit women, to steps (such as limiting nomination spending) aimed at creating a more level playing field for women candidates. While these steps likely would not yield the type of immediate, concrete results that the appointive power produces, they are much more in tune with Canadian conceptions of liberal democracy. In fact,

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<sup>201</sup> This alternative was pointed out to me by Professor Jennifer Smith.

Carty's findings that the under-representation of women and minorities is not deemed to be a serious problem by grass-roots Liberals<sup>202</sup> indicates that the national leaders are making use of the appointive power to remedy a problem that, in the eyes of most party members, is seen to be fixing itself.

The third rationale offered for the existence of the appointive power is that it is necessary to block single-issue groups from hi-jacking a constituency's nomination meeting. Many Liberals find it offensive that groups with little commitment (perhaps no commitment at all) to the party would use it as a vehicle for promoting their narrow interests. The most trouble has been caused by anti-abortion activists. Three anti-abortion candidacies, in fact, were blocked by appointments. The national party's argument is essentially that it cannot allow people who disagree with the party's views and policies to run for election under its banner. Allowing this could potentially lead to an erosion

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<sup>202</sup> In chapter 3 of his forthcoming study, he notes that only 12 percent of the Liberals surveyed agreed with the statement that "special provisions must be adopted by the parties to ensure fair and equal opportunity. In chapter 9, he notes that 81 percent of Liberal associations agreed with the statement: "Complaints about lack of opportunities for women is exaggerated. They could easily get ahead in our riding if they just got more involved."

of the integrity of the party's nomination process, and to an erosion of discipline within the parliamentary party.<sup>203</sup>

However, this argument is not always accepted by local Liberals. Echoing the "substitute judgement" question raised earlier, why should the national party presume that its position is more "right," or more representative of the interests of the constituents than the local constituency associations themselves? There is nothing illegitimate about somebody holding strong views on abortion seeking a nomination. If his or her views do not reflect those of the constituency, then it is the responsibility of people in the constituency to mobilize and defeat the challenger at the nomination meeting. With increasingly rigid candidate selection rules being established throughout the country, it is hard to argue that a single-issue group's organizing efforts could be somehow covert or undemocratic. As one Liberal told me, if an individual or a group is able to win the nomination in a fair and open contest, then we should accept the constituency's decision as a democratic outcome.<sup>204</sup> A second problem with the use of the appointive power in this situation is that the means already exist to

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<sup>203</sup> It is safe to assume that a person elected on the basis of a particular position on an issue (such as abortion) would be unlikely to follow the party line if they took an opposing stance.

<sup>204</sup> James Cowan (interview).

address it. Since 1970 the national party leader has had the power to veto any objectionable candidacies by refusing to sign the candidate's nomination papers pursuant to the Canada Elections Act. The veto power's effectiveness is clearly sufficient to block any undesirable candidates, as has been demonstrated by Prime Minister Campbell's avowed refusal to sign the papers of five Progressive Conservatives accused or (in the case of Billy Joe Maclean in Cape Breton) convicted of corruption.<sup>205</sup>

The parliamentary party advances a fourth rationale, namely, that the power is necessary to protect incumbents from rogue challengers who might distract them from carrying out their parliamentary responsibilities. Cabinet solidarity was obviously the driving force behind the Berger and Lee appointments.<sup>206</sup> However, these two appointments raised the eyebrows (and hackles) of many local party members. The most obvious reason for criticism of the use of the power for this purpose is that it renders incumbents unaccountable to their constituency parties and therefore limits the democratic process. Questions have been raised about why

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<sup>205</sup> Halifax Chronicle-Herald, July 29, 1993. "Quebec Tory MPs angered PM may not endorse candidacies," (p.A9) and July 29, 1993. "Billy Joe may defy PM to seek federal Tory nod" (p.A13).

<sup>206</sup> I was told by Jack Graham that some Liberal MPs had suggested to the Reform Commission that it should consider proposing the automatic readoption of incumbents. The idea was rejected.

sitting members deserve special protection.<sup>207</sup> Without the power to hold representatives accountable to the members that elected them, what check do the local associations have on the behaviour of their members? This trend towards an increasingly independent parliamentary party only serves to weaken the already weak local party organizations.

Another reason for the negative feedback from the Berger and Lee appointments is that most partisans see no reason why incumbents cannot win without assistance. They already enjoy all the institutional advantages accruing to incumbents. If they are willing to make an effort to foster close ties to their constituencies and to the party members who elected them, then there will be little need for the incumbents to face such challenges. In other words, serious challenges to sitting members are deemed to be easily preventable; if the MP does wind up in a difficult situation, it is likely his or her own fault. Thus employing the appointive power in these instances conveys the perception that the party is protecting people who do not deserve protection.

A final area where there has been a perceived need for the power is to avoid potentially destructive nomination

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<sup>207</sup> Note the discussion of the appointments in the previous chapter.

battles in some associations. However, problems that might have resulted from allowing 1988-style nomination wars to break out in 1993 could not have been any more serious than the problems which have emerged in several of the fourteen associations where candidates were appointed (resignations of local executives, independent candidacies) - and at least in the case of contested affairs the party could claim to have acted democratically.

When the local democrats' critique of the need for the appointive power is summarized, one theme becomes apparent. While the power has allowed the party leadership to take strong, authoritative steps to address a number of perceived problems, most if not all of these problems can be reasonably addressed by less autocratic means. The power is too blunt, and it is too undemocratic. They concede that the power was effective in achieving certain objectives. But, they ask, at what cost have these been achieved?

Having already concluded that the power is not really necessary at all, the answer most partisans have come to is: "Too high a cost." Despite the fact that candidates were appointed in just fourteen of the two hundred and ninety-five ridings (less than 5 percent of the Liberal nominations), the symbolism of the appointments has been powerful enough to tar the entire candidate selection



process with an undemocratic brush. Through the establishment and use of this power, the Liberal party has sent out some wrong signals to the Canadian people. Opponents of the appointees will undoubtedly raise the question of their appointments as a campaign issue, and in a number of the ridings independent Liberal candidates threaten to split the traditional Liberal vote. In an election which promises to be as tight as the next one, thirteen seats could well determine the outcome.<sup>208</sup> Both in its effect on the associations where appointments were made, and in its more abstract symbolic message to Canadian voters, the appointive power has clearly done more harm than good.

Since the appointive power has proved not to be a panacea for the Liberal party's nomination difficulties, what other means are available to improve the party's candidate selection process? For any problem, solutions can only be found by acquiring a clear understanding of why the problem exists in the first place. In the case of candidate selection in the Liberal party, most reformers today see two principal causes: the "Instant Liberal" phenomenon, and the lack of formal structure.

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<sup>208</sup> Mila Velshi resigned her appointment in Don Valley West, so while fourteen candidates were appointed, only thirteen will be running in the general election.

The Instant Liberal phenomenon is characterized by large numbers of people joining local associations solely for the purpose of voting at the party's nomination meeting. Often, these people have no more than the most tenuous loyalty to the party itself, and many will never be seen again - until, perhaps, the next candidate selection meeting. The overall effect of the practice is to cheapen the meaning of party membership, since the vote of a long-time party worker is worth no more than the vote of a person (who might not even be eligible to vote in the federal election) who has been a member of the party for a few days. Having defined the Instant Liberal as the root cause, the Liberal Party Reform Commission focused on controlling the impact of Instant Liberals on the process by introducing more stringent membership requirements.

Many of the individuals and groups which appeared before the Lortie Commission feel that the traditionally informal nature of the party's candidate selection process is the principal cause of nomination abuses and under-representation of certain groups of Canadians in the electoral process. They have proposed a number of similar measures to remedy the party's nomination woes. This approach is typified by Carty and Erickson, who write that "[t]he lack of formal structure - evidenced by the absence of uniform national party rules, very limited membership

requirements, almost no financial constraints, and uneven candidate search mechanisms - means there is ample scope for the operation of informal norms and raw political might."<sup>209</sup> In response, these groups seek to create a fairer, yet more structured process with less room for manipulation. The logical outcome of such an approach (and one that was frequently recommended by intervenors before the Lortie Commission) would be the extension of the Canada Elections Act to the nomination stage.

However, while steps have already been taken to address both the "Instant Liberal" phenomenon and the lack of formal structure, nomination problems persist. Would further procedural reforms aimed at creating a more institutionalized candidate selection process solve the problem "next time"? This seems to be the attitude taken by national party officials I have talked to, but "perfection of the process" is not the answer. Nor is the Instant Liberal the underlying cause of the party's nomination troubles. In many ways the Instant Liberal phenomenon, which has become closely identified with perceptions of "busloads of Sikhs clutching five dollar bills," takes away from the real problem.

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<sup>209</sup> Carty and Erickson, "Candidate," p.116.

Rather, these are both symptoms of a more fundamental (yet not necessarily intractable) problem, one which stems from an inherent contradiction in the organizational structure, indeed the very nature, of the party. The fundamental problem underlying the Liberal party's chronic nomination woes is that the Liberal party, in response to popular demands for greater internal party democracy, has over the last thirty years created a member-based candidate selection system in a party where the concept of membership has little meaning. Reform will only be successful in so far as it institutionalizes and stabilizes the party's membership.

The concept of membership in a cadre party has long been recognized as artificial. Such a party has little need for a large grass-roots following. The party elites are self-sufficient; they create campaign organizations, formulate policy, conduct parliamentary business and raise funds all on their own. As a cadre party, the Liberals have historically had little need for a strong grass-roots organization except at election time, when it is necessary to mobilize the party's supporters. Thus the extra-parliamentary wing of the Liberal party is frequently characterized as an "electoral machine" which springs into

action once every four or five years, gets out the vote, then is largely ignored until the next election.<sup>210</sup>

The artificiality of the concept of "membership" in the Liberal party lies at the root of the party's nomination woes. Its most direct consequence has been that Canadian constituency associations are small, weak organizations. Carty estimates that the "typical" constituency association in Canada ranges between three hundred and twenty-six and six hundred fifty-five party members. He goes on to note that Canada ranks "at the bottom" of international rankings of party membership figures, with only Australia having a smaller percentage of its citizens belonging to political parties.<sup>211</sup> For comparison, the average constituency association of the British Conservative party is estimated to be over one thousand members.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> For an excellent discussion of the concept of party "membership," see Duverger, Political Parties, pp. 61-89.

<sup>211</sup> Carty, Political Parties. These figures are the median and the mean, respectively.

<sup>212</sup> Philip Tether, "Recruiting Conservative Party Members: A Changing Role for Central Office," Parliamentary Affairs 44 (1991):20-32. In this article Tether notes that older estimates of the average constituency, which ranged from 2,400 to 4,500 members, are too high. According to a 1987 survey, safe seats averaged 1853 members, marginal seats averaged 903, and unwinable seats averaged 277, for an overall average of 1011 members per constituency.

It is the weakness of these small associations, in turn, which has facilitated the widespread nomination abuses which have been the source of so much embarrassment to the Liberal party. The associations are easy targets for organized groups (both local party insiders who dominate the association and determined outsiders intent on taking over the association) who intend to manipulate the candidate selection process to their advantage. The organizational weakness of the associations renders them incapable of enforcing existing candidate selection rules even if they wanted to.

There is no mystery as to why so few Canadians are members of political parties. It is simply because for most Canadians, membership in the Liberal party "has little intrinsic meaning . . . in inter-election periods."<sup>213</sup> Membership only assumes value for the purpose of participating in the selection of candidates and of delegates to leadership conventions. Aside from those infrequent events, local constituency associations do little of importance. While most hold an annual meeting and one or two fundraisers (usually aimed at retiring the debt incurred by the national party in previous campaigns), they contribute little to the determination of the course to be followed by the parliamentary party. The local associations'

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<sup>213</sup> Carty, Political Parties, ch.3.

influence over the parliamentary party is marginal at best, their role in policy development and party strategy minimal. This is why the Liberal party's membership rises and falls so noticeably according to the electoral cycle.<sup>214</sup>

There are always a small number of people who will join parties out of a genuine desire to serve their fellow Canadians, or who derive some other psychological benefits from their involvement. However, as Michels noted, "For the great majority of men, idealism alone is an inadequate incentive for the fulfilment of duty."<sup>215</sup> These people need a tangible reason to get involved in a political party. They need to have a sense of purpose, and to see that their involvement accomplishes something. The apathy Canadians feel towards the traditional parties at the moment is testament to the failure of these parties to offer any such inducements.<sup>216</sup>

So what are the answers to the Liberal party's inability to institutionalize its membership? Can a way be

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., chapter 3.

<sup>215</sup> Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy (U.S.A.: Free Press, 1915, 1958), p.135.

<sup>216</sup> For a summary of popular attitudes toward our political parties, and toward the larger electoral system, see A. Blais and E. Gidengil, Making Representative Democracy Work: The Views of Canadians (Toronto: Dundurn, 1991).

found to attach value to party membership, or is this an intractable problem that the party will simply have to live with? There are three basic approaches the Liberal party can take. One is for it to accept the inherent contradiction of a cadre party with a member-based candidate selection process, and to take steps to limit the worst abuses resulting from this accommodation. Second, the Liberal party, having acknowledged its cadre-style nature, could take candidate selection out of the hands of the grass-roots party members and make it the responsibility of a small group of loyal party activists. Third, it could fundamentally alter its nature by becoming a true member-based party.

The first option, which should be thought of as a half-way measure, is for the Liberal party to recognize the problems generated by its internal contradictions while at the same time accepting the limitations of this organizational structure. If the party chooses to continue functioning as a hybrid, absorbing characteristics of member-based parties into its cadre-style organizational structure, then it must recognize that the party will continue to have a relatively weak membership that will grow and shrink with the rhythms of the electoral cycle. The logical response in this scenario would be to do many of the things the Lortie Commission and the Liberal Party Reform



Commission have recommended. To control the inevitable problem of individuals joining the party for the sole purpose of voting at a nomination meeting, measures should be adopted to create a more structured, institutionalized process. Membership requirements should be tightened; cut-offs should be lengthened; the nomination stage should be closely regulated, perhaps by Elections Canada; spending limits should be introduced and enforced. Another improvement would be to adopt a variation of British party practices by requiring all potential candidates to be pre-cleared by a national body. By averting embarrassing candidacies before they disrupt a nomination contest, pre-clearance of candidates would eliminate the need for any use of the leader's veto power.

However, the party must also recognize that the present Canadian environment demands an open, decentralized candidate selection process. In other words, it must continue to allow the local associations to select candidates in open meetings, and to prevent the tighter membership requirements from adversely affecting the accessibility and openness of the party to new members.

One example of the difficult balancing act that is required is the choosing of a proper length of time for the cut-off date. If the period of time is too short (like the

current national standard of fourteen days), then large numbers of instant members will continue to arrive on the eve of the meeting without an opportunity for the candidates to canvass them for their support. On the other hand, if it is set too long in advance (for example, a full year before the meeting), then the party will not reap the rewards an exciting nomination contest can bring with it, for example attracting large numbers of enthusiastic new members and creating momentum for the upcoming campaign. In fact, such a long cut-off would likely result in local associations becoming less, not more, democratic. This is because it would likely discourage many from joining the party at all (unless the members were given a greater role in the party's affairs), thus resulting in small associations. Experience suggests that these associations would be more vulnerable to domination by small cliques of local elites (expansion of the suffrage has virtually always had the effect of taking away the ability of party bosses to "fix" elections).

The second option is to acknowledge that the party is and will continue to be a cadre party, and to select the party's candidates accordingly. The party could choose to centralize the candidate selection process in the hands of regional or national party leaders, or (much more likely given Canada's electoral system and its regional political culture) it could follow the British example. Local

selection committees could choose a shortlist of three or four names from which the wider membership would make the final choice.

Regardless of whether a centralized or a decentralized process were followed, responsibility for candidate selection would lie in the hands of loyal members whose commitment to the party is beyond question.<sup>217</sup> Such a system would obviously reduce the degree of intraparty democracy. However, fears of having the party's nominations being won by undesirable candidates, or being decided by people who have no commitment to the party, would be minimal.

This approach would certainly be effective in ensuring party control over the choice of its candidates. This is an important consideration, given that our parties operate within a Westminster parliamentary system. Such an environment demands cohesive and disciplined parties if it is to operate successfully. Such an approach is also clearly in line with international practices. However, Canada's political culture rules this out as a feasible step. Over

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<sup>217</sup> Choosing a decentralized candidate selection system instead of a centralized one would, however, impact on the "quality" issue which was discussed earlier. Whether candidates are selected by open or closed means at the local level, they will still reflect the "local" definition of an attractive candidate. The national party is still likely to be disappointed with some of the choices.

the past thirty years, and in particular since the inception of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), Canadians have come to demand more democratic and inclusive political institutions. The expectations of parties have moved closer to those in America, where parties are regarded as public bodies which have public obligations. The British notion of parties as private organizations, free to conduct their internal affairs as they see fit, is clearly out of sympathy with post-Charter Canadian views of democracy. Any move by the Liberal party systematically to remove the final say on candidate selection from the party's grass-roots members would result in the death of the party as a political force in Canada. It would lose its legitimacy in the eyes of Canadians.

The third approach, and the one which would do the most to address the Liberal party's current legitimacy crisis, is to make a genuine transition to a member-based party. This would involve renewing and carrying through the party's experiments with participatory party democracy (begun in the mid-1960s under Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau, and with the assistance of such figures as Walter Gordon, Keith Davey and James Coutts). The logic behind such a restructuring is that there are only two ways for the Liberal party to permanently eliminate the problems created by Instant Liberals. As outlined above, it could take measures to

minimize the role of the membership in candidate selection, thereby rendering the phenomenon moot. However, it has been found that such an approach is impossible given our political climate. The only other permanent solution, and one which is, at the moment, particularly attractive (for all the same reasons that a more autocratic candidate selection process was just found to be particularly unattractive), would be for the party to institutionalize and strengthen its membership, thereby eliminating the severity of the cyclical relationship between party membership levels and the electoral cycle.

If local associations are strengthened and enlarged, then the potential for outsiders to mount an insurgency in an effort to nominate a particular candidate is reduced. Likewise, a large and involved local membership would also make it more difficult for party insiders to "manage" the nominations, just as expansion of the suffrage everywhere has made manipulation of elections more difficult. The question is how to create such a membership.

Here, the answer is a simple one, but because it requires a considerable delegation of power from the national party leader and the parliamentary party to the party grass-roots (primarily through their local party associations), it is likely to be opposed by the party

leaders (since they would stand to lose the most through such a change). To make membership meaningful, the party must get members more involved in its affairs. The extra-parliamentary party must become more than just an electoral machine. No matter how inconvenient, the parliamentary party should allow local associations to play a genuine role in the development of party policies. It should consult them (beforehand) on its actions, strategies and tactics; moreover, it must go beyond paying lip service to them, and actually listen to what these local associations have to say. If the party is in power, any major legislation should be previewed before and debated among the party members.

This approach is certainly not new. The Progressive movements and the farmers' parties that were so prevalent in North America during the early decades of this century pursued such measures. In fact, they went further by calling for the extensive use of referenda and recall (the power of the local association to force the resignation of its member of Parliament for ignoring their desires) to keep their representatives close to the people who had sent them to Ottawa. The Reform party seems to have tapped into the same streak of populist sentiment by echoing such policies in its platform.

In one respect it would seem critical that reform elements within the party seize the opportunity which this environment has provided in order to transform it into a truly member-based party. Instead of merely seeking to portray itself as internally democratic, the party must actually become internally democratic in order to prevent the party from lapsing into irrelevance for the great body of Canadians. The obvious question to be asked is whether this approach is a realistic option. Is an open, democratic, member-based party functional within a Westminster-style parliamentary system of government, or would its decentralized organizational structure paralyse the party and render it ineffective? There is no equally obvious answer. No North American party has succeeded in governing (for a long period of time) as a member-based party. All North American parties which have been successful in governing for long periods of time have demonstrated a tendency to concentrate power in the hands of the legislative party.

Yet paradoxically, the same political environment which has given rise to all these problems is also one that holds out hope for those seeking to transform the Liberal party from a cadre party to a genuinely member-based one. This is because the citizenry is at the same time both highly politicized and highly amenable to proposals for radical

reform of our political institutions. Support for greater participation in the political process is running at levels akin to those of the Progressive era. In other words, if such a fundamental transformation in the nature of the Liberal party is ever to succeed, it should be now.

The Liberal party must make concessions to popular demands for a more open and democratic party. If it fails to do so, it will lose its relevance to Canadians. And the cardinal rule of all political parties in a democratic society is to get elected. Thus they must be capable of adapting to changes in the political environment. The Liberal Party of Canada is no exception. As we have seen, it has altered its practices in the past to respond to changes in our society, and it will do so again.

If the political environment demands that a party behave more democratically, as was the situation in America a century ago, then it will either move in this direction or lose the support of the voters. If the public accepts oligarchic internal party structures, as it traditionally has in Britain, then parties will remain oligarchic. Canada has always been halfway between the British and American examples. Its political culture has been more deferential than that of the United States, yet less so than that of the British. Canadians have been less vociferous in demanding



democratic internal party structures than Americans, yet more so than the British. While our political institutions were modeled on the British example, we also adopted American-style federalism. Not surprisingly, the end result has been parties that are less internally democratic than their American counterparts, yet more so than the British parties.

Now as the popular mood swings closer to American conceptions of democracy, the Liberal party must respond or it will lose the support of the Canadian people. Polls and surveys repeatedly demonstrate that Canadians' support for the traditional party system is very fragile.<sup>218</sup> It might aptly be described as a mile long and an inch deep. Canadians have increasingly opted for more direct vehicles of participation in the political process, such as pressure groups. They have also demanded more control over decisions that affect their lives, as the recent referendum on the Charlottetown Accord demonstrated. As one veteran Liberal member told me, the traditional parties are increasingly losing their legitimacy and relevancy in the eyes of the average Canadian.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> See Blais and Gidengil, Making Representative Democracy Work.

<sup>219</sup> Harold Colwell (interview).

Yet there are limits to how far this transformation can go. Our constitutional system demands that the parliamentary party retain a degree of independence from the extra-parliamentary organization in order to respond quickly and decisively to crises and other events. The demonstrated tendency of all organizations to concentrate power in the hands of a small group of leaders works to counteract efforts at diffusing power. The present generation of reformers must therefore work to establish a new equilibrium, balancing these competing demands within the Liberal party to better reflect the present political environment.

In assessing the effectiveness of Schattschneider's dictum in the case of the Liberal Party of Canada, we must give it high marks indeed. The chronic nomination battles which have plagued the Liberal party for the past twenty or thirty years are not isolated, insignificant events. They reveal a party caught in a state of arrested development. In many respects, it has retained the features of a cadre party. However, in response to demands arising both inside and outside the party, the Liberals have over the past thirty years adopted some of the features of a member-based party. Most recently, the party's Reform Commission recommended, and the party delegates accepted, the direct election of the next party leader by a system of universal

party suffrage. Every member will be eligible to cast a ballot for the leadership candidate of their choice.<sup>220</sup> Yet the decidedly mixed results of this ongoing experiment in participatory democracy indicate that there may be a limit to how much participation a cadre party can withstand.<sup>221</sup>

In reviewing the literature on political parties, we come to realize that the difficulties faced by the Liberal Party of Canada are not unique. All parties must balance competing forces which demand that they be at once democratic and oligarchic. It is understandable that people living in a democratic society might expect, and demand, a measure of democracy to be present within its parties. However, Michels noted a number of factors operating against this.

First is the "technical indispensability of leadership." Put simply, people are unable successfully to govern themselves. They need leaders to make the swift, difficult decisions they are unable to make for themselves. Michels writes: "The sovereign masses are altogether

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<sup>220</sup> This will be similar to the manner by which the Nova Scotia Liberals elected Dr. John Savage as provincial party leader last year.

<sup>221</sup> Pointing to Liberal nomination experiences in 1988, Carty speculated that there might be a "threshold beyond which a cadre party association can not cope." (Political Parties, ch.5).

incapable of undertaking the most necessary resolutions. The impotence of direct democracy, like the power of indirect democracy, is a direct outcome of the influence of number."<sup>222</sup> Second, he notes that the general characteristics of human nature work to accelerate the formation of what he terms a "democratic oligarchy." The masses are apathetic and incompetent, unable to govern themselves. The leaders, by contrast, possess a natural greed for power. Thus power becomes concentrated in the hands of those who seek it. It is important to note that Michels did not confine himself to the study of cadre parties, which could be expected to exhibit an oligarchic power structure. Rather, he intentionally focused his efforts on the mass-based socialist parties of Europe. Finding oligarchical structures even within these parties, he concluded the following: "Organization implies the tendency to oligarchy. In every organization, whether it be a political party, a professional union, or any other association of the kind, the aristocratic tendency manifests itself very clearly."<sup>223</sup> While it is important that parties appear outwardly democratic, this is merely a veil to hide the party's true nature from the masses.

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<sup>222</sup> Michels, Political Parties, p.29.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p.37.

Michels' conclusions about the oligarchical nature of political parties have been widely accepted. Ostrogorski, Duverger, Lipset and Schattschneider reached similar conclusions. So as we near the end of this thesis, we are confronted with a paradox. Modern democracy, based on universal suffrage, is unworkable without political parties. Yet at the same time, political parties themselves are internally undemocratic. How is it that democratic ends are to be accomplished by undemocratic means? Or, in fact, is true democracy "an ideal which we can never hope to realize in practice?"<sup>224</sup>

Michels and Ostrogorski believed that political parties, due to their fundamentally undemocratic nature, are incapable of providing the masses with anything more than a facsimile of true democracy. This leads them to conclude that democracy is unattainable through the vehicle of political parties. Ostrogorski abhorred the American parties of his day, which he felt had been reduced to mere "organizations" devoid of any principle except the commercial gain of their members. While he acknowledged the need for a means of aggregating and organizing the collective will, he was unable to conclude that the American and British parties as they were could be anything but destructive of democracy. "The combinations of citizens for

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p.422.

a political end, which are called 'parties,' are indispensable wherever the citizen has the right and the duty to speak his mind and to act; but party must cease to be an instrument of tyranny and corruption, and must be restored to its proper function."<sup>225</sup>

Michels himself reached a similar conclusion. Having come face to face with the undemocratic structure of political parties, he was sceptical that any government run by political parties could bring true democracy to the people. He writes: "In the history of party life it is undeniable that the democratic system is reduced, in ultimate analysis, to the right of the masses, at stated intervals, to choose masters to whom in the interim they owe unconditional obedience."<sup>226</sup>

However, others such as Duverger, Lipset and Schattschneider saw the issue differently. They argue that Ostrogorski and Michels were unable to look beyond the internal organizational structures of parties to see how they interact within the broader party system to create a democratic society. To them, democracy is not to be found within parties, but between them.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Ostrogorski, Democracy, p.350.

<sup>226</sup> Michels, Political Parties, p.234.

<sup>227</sup> Schattschneider, Party Government, p.60.

In modern Western democracies, the parties compete amongst themselves for the support of the masses. The party which is best able to represent the voters should win the election. Therefore there is a built-in incentive for parties to be responsive to popular demands. This incentive also works to restrain parties in government from abusing their positions, since they know that their re-election depends on whether the voters are satisfied with their performance while in office.

Duverger captures this notion best. Conceding that ideal, theoretical conceptions of democracy are unattainable, he writes: "No people has ever been known to govern itself, and none ever will. All government is oligarchic: it necessarily implies the domination of the many by a few."<sup>228</sup> However, unlike Ostrogorski and Michels, he is able to appreciate what political parties are capable of achieving, despite their warts and imperfections. True democracy is "something different, more modest but more real." It involves the parties' ability to represent effectively the wishes of the masses. This is accomplished through the ability of the parties to generate a new class of political leaders.

The deepest significance of political parties is that they tend to the creation of new elites, and this

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<sup>228</sup> Duverger, Political Parties, p.424.

restores to the notion of representation its true meaning, the only real one. All government is by nature oligarchic but the origins and the training of the oligarchs may be very different and these determine their actions. The formula 'Government of the people by the people' must be replaced by this formula 'Government of the people by an elite sprung from the people.'<sup>229</sup>

In other words, Duverger contends that while pure democracy is unattainable within political parties, this does not prevent the realization of a functional democracy.

In Canada, the establishment of democracy pre-dates Confederation. This democracy should not be measured abstractly, but according to its everyday effects on our lives. It assumes the form of governments bowing to popular demands on certain issues. It manifests itself in the peaceful transfer of power, via free elections, from one government to another. It involves the powerful forces which act on parties, making them strive to aggregate interests most efficiently.

In the last twenty years, Canadians have become increasingly cynical in their assessment of how our political institutions, and political parties in particular, have contributed to democracy. Blais and Gidengil note that most Canadians favour greater grass-roots involvement in

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<sup>229</sup> Duverger, Political Parties, p.425.



political affairs.<sup>230</sup> It is interesting to note the cyclical nature of this populist appeal in Canadian history. Not so long ago Keith Davey was demanding that the Liberal "brass" get back in touch with the "grass." Yet now the Senator is widely perceived to be part of the party "establishment," a bulwark of the status quo. The irony is not lost on him. In his autobiography, he notes that ". . . when I became national director of the party and took as my watchwords, 'communication and involvement,' I simply represented that new generation of Liberals seeking to resolve identical problems."<sup>231</sup>

Robert Michels concluded his classic work on political parties with the following words:

The democratic currents of history resemble successive waves. They break ever on the same shoal. They are ever renewed. This enduring spectacle is simultaneously encouraging and depressing. When democracies have gained a certain stage of development, they undergo a gradual transformation, adopting the aristocratic spirit, and in many cases also the aristocratic forms, against which at the outset they struggled so fiercely. Now new accusers arise to denounce the traitors: after an era of glorious combats and of inglorious power, they end by fusing with the old dominant class; whereupon once more they are in their turn attacked by fresh opponents who appeal

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<sup>230</sup> Blais and Gidengil, Making Representative Democracy Work, p.19.

<sup>231</sup> Keith Davey, The Rainmaker (Toronto: Stoddart, 1986), pp. 283-284.

to the name of democracy. It is probable that this cruel game will continue without end.<sup>232</sup>

The timelessness of this statement is gripping. We represent merely the latest wave in a never-ending struggle to devise a system of government which provides us with the greatest degree of freedom and liberty attainable. Yet the demand for effective, coherent government requires that we concentrate power in the hands of an elite. Pure democracy is unattainable.

If we are to achieve that degree of democracy which is attainable, we will do so by producing a ruling elite which possesses, and which maintains, a connection to the people it is elected to represent. Parties can be particularly effective at achieving this result. However, these same parties often lose touch with their grass-roots supporters after a time in power. It is at these times that reform-minded individuals must come forward to revitalize the parties and to force the elites to re-establish their links to the people they represent. When party leaders such as members of Parliament establish close ties to those they represent and demonstrate their responsiveness to the concerns of their constituents, the people will give them considerable freedom of action. It is when these same figures fail to represent their constituents that the trust

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<sup>232</sup> Michels, Political Parties, p.424.

placed in them begins to erode. Thus the survival of modern democracy is dependent on two variables: its ability to prevent the disconnection of the ruling elite from the masses; and the subsequent ability of the masses to replace this set of elites whenever it inevitably does become disconnected.

The challenge thrown out to our generation, and to all future generations, is to devise the most effective means of tying these elites closely to the masses which spawn them. For the Liberal Party of Canada, this means integrating the grass-roots into the affairs of the party. Unfortunately, the recent centralization of candidate selection, symbolized by the appointive power, signals that the current party leadership is still not prepared to make a serious effort to achieve such integration. In this age of "inclusion," the party's elites still lack the confidence to involve the party's grass-roots in anything more than the most superficial of ways.

## APPENDIX

List of Liberal candidates appointed by party leader:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>
Oct. 22, 1992	Art Eggleton	York Centre
	Mila Velshi	Don Valley West
Mar. 12, 1993	Derek Lee	Scarborough-Rouge River
	David Berger	St. Henri-Westmount
Mar. 19, 1993	Jean Augustine	Etobicoke-Lakeshore
	Maria Minna	Beaches-Woodbine
	Celine Hervieux-Payette	Ahuntsic
	Margo Brousseau	Louis-Hebert
June 20, 1993	Georgette Sheridan	Saskatoon-Humboldt
	Marcel Masse	Hull-Aylmer
June 21, 1993	Janice Laking	Simcoe Centre
	Eleni Bakopanos	St. Denis
	Raymonde Folco	Laval East
	Rita Lavoie	Manicouagan

Note: Mila Velshi resigned her appointment prior to the election.

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