

The Party Starts Here: Intra-Party Federalism and the Making of the Conservative Party of Canada *

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Abstract. This article examines the role played by the Ontario and Alberta Progressive Conservative Parties in the movement to ‘unite the Right’ in Canada in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This movement sought to unify the Reform/Canadian Alliance and the federal Progressive Conservative party, who all suffered from frequent electoral losses as a result of vote-splitting on the right of the political spectrum. This movement resulted in the creation of the Conservative Party of Canada in 2003. The ‘unite the right’ movement was greatly aided by the power and influence of provincial Progressive Conservative parties, especially in Ontario and Alberta. The paper explores the various strategic and pragmatic concerns of the provincial wings, and details the balancing of ideology, partisanship, and electoral success.

Keywords. political parties; federalism; conservatism; intra-party federalism.

Introduction

Over the past year, members of the Conservative Party of Canada involved themselves in the affairs of their provincial allies in both Ontario and Alberta.¹ A week prior to the 2011 Ontario provincial election, federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty offered an endorsement to his provincial colleague Tim Hudak, arguing that “there is only one choice...one man and one party and that is Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party” (Talaga, 30 September 2011). This very public endorsement ignored a pre-election memo sent out to the entire federal Conservative Party caucus, warning them against overt involvement in the provincial election (Harper, 4 October 2011). Despite sharing a similar ideological worldview and often being seen as the ‘federal cousins’ of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, such a public endorsement is rare and one observer has referred to it as being an “unprecedented dive” by the federal party into the realm of provincial politics (Harper, 4 October 2011).

Similarly, in the 2012 Alberta provincial election, many members of the federal Conservative Party, especially Calga-

Résumé. Cet article se penche sur le rôle joué par les Partis progressistes-conservateurs de l’Ontario et de l’Alberta dans le mouvement pour « Unir la Droite » au Canada, à la fin des années 1990 et au début des années 2000. Le mouvement a cherché à unifier l’Alliance réformiste canadienne et le Parti progressiste-conservateur fédéral, qui ont perdu plusieurs élections, du fait de la fragmentation du vote dans la droite du spectre politique. Ce mouvement a débouché sur la création du Parti conservateur du Canada en 2003. Le mouvement « Unir la Droite » a été soutenu de manière importante par le pouvoir et l’influence des partis progressistes-conservateurs provinciaux, en particulier en Ontario et en Alberta. Cet article analyse les multiples stratégies et les préoccupations concrètes des ailes provinciales, et détaille l’équilibre idéologique, l’esprit de parti, et le succès électoral.

Mots clefs. Partis politiques ; fédéralisme ; conservatisme ; fédéralisme intra-partisan.

ry MP Rob Anders and former advisor Tom Flanagan, supported the upstart Wildrose Alliance Party, with Anders going so far as to suggest that the majority of Alberta’s 26 Conservative MPs supported Wildrose (O’Neill, 17 April 2012). The party’s main opposition are the Alberta Progressive Conservatives, who went on to defeat the Wildrose Alliance Party in a result that surprised many observers within the federal caucus, as many pundits predicted a Wildrose victory. Two months later, federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and Wildrose supporter Jason Kenney referred to Alberta Progressive Conservative MLA and deputy premier Thomas Lukaszuk as a “complete and utter asshole” in an e-mail and refused to meet with him during Lukaszuk’s trip to Ottawa (Thompson, 19 June 2012). This e-mail was sent out to all federal MPs from Alberta. In the same way that an overtly public endorsement of a provincial party is generally avoided by a federal party, so too is an overtly public criticism. Both can lead to fractured intergovernmental relations after an election, depending upon which party is elected.

The federal Progressive Conservative Party, which has formed the government of Canada since 2006, finds itself in a position of power and influence that it (and its various predecessors) have not been in since the late 1980s. It certainly has more power and influence than its provincial allies in Ontario (the opposition Ontario Progressive Conservatives) and Alberta (the opposition Wildrose Alliance Party). Throughout much of the 1990s and early 2000s, however, this was not the case. The right-wing at the federal level was divided between the Progressive Conservatives and the Reform/Canadian Alliance, while Ontario and Alberta were both governed by powerful and influential provincial Progressive Conservative parties.² Throughout this era, it was the provincial wings of the Progressive Conservative Party which held power and influence on the right of Canada's political spectrum.

In fact, it was the provincial wings of the party which helped to unite a fractured right-wing at the federal level. Their influence helped to forge a merger between the federal Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance, both of which suffered from vote-splitting and were unable to defeat the governing Liberal Party. This article examines the role of the Ontario and Alberta Progressive Conservative parties in helping to create the current Conservative Party of Canada. Within three years of the merger, the Conservative Party of Canada formed government for the first time, and in the process, defeated the Liberals, who had governed since 1993. Without the active influence and campaigning of various members of the provincial parties, it is unlikely that the merger would have been successful. More generally, this article examines intra-party federalism, or the relationship between federal and provincial parties of the same ideological leaning and partisan affiliation, an important yet overlooked area in Canadian political science.

An Overview of Intra-Party Federalism

A detailed, historical analysis of the relationship between federal and provincial 'cousins' would show that Flaherty and Ander's endorsements – as well as Kenney's disdain – are hardly unprecedented, but the fact remains that the provincial and federal wings are generally separate entities from one another. An analysis of the inter-relationship between federal and provincial parties, or intra-party federalism, draws on literature involving two predominant institutions in the study of Canadian politics: federalism and political parties. The literatures on Canadian political parties and Canadian federalism, on their own, are quite expansive, but the ways in which these institutions overlap and intersect has not been fully analyzed. Political parties have, however, been forced to both respond and adapt themselves to the presence of a federal system. As Carl Friedrich has observed "...parties tend toward paralleling the government setup... therefore, if the government is federally structured, parties must adapt themselves to such a structure" (1974: 55). That said, each of Canada's three major parties- the Liberals, the Conservatives, and the New Democratic Party- have adapted in different ways.

In the one of the most comprehensive overviews of intra-party federalism, Rand Dyck developed a typology, which provides for three possible relationships between federal and provincial parties. Dyck elaborated that:

Where a political party functions more or less successfully at both levels of government and where the relations between the two branches are generally close, it can be called an "integrated" party. Where the intraparty relations are not so intimate, it has been termed a "confederal" party. In some cases, the party may be completely absent at one level or the other, in what might be labeled a truncated state (1989: 186).

However, he noted that the three categories were not exhaustive, and that in fact a continuum existed whereby the relationship could in fact be somewhere between two of levels. Through an analysis of seven variables of intra-party federalism, Dyck concluded that an increasing level of separation between the provincial and federal branches of all three parties was apparent.

The Progressive Conservative Party can best be described as a confederal party as intra-party relations were (and are) not overly intimate, though they certainly were (and are) existent. The confederal relationship is seemingly desirable for both the party's federal and provincial wings, with both entities content to retain their independence from the other. Dyck concluded that "each goes its own way in terms of organization, membership, constituency associations, offices and finance. On the other hand, there is much crossover in terms of personnel, some mutual assistance in elections and an ongoing relationship among senior staff, executives and caucus members" (1989: 164).

However, the interrelationship has not always been confederal. In fact, at one point the two levels were closely integrated with one another (Stevenson, 1982: 180). In the first fifty years after confederation, intra-party relations were largely dictated by the partisan outlook of the provincial government (Stevenson, 1993: 183). Stevenson has also shed light on why intra-party relations became increasingly distant over the course of the 20th century. Much of the disagreement is a result of the federal system itself. He noted that "this peculiar separation of the party system into federal and provincial layers is perhaps in part a consequence of the intensity of federal-provincial conflict, which makes it difficult for a party affiliated with the federal government to appear as a credible defender of provincial interests" (Stevenson, 1982: 182). The fact that provincial parties must appear to be defenders of provincial interests is of considerable importance. This suggests that provincial parties will need to distance themselves from- and potentially even oppose- their federal cousins should they each form a government concurrently. The same can generally be said of the federal government, who cannot be seen as being too close to their provincial counterparts as it is necessary to maintain a positive working relationship with whichever party is elected at the provincial level. As such, it can be assumed that a parties will need to place pragmatic and

territorial concerns ahead of partisan concerns should it wish to maximize its appeals voters.

While this typology and broad historical overview is useful to contextualize intra-party relations, the use of case studies to explain the practical workings of intra-party politics, which are never as cut and dried as the theoretical typology suggests, is helpful. Scholars working in this field have tended to overlook specific examples of intra-party politics, especially in regard to the Conservative Party of Canada and its various predecessors. George Perlin has remarked that the Progressive Conservative party's provincial units became increasingly independent from the federal party, and that closely related to "...the establishment of strong independent-minded provincial [Conservative] governments was the development of strong independent-minded provincial parties" (1980: 18).

In regard to specific case studies, Edwin Black's analysis of the dispute between the federal Progressive Conservative Party and its now defunct provincial party in British Columbia in the early 1950s is the most recent case study of intra-party politics in the Conservative Party. Of the dispute, and intra-party relations more generally, Black concluded that "the Canadian outlook favours, and, indeed, sometimes requires, politics of pragmatism rather than of policies or ideology" as a result of "...one group seeking federal victory and the other seeking victory at the provincial capital" (1972: 129).

Despite a general lack of interest in this important area, the study of intra-party politics has not gone completely unnoticed in recent years, as Anna Lennox Esselement's work illustrates that there is still interest in the dynamic nature of intra-party politics. She maintains that the way in which "political parties fight elections in Canada provides an interesting contrast to the accepted view that, across the federal-provincial divide, they are disentangled organizations" (Esselement, 2010: 871). Not only does this work challenge the conventional viewpoint, Esselement concludes that "...party activists and election campaigns serve as critical connections between parties with identical partisan complexions. The effect is to produce considerable integration between the parties at the federal and provincial level" (2010: 872).

Aside from a limited number of studies on intra-party politics, this important field has otherwise been overlooked. However, the recent interplay between the federal Conservative Party of Canada, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and the Wildrose Alliance in Alberta highlights the importance of this field of Canadian politics. Similarly, Esselement's (2010) analysis of the intra-party relations within the Liberal Party suggests an increased importance of this field within the academic community. Likewise, the case-study examined herein illustrates the potential transformative impacts of intra-party politics. One particularly noteworthy area in which it has played an important, yet underappreciated role is with the move to unify Canada's right-wing parties in the late 1990s and early 2000s. A central factor in this was the role played by provincial wings

of the Progressive Conservative party, notably in Alberta and Ontario.

The Loyalty Dilemma

Despite the fact that these two provincial parties carried the name of Progressive Conservative, their ideological preference was more in-line with the ideology and policies advocated by the Canadian Alliance than they were with the ideology and policies advocated by the federal Progressive Conservative Party. This divergence placed the leadership of the provincial Progressive Conservative parties in a loyalty dilemma, a useful concept in analyzing the often divided loyalties and strategic considerations made by the leader of one wing of party in their relationship with the other wing of that same party.

The concept of a loyalty dilemma is adopted from the work of Albert Hirschman (1970) and Katrina Burgess (2004). A loyalty dilemma is a situation in which a party leader is pulled in strategically contradictory directions, generally between his or her party's interests and the interests of their 'cousins' at the other level. Often these dilemmas see the leader being pulled between territorial interests and larger partisan interests. When faced with a loyalty dilemma, a party leader has three options: a norm-based voice, a norm-breaking voice, and exit.

A norm-based voice consists of active and overt public support for the federal party, the sharing of resources between the two wings and withholding public criticisms of the federal party and privately negotiating any disagreements with the federal party; a norm-breaking voice consists of withholding financial or organization support for the federal party, refusing to co-operate in joint initiatives, refraining from publicly campaigning on behalf of the federal party and a public critique of the federal party; while exit retains the actions of norm-breaking voice but is expanded to consist of formally disaffiliating from the party (should affiliation have previously existed), vocal and overt opposition to federal party, and possibly public support of another federal party. The 'voice' employed by a party leader is informed by the presence and strength of two variables: the relative power of territorial interests and partisan interests to punish provincial leaders for disloyal behaviour and the provincial party's capacity to act autonomously from its own federal party.

Intra-Party Federalism in Ontario and Alberta: The Case of the Progressive Conservatives in the 1990s

While the concept of a loyalty dilemma has never been formally used to describe the difficult and potentially divisive situation faced by party leaders in a federal system, it can easily be applied to this situation. This is especially true of the situation faced by Ontario Premier Mike Harris and Alberta Premier Ralph Klein- as well as many of their senior cabinet ministers- in the late 1990s and early 2000s. As opposed to many past instances of intra-party conflict which

have been a result of territorial or jurisdictional concerns, the dilemma faced by the provincial leadership in Ontario and Alberta was related to ideology. Quite simply, the natural ideological ally of the Ontario and Alberta Progressive Conservatives was the Canadian Alliance, while their traditional partisan ally was the federal Progressive Conservative Party. When faced with this loyalty dilemma, the provincial parties placed ideology ahead of partisanship, aligning themselves, in varying degrees, with a 'united right,' despite the fact that the federal Progressive Conservative leadership was opposed to such unification.

For Reform leader Preston Manning, a divided right-wing at the federal level served only the interests of the governing Liberal Party and offered no real hope of providing a credible right-wing alternative to the public. To rectify this situation he sought the creation of a new alternative based on the principles of fiscal responsibility, social responsibility, democratic accountability, and reforming federalism (Carty et al, 2000: 56). With the federal Progressive Conservative in considerable debt, the desired course of action was not to take over the PC Party or even to merge with it, but "...to attract supporters and activists from other political groups, particularly at the provincial level, who are also committed to these principles" (Carty et al, 2000: 56). Among these desired provincial groups were supporters of the Progressive Conservatives in Ontario and Alberta. The active seeking of support from provincial wings of the Progressive Conservative Party placed the leadership of these provincial wings in a loyalty dilemma, forcing them to either remain loyal to the federal party or to their neo-liberal ideology, thereby exiting their formal relationship and transferring their loyalty to a new party.

Whereas Klein was supportive of right-wing unification from the beginning, suggesting that a loyalty dilemma placed few constraints on his course of action, he quickly clarified that he "[wouldn't] be down there to lead the Conservative party into that reunification of the right" (Henton and Harper, 11 March 1998: A6). Reform was the most popular choice at the federal level in Alberta (with the Progressive Conservatives significantly less popular), thus making it easier for Klein to openly support the United Alternative and employ an exit strategy from the federal Progressive Conservative Party. By this point Klein had already rescinded his membership in the federal Progressive Conservative Party. Harris, in contrast, never directly supported Manning's initiative, although he did not impose public neutrality on his cabinet and a number of high-profile Ontario ministers came out in support of the United Alternative. As such, Harris' original response to the loyalty dilemma was to proceed with a norm-based voice, though he was unwilling to force that strategy upon his cabinet.

To facilitate the creation of the United Alternative, Reform's leadership scheduled a party convention for the last weekend of May 1998, and selected London, Ontario as the location. The first resolution slated to be heard at the convention called for the formal creation of a 'United Alternative' to the Liberal government. While Premier Harris remained neutral in the 1998 federal Progressive Conservative leadership race and refused to formally support Reform or

the creation of a United Alternative, he noted that "As long as there is a divided centre-right, it allows people like (Finance Minister Paul) Martin to rip off Ontario's workers with almost immunity...We need a strong opposition to present an alternative to massive over-taxation" (Harper, 28 May 1998: A6).

Harris' suggestion of the need for an 'alternative' all but indicated his feelings on a united right, although he offered no direct endorsement to Manning's initiative and chose not to attend the convention in London. A number of his senior staff members, however, attended the convention, along with senior cabinet ministers including John Snobelen and Tony Clement, who by this time had emerged as a key figure in the United Alternative movement. Of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, Reform MP Jason Kenney maintained that "We see no reason why the Conservative party of Ontario should be the provincial wing of the federal PC party" (Speirs, 31 May 1998: A4). In the end, 80.9% of the almost 1 000 convention delegates voted to affirm the leadership of Manning and the United Alternative agenda. Furthermore, 97% of the Ontario delegates voted in favour of 'uniting the right.'

Despite the fact that an overwhelming majority of Ontario's rank-and-file Reform membership was supportive of the United Alternative initiative, that same level of support needed to carry over to the broader electorate. For Mike Harris, there was little incentive to be identified with a relatively unpopular party in Ontario that was often seen as 'too extreme' for many voters. While he may have agreed with Reform in principle, there were no political reasons to offer his own support to a party that could offer him nothing in return. A public declaration of support would only serve to alienate the federal PC voters that also supported the provincial Tories. In this instance, a norm-based approach was the most logical for Harris. As Ian Urquhart observed, "There is good reason for provincial Tories to stay neutral as the federal party and Reform slug it out: Most of them have both Reformers and federal Conservatives active in their riding associations and they don't want to alienate either side" (3 November 1998: A10).

By late 1998, two additional developments in the movement to unite the right occurred. Former Prime Minister Joe Clark was elected as the leader of the federal Progressive Conservative Party and a United Alternative convention was planned for February 1999. For his part, Clark remained steadfastly opposed to any unite the right initiative, arguing that the electorate- especially in Ontario- preferred a more moderate party. Reformers, he argued, could come back to the Progressive Conservative Party, rather than focusing their efforts on building a united right-wing party (Walker, 14 November 1998: A1, A29).

Leading up to the February 1999 UA convention, Clement was appointed as one of the convention's co-chairs and worked hard on the ground to mobilize the grassroots support. "Ontario is the problem," he exclaimed, adding "We are the frontline for where the Conservatives and the Reform did not get their act together, did not dominate one over the other, split the vote and allowed Liberals to take 98 percent of the seats. So we're going to be integrally involved in how

the solution is arrived at" (cited in Girard, 13 February 1999: B5). While these were certainly harsh words coming from an Ontario cabinet minister, there was an element of truth to them.

It must be asked why senior cabinet ministers such as Clement and Runciman would be supportive of the merger, while their party leader stated that he was too busy to get 'mixed up' in uniting the right. As has already been suggested, there was nothing directly that Reform could offer to Harris and the Ontario Tories in return for a public endorsement. Furthermore there was considerable risk for Harris in publicly supporting the United Alternative and risking alienation from partisan federal PC supporters and other more moderate Ontario voters. This pragmatic approach was echoed by Nelson Wiseman, who stated "If I were advising Mike Harris, I'd say: 'Hey, shut up. Let things unfold.' If a United Alternative takes off, it can only help him. If it doesn't, then he has associated himself with an idea that's fallen flat on its face" (cited in Girard, 13 February 1999: B5). What, then, explained Clement and Runicman's support for the UA?

Much as Wiseman theorized above, the emergence of a united right-wing party capable of challenging the federal Liberal Party represented a potential benefit to Harris and the Ontario Tories. A 'United Alternative' would operate to the right of the governing Liberal Party, and would be in ideological lockstep with the Ontario party. The pressing nature of the United Alternative was not so much that unified right-wing at the federal level would be a direct benefit to the Ontario Conservatives, but rather that a divided right-wing could present some difficulties for the Ontario Conservatives to overcome at the provincial level. These difficulties would manifest themselves in the potential establishment and growth of Reform at the provincial level, especially in Ontario, which could have led to a parallel right-wing divide at Queen's Park. In that case, it would be increasingly difficult for them to form a government, as they would be plagued by a similar splitting of the vote that was occurring at the federal level. As such, they needed to build popular support for a United Alternative at the federal level to protect their privileged position as a united right-wing party in Ontario.

The Ontario Progressive Conservative party was well aware that its so-called 'Reformatory' coalition could easily form the government largely because of the absence of a credible right-wing alternative. Clement played an important role in uniting the 'Reformatories' leading up to the 1995 provincial election by ensuring that Ontario Reform members would throw their support behind the Ontario PCs, instead of nominating, running, and supporting provincial Reform candidates. Of course, Reformers were also attracted to the Ontario PCs 'Common Sense Revolution,' which was largely in-line with the ideology and policies of the federal Reform. As Wiseman remarked at the time, "The right is united provincially, right now...If there's a provincial Reform party it would be devastating [to the Ontario Tories]" (cited in Girard, 13 February 1999: B5). The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party had a clear understanding of

the dynamics of electoral competition and sought to protect their privileged position in Ontario.

Despite pragmatic support for the United Alternative by some members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, the supporters of the new party faced a significant obstacle in convincing voters of the merits of a united right-wing. Specifically, the social conservatism that formulated a significant portion of Reform's appeal in Western Canada had limited support in Ontario, and even less support in many urban areas. In fact, only 27% of those who voted for the Progressive Conservative Party at the provincial level in Ontario identified Reform as their first choice at the federal level, a number equal to the percentage of Ontario PC voters who indicated the Reform was "too extreme" for their liking (Carty et al, 2000: 58).

In order for a united right-wing party at the federal level to make significant gains in Ontario that were needed to form government, the party would have to be pragmatic in its approach to social issues as to not alienate Ontario's socially liberal voters. As David Laycock has noted, "fiscal conservatives who are not religious fundamentalists are likely to behave as rational-choice theory would predict...To keep Ontario's fiscal conservatives happy, Mike Harris has prudently gone nowhere near the distance down this [socially conservative] road that many high-profile voices in Reform and Alliance have" (2002: 170).

Ralph Klein noted the dichotomy that existed between social and fiscal conservatism. Despite governing the relatively socially conservative province of Alberta, Klein championed a libertarian philosophy that sought to limit government involvement in all facets of life, contrasting this approach with social conservatives who sought to regulate activity in the private sphere. He explained to the UA convention that "we cannot, as those who adhere to a conservative philosophy, declare ourselves to be the party of minimum interference in the everyday lives of everyday Canadians and then propose to interfere in the most personal of all decisions" (n.a, 20 February 1999: A11). Klein suggested that it was hypocritical- and electorally dangerous- for a united right-wing to run on a socially-conservative platform and was seen by many as a credible supporter of Reform who could bring together both fiscal and social conservatives.

At the United Alternative 1999 convention- attended by three Ontario cabinet ministers, eight Ontario backbenchers, a number of Alberta MLAs- delegates voted in favour of creating a new party. 665 of the conventions 1,216 delegates indicated that such action was their preferred choice, while another 296 delegates indicated it to be their second choice. The convention signaled, according to Preston Manning and other UA supporters, the creation of "a new party for a new century," though federal PC leader Joe Clark maintained that he had "...no interest in a proposal that would involve the winding down of the Conservative party" (Stewart and Harper, 22 February, 1999: A1).

Although many within the Ontario Progressive Conservative party had no real affinity for their federal cousins, preferring instead to create a new right-wing party, the relationship between the Ontario PCs and Reform was certainly not

integrated. As Rosemary Speirs suggested, “For many Ontario Tories anxious to end the vote-split, this whole exercise is about getting rid of Manning, whom they regard as unsellable outside the West” (Speirs, 22 February 1999: A6). This sentiment was echoed by Bob Dechert, the leader of a group of right-wing Progressive Conservatives and a supporter of the United Alternative, who suggested that Manning “has got some problems” and is “...going to have to work hard to sell himself [in Ontario]” (Laghi, 22 February 1999: A10). These critics wasted little time, making these statements on the same day as the United Alternative convention itself. The Ontario PCs faced no real loyalty dilemma when criticizing the Reform party.

After the affirmation by the rank-and-file membership to create a new, united right-wing party, many within the party sought the help of the relatively popular Ontario Progressive Conservative organization. A mobilization on the part of the Ontario PCs to employ either a norm-breaking voice or exit strategy and aggressively support the United Alternative ultimately spelled the end of amicable relations with the federal Progressive Conservative Party, and potentially the end of federal Progressive Conservative Party as a whole. Meanwhile, Harris was facing an increasing number of calls to play a leading role in, or even to lead, the united right, increasing the severity of his loyalty dilemma. “Only Mike Harris can make the UA fly...The UA needs a leader who plausibly brings the two sides [social and fiscal conservatives] together,” stated an anonymous Alberta strategist (cited in Walker and Harper, 24 September 1999: A6).

Harris, for his part, maintained that he had little desire to leave his position as Ontario’s premier, but remained worried about the vote-splitting between the two right-wing parties, suggesting at the very least implicit support for the United Alternative and a move toward norm-breaking voice. What was, however, absent from Harris’ public statements was a rousing defense of the federal Progressive Conservative Party. In fact, the Premier maintained that he was not officially tied to any federal party, indicating that he was no longer a card-carrying member of the federal Conservatives, and thus had exited from the federal party (Boyle, 5 October 1999: A6).

Meanwhile, Joe Clark publicly questioned the lack of commitment from his provincial cousins in Alberta and Ontario. Leading up to the federal Progressive Conservative convention in October 1999, Clark, made reference to his ambivalence toward both Klein and Harris and joked about their relationship to the United Alternative, stating that they were similar to “some kind of Moses who would come and led us all to salvation.” Clark also indicted that he saw little hope for the United Alternative and that his provincial cousins could not be the ‘savior’ that the party needed (Walker, 30 September 1999: A6). Publicly Clark put on a brave face and suggested that the new party did not offer a credible alternative to the Liberals and that calls for a right-wing merger were of little concern to him. The real split, he argued, was between moderate and extremist Reformers, and felt that the moderate Reformers would be much more at home with the Progressive Conservative Party. Nevertheless, the lack of support for the federal party coming from

their strongest provincial wings should have indicated to Clark that their loyalty to him, his party, and its prevailing ideology was in doubt.

For their part, the federal Progressive Conservatives elected Peter Van Loan, a former two-time president of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, as their new party president. Van Loan’s strategy further emphasized the importance of the Ontario electorate, and specifically those who voted for the Harris Conservatives, to the federal party and to the right-wing as a whole. While there has always been some distinction between the will of the electorate at the federal and provincial level (Morrison, 1973), the federal party decided to increasingly cater their strategy to the Ontario electorate by replicating in some respects the fiscal conservatism of Mike Harris. As Van Loan suggested, “...Mr. Clark has made it clear that he’d like to see some tax relief, he’d like to see us focus on balancing the budgets...These are things that are very consistent with the Conservatives in Ontario and certainly with the policies that the Ontario government has had” (Mallan, 4 October 1999: A6). By emulating the Ontario Tories, the federal party was attempting to consolidate their support on the political right, while at the same time seeking to limit the growth of Reform or a new right-wing party in vote rich Ontario.

While the federal PCs were seeking to emulate the policies of the Ontario government, Preston Manning was boasting that his party had always maintained these same principles. Of Ontario’s ‘Common Sense Revolution,’ Manning stated “It is a positive and constructive force that deserves to be supported and expanded, expanded so that its principles of controlled spending, debt reduction and tax relief are practiced in Ottawa as well as Queen’s Park...” (Brennen, 19 November 1999: A9). The key to this, Manning argued, was to end vote-splitting in Ontario. As they had throughout much of the post-war period, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party proved to be much more powerful and influential than their federal cousins (and step-cousins). As it routinely had, the influence within Canada’s right-wing rested with the provincial Progressive Conservatives, which led them to command a certain amount of respect from their federal counterparts in both the Progressive Conservative Party and Reform.

Despite its potential advantages, the Ontario provincial wing of the Progressive Conservative Party was not shielded from attack. In fact, their perceived cozy relationship with Reform and the corresponding divide between the federal and provincial party led one prominent member, Bill King, a former executive assistant to Mike Harris, publicly to highlight and criticize the division. In fact, King was virtually the only Ontario Conservative to employ norm-based voice and defend Clark and the provincial party from attacks from its provincial wing. King’s criticisms were directed at party strategist and UA supporter Tom Long, who referred to Clark as “tiresome” and “not a real Conservative” during a keynote speech. In response, King stated he was saddened by the attack, adding “I thought Tom Long’s personal attack on Joe Clark was an unwarranted cheap shot. I expected Tom to offer substantive reasons to join this movement

rather than attacking his friends on the right" (Walker, 30 January 2000: A6).

For Long, there was hardly a loyalty dilemma in deciding between the more centrist federal Tories and the overtly right-wing United Alternative. Long, loyal to a neo-liberal ideology, quickly and forcefully identified with Manning, Reform, and the United Alternative and proceeded to employ an exit strategy from the federal Tories. King, on the other hand, remained loyal to the Progressive Conservative Party in the midst of a badly divided right-wing. A similar rebuttal of Reform was put forward by Harris' long-time communications director Paul Rhodes, who simply stated "If I wanted to join a small-c conservative party led by Preston Manning, I had 13 years to do that. No thank you" (Walker, 30 January 2000: A6). Despite a defense of Clark and the federal party from two of Harris' senior staffers, the prevailing viewpoint was one of support for the UA.

Intra-Party Federalism in Ontario and Alberta: The Case of the Progressive Conservatives in the Early 2000s

By early 2000, the United Alternative was beginning to take shape as the Canadian Alliance, although it would not become an official party until late March. Alberta Treasurer Stockwell Day, who had long been rumored to seek leadership of the new party, had proceeded to exit from the federal Progressive Conservative Party and quickly aligned himself with the UA. His statement confirming his intention to seek leadership of the new party came one day after the website draftstockday.com received 10,000 hits. By the end of the first week on-line, the site had received 40,000 hits. Both the 'Draft Stock Day' campaign and Day's formal leadership campaign were led by Reform MP Jason Kenney and Rod Love, Klein's long-time senior advisor and a strategist for the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party. While Klein stopped short of formally endorsing Day for the new party, it was clear that the Alberta PC Party was largely in support of the new party and had no particular affinity for their federal cousins.

Just days prior to the convention to create the new party, Ontario cabinet minister Frank Klees announced his intention to seek the leadership of the Canadian Alliance. His campaign was backed by Long and by cabinet ministers Jim Flaherty, Chris Hodgson, and Bob Runciman. While Manning was not often seen as a candidate who could not be 'sold' in Ontario, neither Day nor Klees were as liberal on social issues as Ralph Klein's speeches suggested that the new party and its leader should have been. This can explain, at least in part, the Alliance's inability to make significant gains in Ontario in the 2000 federal election. As far as the party's leadership went, to ensure that the leadership race was not seen as Alberta's candidate versus Ontario's candidate, Klein did not officially endorse Day nor did Harris endorse Klees, though Klein did formally join the Alliance to back Day's bid. Only a few weeks after announcing his leadership campaign, Klees unexpectedly withdrew his name from the contest, and Tom Long quickly announced his candidacy and became Ontario's flag-bearer.

Long's entry into the leadership campaign as Ontario's preferred candidate presented problems for Joe Clark, as well as for Preston Manning. For Clark and the federal Tories, the withdrawal of Klees' leadership campaign signified a brief opportunity to make inroads with Ontario's small-c conservative voters, though that opportunity quickly passed when it was reported that Long had signed up between 120,000 and 140,000 Ontario PCs to the Alliance, and an additional 60,000 across the country (Walker and Brennan, 11 April 2000: A6). With such a larger number of Ontario Conservatives and potential federal Conservative voters switching to the Alliance, Joe Clark and the federal party faced a significant setback at the hands of Long and the Ontario party.

In many respects, Long's entry into the Alliance leadership campaign was a nail in the coffin for Clark. As Jim Travers noted:

Clark's strategy, planned before speculation about Long surfaced this weekend, was to take advantage of the embarrassing withdrawal of Ontario cabinet minister Frank Klees from the Alliance leadership race. With no credible Ontario candidate seeking the post, Clark saw an opportunity to position his party as the obvious alternative to the federal Liberals for the 905-area conservatives. Long's decision to contest the leadership, something he said he wouldn't do as recently as week ago, transforms that opportunity into a potentially fatal threat. While long may not have the broad national support or public profile needed to beat Manning or Day, he does have the loyalty of the Ontario Tory party and the political IOU's that come with it. Long... can count in widespread support from the Ontario cabinet and caucus, as well as access to party membership and fundraising lists (Travers, 11 April 2000: A17).

Again, the loyalty dilemma faced by the Ontario party placed pragmatism and ideology in direct competition with cordial partisan relations. When faced with a loyalty dilemma between the good of the federal party and the benefit of their own interests and the leadership quest of one of their own, the Ontario party was quick to employ a norm-breaking voice to support their own interests at the expense of the interests of the federal party. Long, committed to the politics espoused in the Common Sense Revolution, quickly placed his loyalty with ideology and the Alliance, largely at the expense of the federal PCs.

Despite having the support of many within the Ontario party, and access to the party's fundraising and membership lists, Long was unlikely to win the Alliance leadership race. Despite his close friendship with Long, Harris attempted to be seen as employing a norm-based voice throughout the Alliance leadership campaign. He praised him publicly, though, which did little to hurt his leadership campaign within right-wing circles. Harris declared that "Tom Long is a very good friend of mine. He is a very, very committed Canadian, a very bright individual, somebody who I have a great deal of time and respect for," though he added, "I will maintain...neutrality in anything to do with federal politics, even with Tom Long" (cited in Mallan, 12 April 2000: A6).

Despite maintaining neutrality, Harris let his feelings toward the Alliance and Long be known, suggesting that he desired to employ a norm-breaking voice.

Worse news was on the horizon for the federal party, as it was faced a major setback when Ontario Finance Minister Ernie Eves, one of the last of Ontario's cabinet ministers to remain a card carrying federal Conservative and loyal to Joe Clark, quit the party in order to support Long's bid for the leadership of the Alliance (Mackie, 20 April 2000: A4). An exit strategy on the part of Eves dealt a significant blow to the federal PC Party. Of all the Ontario PCs, the loyalty dilemma faced by Eves was the most severe, as his loyalty remained with the federal party and its leader longer than almost everyone else in the Ontario cabinet. Furthermore, he was a long-time friend of Clark and a life-long federal Progressive Conservative. Nevertheless, his pragmatic outlook eventually overtook his partisan allegiance when he determined that the only way to defeat the Liberals was by uniting Canada's fractured right-wing.

Furthermore, Eves' personal loyalty to campaign strategist Tom Long also had a great deal to do with his quitting of the federal party and endorsement for Long's Alliance leadership bid. He believed that the Alliance under Long's leadership would draw in many federal PC supporters, former Reform supporters, and right-wing Liberals. Such a feat, he hoped, would all but guarantee a right-wing federal government. Furthermore, Eves suggested that a party led by Preston Manning, "...was, and is perceived, here in Ontario and in other parts of Canada, as being a fairly right-wing party, too far right wing for the liking of a great many Ontarians" (Mackie, 20 April 2000: A4). As the economic policies between the Ontario Tories and the federal Reform were rather similar, Eves was likely referring to Reform's stance on divisive social issues. Indeed, while all the candidates sought to increase the use of direct democracy, Long was the only one, for pragmatic reasons, willing to restrain its use on moral issues (Laycock, 2002: 21), and became the champion of Ontario's Tories, who did not wish to alienate their socially liberal voters from the Alliance.

The event was significant not only for the fact that Eves switched loyalties, but also sent a strong message to the federal party. As John Ibbitson explained, "Mr. Eves' endorsement, therefore, signals that even those Ontario Tories who had until now remained loyal to the federal party have moved four-square behind their friend and campaign strategist (20 April 2000: A4). By this point, the list of prominent Ontario PC cabinet ministers who had pledged their allegiance to Long, and by extension employed an exit voice included Elizabeth Witmer, Chris Hodgson, Jim Flaherty, Chris Stockwell, Norm Sterling, Bob Runciman, John Snobelen, Al Palladini, and Janet Ecker. Of that list, only Ecker retained her membership in the federal Progressive Conservative Party (Ibbitson, 20 April 2000: A4).

The Canadian Alliance's leadership convention in July 2000 saw Long finish in third place on the first ballot, and then, in a somewhat surprising turn of events, back Manning on the second ballot. Manning ended up being defeated by Stockwell Day, who became the new party's first leader. While many Ontario PCs preferred a Day-led Alliance to the

then current Liberal government, they did not leave the leadership convention totally unscathed. While Harris never publicly endorsed Long and the Alliance, he certainly let his feelings be known. At the same time, many senior Ontario cabinet ministers exited the federal Progressive Conservative Party in order to back Long and the Alliance. In the end, their gamble and lack of loyalty to the federal party did not deliver the desired results. At the end of the day, Harris had gained absolutely nothing by supporting Long's failed leadership campaign. In the process, he not only alienated many federal PC supporters, but also put himself in a potentially compromising position with the Alliance's new leader by supporting the competition in Tom Long.

In analyzing the 'winners' and 'losers' of the Alliance leadership campaign, columnist Ian Urquhart believed that the Ontario Tories had lost far more than they won. His 'losers' column included Tom Long, Mike Harris, who, "...signaled with winks and nods that Long was his man, thereby alienating the federal Tories in his ranks," and Ernie Eves, who became "a man without a federal party" (Urquhart, 12 July 2000: A25). On the other hand, the 'winners' included Tony Clement, a key architect of the new party. Despite severing any ties that they may have had with the federal Progressive Conservative Party in order to create the United Alternative and the Canadian Alliance, other Ontario PCs could have learned a lesson from Clement's strategy leading up to the leadership convention. Clement stayed neutral throughout the leadership campaign, thereby ensuring that he could have a privileged position within the inner-circle of whoever won the leadership of the Alliance. Clement showed no loyalty to any individual campaign within the Alliance, but was loyal to the Alliance as a whole after employing an exit strategy from the federal party.

Following the Canadian Alliance leadership convention, the governing Liberal Party called a snap election only three years into their five year mandate, largely to capitalize on the unpreparedness of a the new party. The Alliance went into the election with a great deal of hope and expecting to capture more seats than the one it had (via a floor crossing) in seat-rich Ontario. The 2000 election was proved to be a disappointment. While the Alliance won 23.6% of the votes in Ontario, compared with 19.1% for Reform in 1997, the party won only two of Ontario's 103 seats, in the process losing their incumbent in Markham. Clearly this increase of 4.5% of the popular vote fell well-short of the high expectations that the party had going into the election. Once again, the Alliance, like its predecessor in Reform, was still perceived as too extreme by many in Ontario, prompting Attorney General Jim Flaherty to add that the results "were depressingly predictable" (cited in Richard Brennan, 28 November 2000: B3).

The Ontario PC's support of the Alliance certainly hindered their federal cousins. While the results were admittedly disappointing for those hoping for an Alliance breakthrough in Ontario, the Alliance's 4.5% increase in vote mirrors the Tories 4.4% drop. This may be explained, in part, by the fact that thirty percent of those who identified themselves as conservatives in Ontario ended up voting for the Canadian Alliance in 2000 (Blais et al, 2002: 120).

While the Alliance/Reform was not always the preferred second choice of federal Progressive Conservative voters, there were still more PCs willing to vote Alliance than there were Liberals or New Democrats. Indeed, had it not been for the involvement of the provincial party, the Alliance would have likely done much worse than it did. Without access to party lists and donation lists and the endorsement of a large portion of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, the Alliance would have lacked any real backing in Ontario. After all, they had no official and active provincial wing to provide them with support. For their part, the federal party, while having an official provincial wing, was unable to take advantage of its resources, volunteers, and overall organization. Indeed, a simple endorsement was hard to achieve. While the results in Ontario illustrate that simply having the support of a powerful provincial wing does not guarantee a federal party electoral success in that province, they do illustrate that the positive effects of such support generally outweigh the negative effects. Conversely, it shows that a federal party can suffer greatly when it does not have the organizational support of its provincial cousins.

The Ontario party was forced to be pragmatic in their outlook toward intra-party relations as a large number of their supporters at the provincial level were not Reform/Alliance supporters at the federal level. The 'Reformatory' coalition in Ontario was made up of Progressive Conservatives, Reformers, and right-wing liberals. As such, their support of a federal party represented a cautious balancing act and largely explains Harris' unwillingness to formally endorse Alliance candidates or the party as a whole. A loyalty dilemma was binding on Harris. In Alberta, the loyalty dilemma faced by the governing Progressive Conservatives led by Ralph Klein was not particularly strong as the majority of Klein's provincial network consisted of federal Reform supporters. This fact made his loyalty dilemma virtually non-existent and gave a green light to an exit voice and to endorse the Alliance. Reform won a remarkable 54.6% of the vote in Alberta in 1997, only to increase that to 58.9% under the Alliance in 2000. In many respects, it made perfect sense for Klein to align his provincial party with the populist, right-wing Alliance.

In comparing the loyalty dilemmas faced by Harris and Klein, Clare Hoy accurately remarked that:

In Alberta essentially the same people voted Reform federally and Conservative provincially. Harris, however, had to deal with a reality in which Reform voters and Conservative voters were quite different animals. Historically, Ontario's Conservative voters have tended to split into two major camps, the blue, or more right-of-centre, contingent...and the pink Tories, or Clarkites...In winning two consecutive majorities in Ontario, Harris had relied on support from the entire conservative spectrum. He wasn't about to openly endorse any of the groups... (2000: 111-12).

As such, despite the economic similarities between the policies of Reform and the Ontario PCs, Harris was forced to look out for his own interests and ensure his party's own success at the provincial level before he could attempt to

ensure another party's success at the federal level. This largely explains his choice to employ a norm-based voice, while only occasionally flirting with a norm-breaking voice. For Klein, that dilemma was not present as the parties (federal Alliance and Alberta PCs) were one and the same.

The competing situations of Klein, Harris, and Harris' cabinet ministers during the era of a divided right-wing in the late 1990s and early 2000s is particularly telling of the strategic choices that a provincial politician must make in dealing with their federal cousins. In almost all instances, their own rational-choice electoral concerns come before larger partisan alliances. So too do provincial and ideological interests. Throughout this entire era, endorsements of the weakened federal party- or a norm based voice- were all but absent. As a result, the provincial parties in Alberta and Ontario routinely employed a norm-breaking and an exit voice.

Conclusion

The use of this important and thus far overlooked case study has helped to contribute to the important and dynamic role played by intra-party federalism. It has also highlighted a useful theoretical approach- the loyalty dilemma- to study other instances of intra-party division. While it has confirmed much of the theoretical discussion about the strategic nature of intra-party politics, it has illustrated the important role that strong provincial parties can have in supporting or undercutting their provincial cousins, depending upon the nature of the loyalty dilemma.

Within three years of the 2000 election, the two parties merged into the Conservative Party of Canada, which has since made an important breakthrough in seat-rich Ontario. Interestingly, many Harris-era cabinet ministers, notably Jim Flaherty and Tony Clement, have gone on to serve as cabinet ministers in the united right-wing federal party that they pushed for and helped to create. They seem, however, to have forgot about the important strategic considerations that are generally employed in the operation of intra-party federalism, even though they seem to be following their party's constitution. Although not doing so by name, the memo sent out by Prime Minister Harper's press secretary in advance of the 2011 Ontario election not only suggested muting the norm-based voice that the party's own constitutions appears to mandate, it also spoke to the concept of a loyalty dilemma and rightly warned of the potential follies of involving one's self in the affairs of one's 'cousins' at the other level of government.

In addition to the analysis of a specific case-study that this article has provided, it also had developed an important theoretical approach that is readily transferable to future studies of intra-party relations. These studies may include additional parties, additional provinces, or an analysis of the growing importance of the ideological relationship between parties sharing not necessarily a partisan label, but who possess the same ideological worldviews. This article, therefore, offers future scholars a launching point into subsequent

research in an area that has been under-studied in recent years.

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Endnotes

- 1 Although the current Conservative Party of Canada has not established provincial political parties, its constitution notes that it "...shall promote and maintain relationships with existing provincial conservative parties" (<http://www.conservative.ca/media/2011-CPC-Constitution-E.pdf>). Although an official list of these 'existing provincial conservative parties' does not exist, publically at least, it would surely include the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party and the upstart WildRose Alliance in Alberta. As a result, the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party, who is relatively centrist compared to the WildRose Alliance, finds itself as an outsider in the world of provincial-federal politics on Canada's right-wing.
- 2 The WildRose Alliance Party was formed in early 2008 and was therefore not an active political entity in the late 1990s/early 2000s.