

CANADA POLLS / THIRD CONSECUTIVE WIN

# Chretien carries the day

OTTAWA, NOV. 28. Mr. Jean Chretien won a bold gamble on Monday, becoming the first Canadian Prime Minister to win a third consecutive majority government since World War II.

Defying forecasters, Mr. Chretien's Liberals swept Ontario and picked up several seats in Quebec, reducing the parliamentary delegation of the separatist Bloc Quebecois.

"Tonight the people of Canada renewed their confidence in our programme, our government and our leadership," Mr. Chretien (66), told supporters. Apparently ruling out any early retirement, he shouted, "I guarantee the next five years will be very exciting for Canada." Mr. Chretien, who became Prime Minister in 1993, won his 12th election for Parliament.

"For the Prime Minister, it's a three-peat!" Mr. Allan Rock, Health Minister and Ontario Member of Parliament, exclaimed at a victory party. "We have got a third majority government." Preliminary returns indicated that the Liberals had added 11 seats, bringing their delegation to 172, comfortably above the 151 needed for a majority.

Under Canada's parliamentary system, a majority vastly strengthens powers of the Prime Minister, allowing him great authority to pass legislation.

Surprising pollsters, the Quebec separatists lost seven seats, almost all to the Liberals.

"This is the first time since 1980 that the Liberal Party has obtained the majority of votes in Quebec, and this is important," said Mr. Chretien, a native Quebecer, clearly seeing the returns as a personal



The Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Jean Chretien, and Mrs. Aline Chretien wave as they take the stage in Shawinigan, Quebec, on Monday after his Liberal Party secured the third straight victory in national elections. — AP

vindication of his national unity policies.

The 36-day campaign started when the Prime Minister, encouraged by a strong economy and good polling numbers, and a wave of nostalgia after the death of the former Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, decided to call a snap election, only 3 1/2 years into his second five-year mandate.

The Liberals won about 41 per cent of the popular vote, a slight improvement over their 1997 showing. The Canadian Alliance won about 25 per cent.

Though the Alliance appeared to increase its parliamentary delegation by nine seats, to 67, the elec-

tion was seen as a setback for the party, which was formed earlier this year expressly to unite the right and to win seats in Ontario. The Alliance did win two Ontario seats, both near this capital, but the Liberals swept 100 of the province's 103 seats.

"The message to us is not yet, not this time," the alliance leader, Mr. Stockwell Day, said in British Columbia, adding that he had called Mr. Chretien to congratulate him on his victory. "We have increased our seats and we are the only party that has increased our popular vote in every part of the country. We are the federal alternative." — *New York Times*

THE HINDU

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# Churning in Canada

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**I**RRRESPECTIVE OF how the leadership battle within the newly-formed conservative Canadian Alliance turns out, the country's political landscape is heading for a change. And it is not as if only the Liberals will have to wake up and smell the coffee. The major parties of the political spectrum and their leaders who seem so eager to "hang on" appear to be the target of the "message".

And that "message" could be one of two things — changes in the political environment or the need for the parties to adapt to the changing political environment. Whether it is the Prime Minister, Mr. Jean Chretien of the Liberals, Mr. Joe Clark of the Progressive Conservatives or Mr. Preston Manning of the erstwhile Reform Party, the bottomline is that they cannot keep talking of "change" and still want to be a part of the emerging scenario.

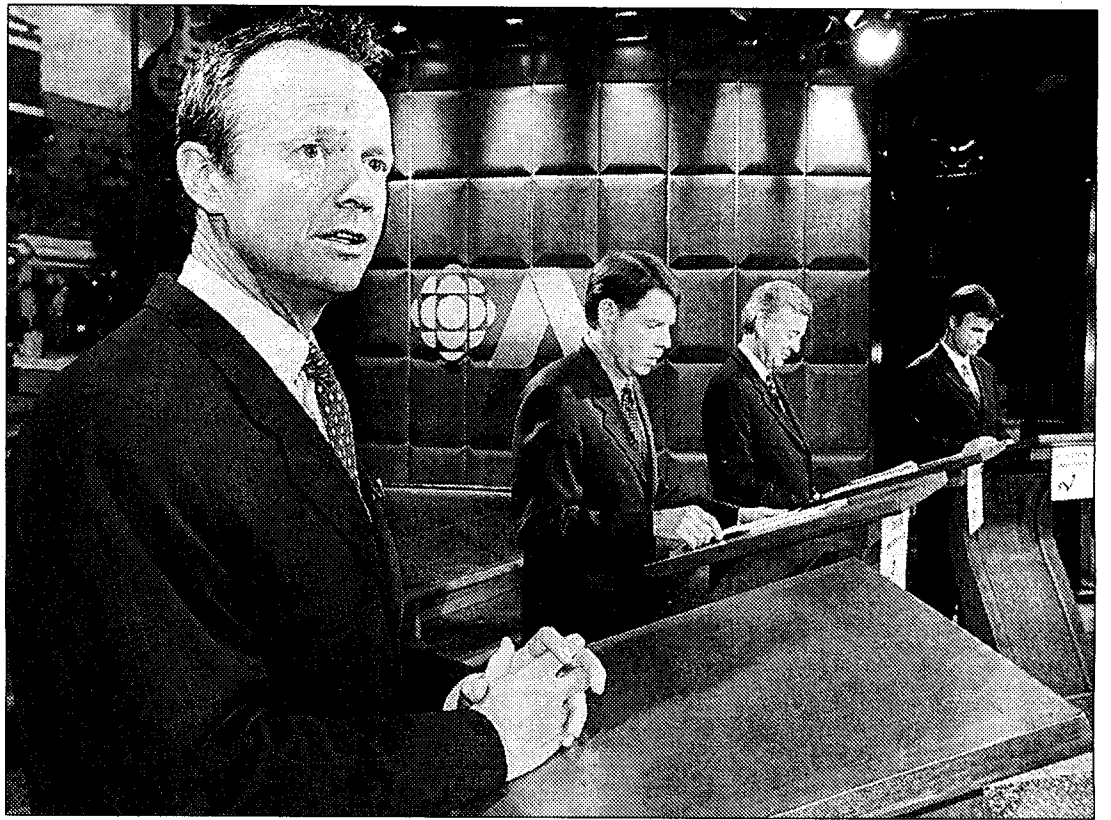
This is where there is so much emphasis in the last few weeks on the "messenger". For all practical and political purposes, the former Alberta Treasurer, Mr. Stockwell Day, seems to be shaking the system so hard that few are inclined to dismiss the evolving scheme of things as something that is a temporary phenomenon. Seen in this perspective the showdown between Mr. Day and Mr. Manning for the Alliance leadership would seem, at least on surface, to be far less important for the larger picture.

In the immediate context, it is the Conservative Alliance that is on the mat, and for good reasons. The traditional argument has been that there is hardly much difference in philosophy between Mr. Day and Mr. Stockwell, but why then is there such a fuss about the implications of Mr. Day coming to the leadership position?

Not geography or the fiscal agenda is the crux of the problem. It is the social conservatism that is being passed off as sitting on the fringes of right-wing extremism or fundamentalism — something "un-Canadian". Both Mr. Day and Mr. Manning are indeed social conservatives but the difference would be that Mr. Day openly talks and solicits support from the more traditional Christians, Jews and Muslims.

It does not matter if Mr. Manning stays in the race till the finish line on July 8. The writing is on the wall. Mr. Chretien can keep talking of the importance of differences based on policies, programmes and ideology and pretend that generational change is of no consequence. But it is indeed a motivating factor and one that has been instrumental in pushing Mr. Day, the conservative from Western Canada, into the political limelight — in the process elbowing out the more seasoned Mr. Man-

*The political landscape of Canada is heading for a change... The challenger for the conservative Canadian Alliance's leadership, Mr. Stockwell Day, seems to be shaking the system so hard that few are inclined to dismiss the evolving scheme of things as a temporary phenomenon.*  
**SRIDHAR KRISHNASWAMI reports.**



**Mr. Stockwell Day has begun to overshadow the other claimants for the leadership of the conservative Canadian Alliance.**

ning within the Alliance and raising eyebrows within the Liberal Party.

For now the focus is on the Alliance and on the ways Mr. Manning and Mr. Day are going to ensure that their bitter campaign for the party leadership does not lead to divisiveness or further polarisation. The Liberals, on the sidelines, are hoping very much that the slanging match between the two frontrunners of the Alliance does enough damage. And the Progressive Conservatives of Mr. Joe Clark are hoping to use the occasion to woo the disgruntled back into the party.

What bothers the critics of Mr. Day is not his fiscal agenda — that includes lower tax for all classes of society with corporate and capital gains taxes also set to be lowered — which even many conservative Liberals may embrace. It is the social agenda on issues such as abor-

tion, the death penalty and attitudes to homosexuals that bothers many even within the Alliance. Mr. Manning frequently talks of the Alliance having to be an "inclusive" as opposed to an exclusive camp.

In reaching out to the religious groups, Mr. Day has promised the federal Government's help for religious schools; in Alberta, the top Alliance candidate has supported policies that excluded the gay community from protection under the human rights code; and at the provincial level has backed policies that denied funding for abortions. Although Candidate Day has been careful in not touching on any of these issues in the runup to the leadership tussle, the nagging fear is that once the leadership question is settled, his social values theme will dominate.

In the rise of Mr. Day, the Liberal Party of Mr. Chretien has been

handed both a risk and an opportunity — the former having to do with a younger and a "charismatic" person challenging Mr. Chretien and his party for the seat of power in Ottawa.

The big opportunity for the Liberals is to start hammering the Alliance even before the show is over. The Liberal leadership may not want to hear it, but there is something called "voter fatigue" that has increasingly been talked about in recent weeks. The Chretien Party has been in power for seven years.

If Mr. Day does indeed emerge as the undisputed leader of the Alliance, Mr. Chretien has met his match; and the one way that the Canadian Prime Minister can ensure a third term for his party is to call for elections even before Mr. Day and his Alliance can settle down. Parliamentary elections in Canada are not due until June 2002, but not too times has the House of Commons been stretched into the fifth year.

Mr. Chretien does not have the "luxury" of time on his side; and this will be especially true if Mr. Day and Mr. Manning close ranks fast enough to present a real united front to the Liberals. Already there is talk of the Prime Minister calling for elections next year, but with the national political landscape changing so fast, it should not be a surprise at all if Mr. Chretien takes on the conservative challenge this year itself.

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